



July 21, 2016

Honorable Eleanor McMahon

Minister

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport/Minister Responsible the Ontario Trillium Foundation
9th Floor, Hearst Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2E1

Dear Minister McMahon:

**RE: Congratulations**

It was a pleasure to meet you at the formal launch of Ontario’s first Culture Strategy at the AGO. Our organization participated strongly in the consultation process and are very pleased to see initiatives related to public libraries in the recommendations and we look forward to participating further and consulting with the Ministry on these vital supports for public libraries in Ontario. We wish you special congratulations on your appointment as Minister of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport/Minister Responsible for the Ontario Trillium Foundation and carrying forward this initiative and providing leadership to ensure the continued and sustainable role of Ontario’s public library systems which are by nearly any measure the province’s largest cultural institution.

I am the executive director of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries. FOPL represents Ontario’s over 400 public library systems exceeding 1,000 branches in virtually every Ontario community including First Nations reserves. Over 5 million Ontario residents make hundreds of millions of visits to the library, in person and virtually, *every* year. Libraries are trusted, accessible community hubs providing freely accessible professional service, technology, programs, and resources to a more diverse range of residents than any other cultural institution. Ontarians have voted with their library cards and passionate support for public libraries continues to grow in the digital age.

Our member, Maureen Barry at Burlington Public Library assure us that you care deeply about issues close to the heart of public librarians’ passion – literacy, education, kids and youth.

Simply put: Ontario’s Public Libraries are a great public investment. Now more than ever before, they play a critical role in the social, educational, cultural and economic success of the communities in our province. Public Libraries are an essential investment in the future of our communities and are essential drivers of success in school preparedness, reading readiness, economic and employment success, and social equity. As the development of the knowledge economy progresses, public libraries are a vital link for every resident and every community to ensure success of all Ontarians, regardless of location or background. We reduce service duplication and provide a venue for the delivery of government initiatives in every community.

We are especially interested in your Ministry‘s process for the promised support of funding initiatives for public libraries in Ontario as envisioned in your Culture strategy. We look forward to providing input and advice. Library funding from the province was cut by 50% in 1997 and has remained at the same level with no increases for almost 20 years. This has occurred in a period where library use has risen by double digits, and public libraries have played an important role in providing access and support for Ontario residents and access to government programs in every community.

The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries wants to commend you for this consultation initiative which has the potential to further recognize and support the clear difference that public libraries in Ontario make on the social, economic and learning fabric of our province. We have data to share that shows the lasting impact on the capacity of public libraries to continue to thrive and succeed in supporting all Ontarians and have a measurable impact on the success of Ontario and Ontarians.

Congratulations and thank you again for your support of public libraries in our province.

Sincerely,

**Stephen Abram**

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Cc: Shelagh Paterson, Executive Director, Ontario Library Association

 Kevin Finnerty, ADM, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport