

2018 ONTARIO PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

A Modern, Sustainable Approach for Ontario's Libraries

Ontario's libraries play a **critical role** in communities and schools across Ontario

Ontario's libraries and library staff are helping millions of Ontarians improve their well-being, reach their potential, and gain meaningful social connections and learning experiences. Whether in their schools or in their communities, libraries reach millions of Ontarians through a wide range of impactful resources and programs.

Did You Know?

- ✓ Every year, **4.2 million Ontarians** of all ages access 242,000 programs through their local public library.¹
- ✓ Every dollar invested in libraries generates over \$6 in local economic impact benefitting regular Ontarians.²

That's why libraries and librarians in communities, schools, universities and colleges throughout Ontario are an essential resource for helping residents and students succeed.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) and Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) recommend **three funding priorities** that are essential for ensuring a modern, sustainable library sector in Ontario.

- Provide sustainable, predictable funding for all public and First Nations libraries across Ontario by increasing annual base funding from \$33 million to \$50 million - **an increase of \$17 million in annual funding.**
- Dedicate **\$25 million in new, annual funding** for the development and implementation of **Ontario's Digital Library.**
- Mandate the use of **funding allocated by the Ministry of Education for school libraries and teacher-librarians** for its intended purpose. This will inject **an estimated \$100 million in annual funding** to school libraries across Ontario **without requiring any new provincial funding**, while ensuring that school libraries get their fair share.

Ontario's libraries need a new, modern, comprehensive funding model

The current provincial funding approach is threatening the long-term sustainability of libraries across Ontario. Insufficient funding and an ineffective, patchwork approach means that many libraries are struggling to keep up, leaving many communities and schools at risk of falling further behind.

Funding for libraries has fallen far below what is needed to maintain a modern and innovative library system across Ontario. A sharp and steady decline in provincial support over the past 20 years is at the root of this growing crisis.

This dramatic decline in library resources and staff is eroding the impact of the province's major investments in education, children and youth services, and newcomer and employment supports made during the same period. Libraries across the province are having to make tough decisions about how they can continue to serve the needs of their community.

It is time for the Ontario Government to return to its historic leadership role in supporting Ontario's public and school libraries with a modernized, sustainable funding model to respond to the changing needs of residents, students & local communities.

THE IMPACT OF A NEW FUNDING MODEL FOR ONTARIO'S LIBRARIES

These proposed recommendations **will address the needs of a modern and innovative library system** that is responsive to the diverse and evolving role of libraries as local change agents.

Libraries are Ontario's **farthest-reaching, most cost-effective resource** for empowering positive change on provincial priorities by:

- **Supporting high-quality education**, in providing students with the guidance of dedicated teacher and academic librarians, assistance in developing literacy skills, and access to cutting-edge digital resources for lifelong learning;
- **Reducing the impacts of poverty**, through access to community resources and supports, as well as giving all children and youth the chance to participate in rich and accessible programming delivered by passionate librarians and library staff; and,
- **Fostering community economic development**, by providing business development and job skills programming for adults and youth, as well as providing space and resources to help entrepreneurs, newcomers and rural Ontarians.

Mustafa (London, Ontario)

When Mustafa was new to Canada, he spent every day learning English so he could work and support his family. He says: "You have to be fluent in the language or you can't make it, you can't get a job. My goal was to be able to listen, to understand and communicate with people. Even for a taxi driver, I had to pass an English test."



After attending English classes in the morning, Mustafa would come to the library to use Rosetta Stone, and borrow books and CDs from the ESL collection to take home. Remembering the first time he came to the library, Mustafa says: "I knew just a few words and I think they hardly understood what I was asking for, but they helped me. Now I encourage every newcomer to go to the library. I know they will get help for sure."

While provincial priorities may be similar, local implementation and needs are diverse. **Predictable and flexible funding will let libraries make sustainable decisions that best respond to the needs of their local communities and users**, while delivering positive impacts consistent with the province's priorities.

Implementing a modernized, sustainable and predictable funding model for Ontario's libraries will **protect Ontario's investments** in education and poverty reduction by:

- Ensuring that all Ontarians benefit from **equitable, world-class resources** in their local community or school, regardless of where they live;
- Maximizing the impact of the provincial government's **landmark investments in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education**;
- Supporting the collaborative **development of world-class digital resources** available to all Ontario libraries, residents and students;
- Empowering **impactful, long-term** planning and program development responsive to **local community and school needs, as well as provincial priorities**;
- Facilitating **ongoing, multi-ministerial collaboration** with Ontario's library systems to maximize impact and identify emerging needs and opportunities.

Ontario can provide every resident and student with comprehensive and diverse library resources - regardless of where they live. Leveraging trust in and the reach of Ontario's libraries with help level the playing field and increase equity for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians and their families - in education, economic development and poverty reduction.

Jon & Tomio (Brantford, Ontario)

Jon is a Grade 10 student at Brantford Collegiate and an avid reader of adventure fiction. He has been a regular patron of the library since his first day of Grade 9. He enjoys reading and hanging out on the comfortable couches. According to Jon, "I come here because it is a welcoming space. It is calm and relaxing...most of the time." In a high school with a population of over 1300 teens, it's important to provide a safe haven.



Tomio is a Grade 10 student who can be found in the Library before and after school and on his lunch hour, working, reading e-books on his Kobo and solving the many puzzles we have out for student use. He loves the library because, "I come here to do a LOT of homework. I have a laptop at home, but it's old ...so the library computers are much faster."

Ontario Library Association / Federation of Ontario Public Libraries

The **Ontario Library Association (OLA)** is the oldest continually-operating non-profit library association in Canada, with over 5,000 members comprised of library staff and supporters from public, school, academic, and special libraries.

The **Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL)** represents 246 public library systems in Ontario, including 45 First Nations public libraries, in communities throughout the Province.

Together, OLA & FOPL are committed to ensuring that libraries are able to continue to play a critical role in the social, education, cultural and economic success of our communities and schools.

APPENDIX A - Budget Details

Recommendation A

*Provide sustainable, predictable funding for all public and First Nations libraries across Ontario by increasing annual base funding from \$33 million to \$50 million - **an increase of \$17 million in annual funding.***

Context for Recommendation

Public and First Nations libraries are important cultural institutions and essential community hubs for all Ontario residents. It's no surprise that **libraries are consistently among Ontario's most trusted institutions.**³ Libraries are local and can adapt to the unique needs of a community. **Public libraries reach over 98% of Ontario residents, and 3 out of 4 Ontarians access their local public library.**⁴

However, funding for these libraries has fallen far below what is needed to maintain a modern and innovative library system across Ontario. A sharp decline in provincial support is at the root of this growing crisis: the net present value (NPV) of **Ontario's investment in public libraries has decreased by over 60%** over the past 20 years.

Municipal governments are responsible for the largest share of public library base funding - typically comprising about 96% of public library budgets. The Ontario government provides smaller but important support for public libraries through the Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG) which averages 4% of public library funding. It is apportioned based on population and involves accountability through several annual reports, as well as reporting on any special short-term grants. Prior to 1996, the PLOG was set at \$64 million per year, apportioned by population, thereby providing libraries across Ontario with effective provincial support. In 1996, it was suddenly reduced by 50% to \$32,000,000. Despite inflation, changes in technology and the increasing importance of libraries in contributing to local community well-being, **there has been no increase to the PLOG in the past 20 years.** Occasional, one-time grants over the past decade do not make up the difference, as libraries are forced to make short-term, "use it or lose it" decisions rather than long-term, strategic investments.

Despite these significant funding decreases, libraries have made meaningful efforts to use innovation and technology to make library resources more accessible and responsive to changing community needs.

Supporting Provincial Priorities

Public and First Nation Libraries are critical to the achievement of many of the Ontario government's priorities and policies. As one of the largest cultural institutions in the province; libraries are essential hubs for hundreds of communities across Ontario; they

support newcomers and refugees; provide frontline employment, economic and social engagement services; are key to achieving Ontario's ambitious early and middle years, youth, digital, school and college readiness goals. For more than 1 in 4 Ontarians, libraries are a key access point for the internet and participation in the digital economy and e-government resources⁵.

Investment Outcomes

Increasing annual base funding for public and First Nations libraries will empower libraries across Ontario to address immediate issues, as well as support long-term planning to address the evolving needs of our communities, including:

- Access to the growing suite of digital government resources and quality, proprietary digital information resources supporting Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) initiatives for students.
- Access to health information in partnership with local health agencies and avoidance of emergency visits.
- Support for re-training and online education, employment support, and small business support.
- Increasing social and educational equity for small, rural and First Nation communities.
- Equitable, reliable access to the internet at all libraries across the province (25% of Ontarians do not have access at home)

Recommendation B

*Dedicate **\$25 million in new, annual funding** for the development and implementation of **Ontario's Digital Library**.*

Context for Recommendation

Currently being studied by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the creation Ontario's Digital Library will **provide all Ontarians with equitable and seamless access to a suite of high quality databases and learning resources, no matter where they live in Ontario**. Unlike Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan, Ontario does not currently have a centralized digital resource foundation or province-wide strategy for leveraging costs and licensing databases and e-learning resources across all school boards and public libraries.

Stable, ongoing funding is necessary to ensure that Ontario's Digital Library is professionally managed and responsive to new technology and emerging resources. Rather than starting from a blank slate, it will utilize the relationships and professional licensing expertise of existing partners (for example, Southern Ontario Library Services (SOLS) and OLS-North, Our Ontario and the Ontario Heritage Society) for ongoing management and oversight, working in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport to ensure a comprehensive suite of digital resources.

Supporting Provincial Priorities

The issue of equitable access to broadband services is a long-term fix for our province's residents. All public libraries in the province provide access to Internet resources and services and serve to level the playing field. Libraries are a key component for equitable access for all in the digital and knowledge economy, and ensuring that in an era of digital misinformation, all Ontarians have access to verifiable, academically-rigorous information resources.

Investing in the establishment and operation of Ontario's Digital Library will provide fair access for northern, small, rural and First Nations communities and school boards that struggle with funding these costly resources on their own.

Investment Outcomes

Establishing Ontario's Digital Library will ensure that all Ontario residents and students throughout the province will have access to leading, in-depth and world-class digital resources. These would include:

- Cost-effective, lower cost per resident, efficiently delivered;
 - e-learning resources that support digital literacy, business learning and personal development, and

- research resources that support student homework, study and adult lifelong learning.
- Heritage resources and multimedia such as provincial and local history, archives, maps, photographs, genealogy, and more.
- Cultural resources such as archives, video, audio, music, dance, etc. reflecting diverse communities and First Nations.
- Partnerships with cultural and local history societies and museum collections.
- High-quality, evidence-based databases that support good decision-making by community organizations and businesses.

Recommendation C

*Mandate the allocation of **adequate funding for school libraries** as recommended by the Ministry of Education. This represents the equivalent of a critical injection of **an estimated \$100 million in annual funding** to school libraries across Ontario **without requiring any new provincial funding.***

Context for Recommendation

Ontario students are losing access to libraries and library-based resources. For example, **only 52% of elementary schools have a teacher-librarian - either full- or part-time - down from 80% only 20 years ago.** The situation in **Northern Ontario is especially dire: only 11% of elementary schools have these specialized staff.**⁶ Because resources allocation is determined at a board-level, some boards, including the Ottawa Catholic District School Board, have made board-wide decision to go so far as to no longer hire Teacher-Librarians in their elementary schools, in direct contradiction of Ministry of Education recommendations. Students are rapidly losing access to a critical learning resource previously available for generations.

The Ministry of Education has an established funding formula that recommends a ratio of 1 elementary teacher-librarian per 763 Elementary pupils, and 1 teacher-librarian per 909 secondary pupils. This falls short of the Canadian School Library Association recommended ratio of one teacher-librarian to 567 students⁷. However, because the funding is not currently mandated by the Ontario Government, school boards are not even allocating the recommended funding to teacher-librarians.⁸ As noted in the Auditor General's annual report, school boards are frequently failing to report to the Ministry of Education how these allocated funds are being spent.⁹ Across the province, we estimate that approximately 50% of funds that are recommended for teacher-librarians are being otherwise allocated by school boards.

It is important to recognize the critical role school libraries play in supporting Ontario's student achievement goals by requiring, rather than recommending, that annual funds currently allocated by the Ministry of Education to school boards for school libraries and teacher-librarians are spent on these prescribed priorities.

Supporting Provincial Priorities

Access to libraries and teacher-librarians has a demonstrable impact on the learning outcomes of students across Ontario. Schools with trained library staff are more likely to see better reading outcomes on the Grade 3 and 6 EQAO assessments.¹⁰ Conversely, the steep decline in the percentage of Ontario children who report that they enjoy reading - from 76% in 1997 to 47% in 2018 - closely aligns with the declining presence of teacher-librarians in Ontario schools over the same period.¹¹

The existing shortfall in funding for libraries and teacher-librarians is having far-reaching impacts on student performance and outcomes, including post-secondary readiness. College and university librarians are increasingly reporting significant differences in information literacy skills between students graduating from secondary schools with resourced school libraries and teacher-librarians, and those without.

Mandating the allocation of adequate funding for school libraries will provide students across the province with the library resources they need to collectively achieve the outcomes envisioned in Ontario's extensive education and post-secondary education investments.

Investment Outcomes

Equitable access to a properly staffed school library is an essential component of student success. Teacher-librarians have specialized skills to support the implementation of new curriculum and teaching strategies by co-planning, co-teaching and, co-assessing with teaching partners.

Teacher-librarians and access to properly resourced school libraries:

- Promotes critical information literacy and research skills;
- Fosters students' love of reading, which research has shown has a positive impact on:
 - literacy scores,
 - success in science and math, and
 - students social and civic engagement;¹²
- As leaders on digital content, promotes digital literacy and digital citizenship by acting as a technology mentor and coach for all staff and students;
- Creates a welcoming and safe space within schools; and
- Curates balanced library collections in diverse formats to serve all learners.

APPENDIX B – Further Resources

[Canadian Library Association. *Leading Learning*. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 2014](#)

<http://llsop.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>

[Ontario Library Association. *Access to Information for Ontarians: Leveraging and Providing E-Resources for All Ontario Students*. Toronto: Ontario Library Association, 2016.](#)

<http://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/issues/2016/E-ResourceStrategyBudgetAsk.pdf>

[Ontario Library Association. *First Nations Public libraries in Ontario*. Toronto, Ontario Library Association, 2017.](#)

http://www.accessola3.com/index.php?app=core&module=attach§ion=attach&attach_id=3719

[Ontario Library Association. *Information Brief: E-Resources in Ontario's Public, School and Academic Libraries*. Toronto, Ontario Library Association, 2017.](#)

[http://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/issues/Information%20Briefs/Information-Brief_e_resources\[1\].pdf](http://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/issues/Information%20Briefs/Information-Brief_e_resources[1].pdf)

[Ontario School Library Association. *Together for Learning: School Libraries and the Emergence of the Learning Commons*. Toronto: Ontario Library Association, 2010](#)

<https://www.accessola.org/web/Documents/OLA/Divisions/OSLA/TogetherforLearning.pdf>

[People for Education. *Libraries. People for Education, 2017*](#)

<https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/P4E-Libraries-2017.pdf>

¹ Molyneux, Robert E., and Stephen Abram. Ontario Public Library Operating Data 2006-2015 Overview, Primer on Library Statistics and Collected Tables. Toronto: Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, 2017.

² Stolarick, Kevin and Kimberly Silk. So Much More: The Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto. Toronto: Martin Prosperity Institute, 2013.

³ Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport. Sector Profile: Public Libraries. Toronto: Government of Ontario, 24 Mar. 2016. Accessed 30 Oct. 2017.

⁴ Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport. Ontario Public Library Statistics. Toronto: Government of Ontario, 1999-2015. Ontario's Data Catalogue. Accessed 30 Oct. 2017.

⁵ Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Research. Presentation on the Market Probe Public Opinion Poll 2015 Survey. Toronto: 2016.

⁶ People for Education. Competing Priorities (Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2017). Toronto: People for Education, 2017.

⁷ Canadian Association for School Libraries, *Achieving Information Literacy - Standards for School Library Programs in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Association for School Libraries, 2003.

⁸ People for Education. *Competing Priorities (Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2017)*. Toronto: People for Education, 2017.

⁹ Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. *Annual Report 2017*. Toronto: Government of Ontario, 2017.

¹⁰ People for Education & Queen's University Faculty of Education. *School Libraries and Student Achievement in Ontario*. Toronto: Ontario Library Association, 2006.

¹¹ Ministry of Children & Youth Services. *Gearing Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario Middle Years Children Thrive*. Toronto: Government of Ontario, 2017.

¹² People for Education, *Reading for Joy*, 2011. Toronto: People for Education, 2011.