

**Ministry of Tourism,
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**Ministère du Tourisme,
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May 7, 2018

To: All First Nation Public Library and Ontario Public Library CEOs

From: Kevin Finnerty, Assistant Deputy Minister, Culture Division
Soussan Tabari, Chief Information Officer, Community Services I&IT Cluster Division

Re: Exploring the Feasibility of an Upgrade to Library Broadband Service

We are writing to let you know that the Culture Division, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) is collaborating with the Community Services and I&IT Cluster Division, MTCS, to explore the feasibility of providing a broadband upgrade service to those libraries requiring one. As part of this work, we will be leveraging the Ministry of Education's experience in addressing similar broadband needs across publicly funded schools (including network design, capacity and last mile fibre issues).

As you know, the Ontario Culture Strategy commits MTCS to: reviewing and updating funding programs for public libraries in order to build the capacity of libraries serving rural and remote communities; improving digital services; supporting leadership and innovation; and, working with First Nation Public Libraries (FNPLs) to identify opportunities to respond to their unique needs.

Following extensive engagement with our library partners last year, we heard that while public libraries are key access points for new technologies and digital resources, the availability of these services is uneven across the province, in large part due to inadequate internet connectivity. In many rural, remote and First Nations communities, digital services remain limited. For residents of these communities, this places them at a disadvantage in an increasingly knowledge-based economy and society. Furthermore, as MTCS works towards establishing a provincial Digital Public Library, the provision of adequate broadband and internet connectivity becomes increasingly necessary.

For FNPLs, which are critical community and cultural hubs, there are even greater challenges with respect to broadband limitations. The 2017 FNPL Needs Assessment report pointed to the fact that FNPLs required significantly improved internet access, and that the digital divide continues to be a major barrier to accessing digital content, training opportunities and electronic government services including online grant applications.

In response to this feedback and as a first step, the ministry will undertake an assessment with libraries to better understand current internet network usage, for the purpose of determining the feasibility of upgrading broadband service. To this end, we are asking you to nominate a single point of contact for this work, in order to complete the assessment. Please note we are interested in exploring the feasibility of this opportunity for all library branches requiring an upgrade.

For those libraries that are interested in taking part in the assessment, please email the information below to Rod Sawyer at Rod.Sawyer@ontario.ca and Adam Haviaras at Adam.Haviaras@ontario.ca by June 29, 2018.

Library Name:
Library Location:
Key Contact Name:
Key Contact Email:
Key Contact Phone #:

If your library has more than one location it wishes to include in the initiative, please provide all location names and any additional contact information in the email you send Rod Sawyer and Adam Haviaras.

MTCS and CSC are excited and eager to collaborate with you on this initiative. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kevin Finnerty
ADM, Culture Division
MTCS

Soussan Tabari,
CIO, CSC Division
MTCS