**OLA / FOPL – 2019 Ontario Pre-Budget Consultations**

**Deputation Remarks – Template**

* Good afternoon. Greetings Minister Fedeli, and MPP Parm Gill (Milton)
* Thank you to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for the opportunity to participate in your 2019 Pre-Budget consultations.
* I am Shelagh Paterson, executive director, Ontario Library Association, and we work with the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries on behalf of Ontario’s libraries including the wonderful Milton Public Library.
* My colleague Stephen noted the critical role and local economic impact our libraries have on hundreds of communities across Ontario, the cost-effectiveness and return on investment delivered by public libraries, and the need to ensure Ontarians in every community have the same access to educational and employment training resources.
* For many people in Ontario, the library is the front line for connecting them with the Ontario government through ServiceOntario, allowing them to complete important transactions and access critical services.
* For example, the community of Callander is 30 km from the nearest Service Ontario branch in North Bay. As many members of the community don’t have fast or reliable internet in their homes or even regular access to a car, they rely on their local public library to access Service Ontario.
* Helen McDonnell, CEO Callander Public Library, tells us that assistance with completing ServiceOntario transactions is just one of the many hats they wear – providing programs for children and families, running senior’s groups and helping people access the tools they need to start a business or train for a job.
* Many libraries, including the North Bay Public Library that you know well, provide an invaluable proctoring service for professional accreditation. Insurance brokers, accountants and financial planners, just to name a few, can take required exams and keep their skills current without leaving their own communities.
* These are just two examples of our modern-day libraries –where people independently train, learn and improve themselves and their families with resources that help them succeed.
* We understand the fiscal challenge Ontario is facing. Ontario’s public libraries have become experts at maximizing the value of every dollar. We’ve had to, as annual base funding from **Ontario has been frozen for 22 years.**
* Municipalities have contributed their fair share, but more is needed to ensure that people in every community across the province have the support and resources they need to succeed.
* In many small, rural and Northern communities, it’s reached a tipping point.
* That’s why we’ve re-submitted our recommendation for a modest increase of $17 million annually to the Public Library Operating Grant – shared across hundreds of local libraries.
* We look forward to building on our vital partnership with the Ontario Government as we work together to deliver important government services, locally-relevant resources and economic development close to home in the communities where people live.