

Board Chair's 2024 AGM Report

Report to: The FOPL Board and Members
Prepared by: Paul Ainslie, Chair
Prepared on: April 12, 2024

Recommendation

THAT the FOPL board and members receive the chair's report as information.

Report

Dear FOPL Members,

Dear Fellow FOPL Board Members,

It has been another remarkably busy year for the FOPL Board!

As a Board I think we have accomplished a lot this past year in meeting our mandate to be a strong advocate for public libraries across Ontario.....even as we were thrown some curve balls along the way.

We had an excellent Advocacy Day last Fall in Queen's Park in conjunction with the Ontario Library Association! It was great to see so many of our Board Members actively involved in getting our message across to M.P.P.s of all political parties about the importance of public libraries to the residents of Ontario, from one end to the other. I think except for some politicians who shall remain nameless.....our talking points were understood and well received by everyone we talked with. The only downside was taking librarians to Question Period to see the antics of our elected representatives. Actions and words which no one expects to hear on TV....and never in a public library!

Kudos to Dina for all her hard work and dedication organizing the day with the Ontario Library Association to make it so successful!

Another highlight of this past year was the OLA Super Conference which was very appropriately entitled "Get Loud"Which as we get further away from COVID and more in person events was very well attended.

Our booth was in an excellent location, receiving lots of traffic and interaction with conference attendees. Dina represented us admirably during the conference attending a number of sector



meetings, including with AMPLO and ARUPLO. She gave a packed-room presentation on behalf of the Intellectual Freedom Committee for the CFLA.

I was very honoured to receive the James Bain Medallion for Library Board Advocacy! I often joke as being high school student employed by the Scarborough Public Library my main goal was to make sure the Librarian knew I understood the Dewey Decimal System. I do not think I had ever heard of a Library Board of Directors and how important they were...especially for advocacy work!

With the imminent launch of the Provincial government's budget, it is safe to say we were anticipating seeing the fruits of our labour. I was very hopeful, especially since Dina was invited by Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport staff to sit in the Public Gallery to listen to the budget presentation and by Ministry of Finance staff to sit in the embargoed session prior to the launch! So, it was with much consternation to not see monies announced for public libraries.

Saying all of this, we were all overly excited to learn the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport will be providing additional funding for First Nations Public Libraries. An additional investment of 1.25 million per year for a total of 3.75 million over three years will be allocated through the First Nations Salary Supplement and Provincial Libraries Operating Grant. This is an increase of almost 300% of what these libraries are currently receiving.

I can not say enough good things about all the meetings, presentations, and delegations our Executive Director Dina Stevens has been leading over the past year. She has done a tremendous job in advocating across the Province of Ontario for FOPL has been making progress on so many fronts!

In conclusion I can not say enough positive words about the tremendous work being done individually and collectively by all the Board Members of FOPL. It is very satisfying to see how much we have all accomplished in the past year in advocating for our amazing public library systems. In my opinion, FOPL has grown by leaps and bounds since I first joined the Board. I am immensely proud to be the Chair of the Board of such a dynamic organization.

All my Best,

Paul Ainslie
FOPL Chair