

Executive Director's 2025 AGM Report

Report to: The FOPL Board and Members
Prepared by: Dina Stevens
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Recommendation

THAT the FOPL board and members receive this report as information.

Report

It is my pleasure to present this year's Annual General Meeting report and to reflect on the incredible progress and accomplishments we achieved together in 2024. This past year has been one of the most active and impactful in FOPL's history, and I want to begin by thanking our members, board, staff, and partners for their tireless dedication and passion for Ontario's public libraries.

Advancing Our Advocacy – Stronger, Louder, United

Following the success of our 2023 Library Days at Queen's Park, we entered 2024 with momentum—and we used it well. Our advocacy for the **Ontario Digital Public Library (ODPL)** and increased public library funding has reached unprecedented levels of engagement. Thanks to the combined efforts of our members and partners, we:

- Delivered **11 deputations** to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs across Ontario, highlighting how the ODPL will transform services in communities of all sizes.
- Participated in over **32 strategic MPP meetings** with members of the PC Caucus and other parties, amplifying the voices of local libraries and aligning provincial priorities.
- Had the opportunity to speak **directly with the Minister of Finance**, the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, to share our sector's compelling needs and opportunities.

The result? Real progress. In fall 2024, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport announced a **historic \$1.25 million annual increase to First Nations Public Libraries**, to be rolled out over the next three years. This vital funding will stabilize and empower some of our province's most vulnerable libraries. This milestone is a testament to the power of collective advocacy and what we can achieve when we speak as one.



In addition, the **Internet Connectivity Grant** received a \$122,000 boost, ensuring that **up to 155 rural, northern, and First Nations libraries** can maintain reliable broadband—a true lifeline for many communities.

Building Relationships and Elevating the Library Voice

Beyond Queen’s Park, we’ve worked hard to ensure libraries are part of broader conversations. Our presence at key **municipal conferences** this year—including **ROMA, FONOM, AMCTO, and AMO**—reaffirmed our commitment to working alongside municipal leaders. The joint FOPL-OLS booth at FONOM in Sudbury marked the first coordinated outreach of its kind since 2018, and it was a powerful moment of reconnection and shared vision.

At each conference, we proudly promoted our new advocacy campaign: **“Libraries are for Everyone.”** This campaign champions intellectual freedom, inclusivity, and access to information—values that are especially vital amid rising challenges to library collections and programming.

Strategic Action and Organizational Growth

We’ve continued advancing our strategic goals through focused initiatives and improved infrastructure:

- A **non-member outreach campaign** was launched, distributing new materials that spotlight the value of FOPL membership. Follow-ups are planned throughout 2025 to grow our membership base.
- Our **Power BI Dashboard migration** will enhance how we collect, analyze, and share library data—strengthening our research capabilities and advocacy.
- We welcomed **Diana Chiavaroli** as our new Administrative Assistant and transitioned to **QuickBooks** for our financial management—both changes aimed at increasing efficiency and clarity in our operations.

We also marked changes within the board, with heartfelt thanks to **Matthew Corbett** and **Anne Smith** for their service, a warm welcome to **Beverly King** as our newly elected Small/Medium Caucus representative, and congratulations to **Catherina Moskau**, who has joined as our new Treasurer.



Forging New Partnerships

One of the most exciting aspects of this year has been our work to expand the role of public libraries through new partnerships:

- An **information session with ServiceOntario** saw overwhelming library interest in bringing vital government services into library spaces. This is a prime example of how libraries are stepping into new roles as civic hubs.
- Early discussions with the **Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions** about collaboration with **Youth Wellness Hubs** show great promise for future engagement.
- At the **First Nations Spring Gathering**, we had the honour of learning from and collaborating with First Nations library staff across Ontario, reinforcing our commitment to equity and partnership.

Looking Ahead – Building on Our Momentum

As we prepare for a dynamic 2025, we remain laser-focused on the future of the Ontario Digital Public Library and continued increases to the Provincial Libraries Operating Grant (PLOG). With pre-budget consultations beginning earlier than usual, our advocacy has already shifted into high gear. In late 2024, we presented additional deputations, participated in spontaneous Ministry of Finance consultations, and coordinated efforts with Counsel Public Affairs to ensure our voice remains present—and persistent.

We are optimistic about early 2025 meetings with Minister Cho and his team, and are encouraged by their growing recognition of libraries as essential partners in community development and service delivery.

Celebrating Leadership and Community

This year, we were proud to celebrate **Paul Ainslie**, our Board Chair, who was honoured with the **OPLA James Bain Medallion**. Paul's long-standing dedication to the Toronto Public Library and to FOPL is nothing short of inspiring. Congratulations, Paul—this recognition is richly deserved.



In Closing

2024 has proven that public libraries are not only relevant—they are essential. From digital equity to civic access, from reconciliation to intellectual freedom, Ontario's libraries are helping build a stronger, more informed, and more inclusive province.

Thank you to our dedicated board, members, staff, and partners. Together, we've moved mountains. Let's continue climbing—together.

With gratitude and optimism,

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