



FOPL 2026 Advocacy Campaign

The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) is launching a province-wide advocacy campaign in April 2026 to:

- Raise awareness among government and the public about growing pressures on libraries
- Reinforce libraries as essential social infrastructure
- Position libraries as partners—not replacements—for social services
- Advocate for stronger provincial investment in upstream supports

The campaign includes media outreach, social media, op-eds, and direct engagement with provincial decision-makers.

Why This Matters to You

Public libraries are among the most trusted and heavily used municipal services. As elected officials and board members, you play a critical role in ensuring libraries remain safe, welcoming, and sustainable community spaces.

Across Ontario, libraries are experiencing increasing pressure as they respond to complex social challenges linked to mental health, addictions, and housing. These pressures are directly impacting staff capacity, service delivery, and the overall library environment in your communities.

The Core Issue

Libraries are open to everyone—and increasingly, they are serving individuals in crisis. When systems fall short, libraries often become:

- De facto warming/cooling spaces
- Points of first contact for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Safe spaces for those facing mental health or addiction challenges

While library staff respond with compassion, they are not trained or resourced to provide crisis intervention or social services.

Key Campaign Messages

- Libraries are essential social infrastructure worth protecting
- Libraries are welcoming, trusted spaces for everyone
- Libraries are doing more than ever—but are not social service providers
- System gaps in mental health, housing, and addictions are showing up in libraries
- The solution requires coordinated, system-wide investment



The Provincial Ask

FOPL is calling on the province to work with all levels of government to strengthen housing, health, and community supports so people can get help before they end up at the library's front desk.

All Ontario communities are experiencing the impacts of Canada's mental health, addiction and housing crisis first-hand. Every day, libraries open their doors to everyone—families, newcomers, students, job seekers, and increasingly, people with nowhere else to go.

While public libraries have worked hard to build partnerships and connect community members in crisis to supports, public libraries are at the limit of what they can do on their own.

Public libraries are not frontline crisis centers, yet they are being forced to take on parts of that role due to gaps in the available supports. If housing, mental health, and addiction systems fall short, library workers see the impact. Librarians aren't social workers, but they're showing care and compassion where the system has left a gap.

Public libraries have had to redirect limited budgets away from their core mandates to provide frontline crisis training for staff, increase security measures, stretching public library budgets to the limit.

A province-wide strategy is needed to address the intersection of public safety, mental health, and its impact on community infrastructure, with coordinated investments across all levels of government and funding for municipalities to build real crisis response capacity in the community.

What Advocacy Will Be Happening

- Meetings with local MPPs and provincial ministers
- Coordinated media outreach including interviews and opinion editorials
- Province-wide social media campaign amplifying library voices
- Engagement with sector partners to reinforce shared messaging
- Local outreach opportunities for libraries to connect with elected officials

How You Can Support the Campaign

As a municipal councilor or board member, you can help.

- Champion the role of libraries in council discussions and decisions
- Support advocacy efforts with your local MPP
- Amplify campaign messaging through your networks
- Ensure local awareness of pressures facing your library system
- Advocate for integrated community solutions at the municipal level

Libraries are doing more than ever—but they cannot do it alone.

Sustaining safe, welcoming libraries requires coordinated action across all levels of government. Your leadership is essential to ensuring libraries can continue to serve their communities effectively.