

# Executive Director's 2026 AGM Report

**Report to:** The FOPL Board and Members  
**Prepared by:** Dina Stevens  
**Prepared on:** March 30, 2026

## Recommendation

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

## Report

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It is my pleasure to present this year's Annual General Meeting report and reflect on the significant progress we have made together over the past year. 2025 has been a year of strategic positioning, strengthened relationships, and continued evolution for FOPL as we respond to an increasingly complex landscape for Ontario's public libraries.

I would like to begin by thanking our members, Board of Directors, partners, and colleagues across the sector. Your collaboration, leadership, and advocacy continue to drive our collective impact and ensure that public libraries remain a vital and visible part of Ontario's social infrastructure.

### **Advancing Our Advocacy – Responsive, Strategic, and Sector-Driven**

Over the past year, FOPL has maintained a strong and adaptive advocacy presence at the provincial, municipal, and federal levels. Building on the momentum of previous years, we continued to elevate the voice of Ontario's public libraries while responding to shifting political priorities and emerging sector challenges.

Key highlights include:

- Coordinating 11 deputations to the Ministry of Finance and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, ensuring libraries were represented in provincial budget discussions
- Leading province-wide election engagement efforts, including a party survey, member toolkit, and coordinated outreach to newly elected and returning MPPs
- Advancing targeted advocacy with Ministry staff and senior officials, maintaining momentum on key priorities despite evolving government focus areas
- Continuing to champion core funding priorities, including the Ontario Digital Public Library (ODPL), Public Libraries Operating Grant (PLOG), and Internet Connectivity Grant expansion

While progress on large-scale initiatives such as the ODPL has slowed due to shifting provincial priorities, FOPL has demonstrated agility by advancing incremental, strategic “stepping-stone” asks, particularly in support of reliable internet access for small, rural, and First Nations libraries.

In parallel, we began developing and launching a province-wide advocacy campaign focused on safety and security in public libraries, recognizing the growing pressures related to mental health, addictions, housing instability, and community safety. This work reflects direct feedback from members and positions FOPL within broader cross-sector discussions.

### **Building Relationships and Elevating the Library Voice**

Strengthening relationships with government, municipal leaders, and sector partners has remained a central focus of our work. These efforts have strengthened FOPL’s visibility and credibility, ensuring that libraries are included in conversations related to civic engagement, public safety, and community well-being.

In 2025, FOPL:

- Maintained an active presence at major municipal conferences including ROMA, OSUM, AMCTO, and AMO, engaging hundreds of municipal leaders and decision-makers
- Delivered a panel presentation at AMO positioning libraries as critical social infrastructure and the ideal partner for municipalities to achieve shared goals, reinforcing their role in community resilience and service delivery
- Participated in provincial forums such as AMO’s Healthy Democracy Forum and consultations on the Civility Strategy, ensuring libraries are represented in broader policy discussions

### **Responding to Emerging Issues – Safety, Governance, and Social Pressures**

A defining theme of 2025 has been FOPL’s responsiveness to emerging and complex issues impacting libraries across Ontario. Through caucus engagement, member consultations, and sector dialogue, we identified several key trends:

- Increasing safety and security challenges within library spaces
- Rising impacts of mental health, addictions, and homelessness on service delivery
- Evolving municipal governance dynamics, including Strong Mayor powers
- Growing need for staff training, policy development, and cross-sector collaboration



In response, FOPL:

- Initiated a provincial safety and security advocacy strategy and began aligning with partners such as CULC and Parks and Recreation Ontario
- Hosted member education sessions, including a Strong Mayor Powers panel, to support library leaders navigating legislative changes
- Contributed to consultations and policy discussions at both provincial and municipal levels

### **Strengthening Member Engagement and Sector Collaboration**

FOPL continued to prioritize member engagement, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across the province.

Key initiatives included:

- Hosting spring caucus meetings to gather direct feedback and inform advocacy priorities
- Delivering training and professional development opportunities, including advocacy workshops such as *“Crafting Your Ask”*
- Supporting members through one-on-one consultations, board training, and advocacy guidance
- Launching new tools and partnerships, including the Sentobib audience research initiative, providing libraries with valuable data insights

We also continued to work closely with key partners including the Ontario Library Association (OLA), Ontario Library Service (OLS), CULC, and others to ensure alignment and maximize sector-wide impact.

### **Marketing, Communications, and Organizational Growth**

This year marked important progress in strengthening FOPL’s communications and organizational infrastructure. Highlights include:

- Completion of a comprehensive communications audit to inform a forthcoming website redevelopment and improved member communications
- Advancement of a strategic branding initiative, ensuring consistent and impactful messaging across all advocacy efforts
- Continued development of the Power BI data dashboard, enhancing our ability to support evidence-based advocacy and member storytelling



## **Expanding Our Reach – National and Cross-Sector Advocacy**

FOPL also contributed to national advocacy efforts, ensuring Ontario’s voice is represented in broader discussions. This included:

- Supporting sector submissions related to federal tariff proposals on library materials
- Contributing to consultations on Bill C-15 (Canada Post Library Materials Rate) in collaboration with national partners

At the same time, we expanded cross-sector relationships—particularly with municipal organizations and adjacent sectors—recognizing that many of the challenges facing libraries require coordinated, multi-sector solutions.

## **Looking Ahead – Focus, Momentum, and Opportunity**

As we move into 2026, FOPL is well-positioned to build on the strong foundation established over the past year. Our work will continue to focus on advancing the Safety and Security advocacy campaign, ensuring that libraries are recognized as critical partners in addressing complex social challenges and that all levels of government are engaged in meaningful, coordinated solutions. At the same time, we will maintain targeted advocacy on our core funding priorities, including expanded connectivity, enhancements to the Public Libraries Operating Grant, and continued progress toward equitable digital access across the province.

Internally, we will place a strong emphasis on strengthening member engagement and communications, including the launch of a renewed website that more clearly reflects FOPL’s value and improves access to resources and information. We will also expand our training, research, and data initiatives to better equip members with the tools and insights needed to support local advocacy and service delivery. Central to all of this work will be our continued commitment to deepening partnerships across government, municipal organizations, and sector allies, recognizing that collaboration is essential to advancing shared priorities and achieving lasting impact.

This past year has reinforced that public libraries are not only essential—they are increasingly at the forefront of addressing some of our most pressing societal challenges. From supporting digital inclusion and civic engagement to responding to complex community needs, libraries continue to demonstrate their value as trusted, accessible, and adaptable public institutions.

FOPL has risen to meet this moment by advocating with clarity, responding with agility, and supporting our members with purpose. Our collective efforts have strengthened the voice of Ontario’s public libraries and positioned the sector for continued growth and impact.



Thank you to our Board, our members, and our partners for your continued leadership and commitment. Together, we will continue to strengthen Ontario's public libraries and the communities they serve.

With gratitude and optimism,

**Dina Stevens, MLIS**  
Executive Director

**Federation of Ontario Public Libraries**  
PO Box 3285  
Meaford Stn Main, ON  
N4L 1A5  
Cell: 416-873-8139  
Email: [dinastevens@fopl.ca](mailto:dinastevens@fopl.ca)