

ONTARIO LIBRARIES: 2018 ONTARIO ELECTION BRIEF

Libraries Play a Critical Role in Communities and Schools Across Ontario

- Libraries are Ontario's **farthest-reaching, most cost-effective community resource** – providing high-quality education and lifelong learning, fostering community economic development and reducing the impacts of poverty.
- Ontario's libraries and library staff are **helping millions of Ontarians** in thousands of schools and communities across the province.

Ontario Needs a Modernized Library System

- Predictable and flexible funding lets libraries make sustainable decisions to meet the needs of their local communities.
- Insufficient base funding from the province – frozen for over 20 years – and an ineffective, patchwork approach left many public libraries struggling to keep up.
- **Recent provincial investments in annual base funding for public and First Nations libraries, as well as Ontario's Digital Public Library, are crucial for ensuring the sustainability of libraries across Ontario.**
- School libraries continue to face challenges across the province, impacting and restricting equitable student access to school libraries and teacher-librarians.

Key Priorities for Ontario's Libraries

1. Maintaining Sustainable, Predictable Funding for all Public and First Nations Libraries

- This year, public and First Nations libraries received a much-needed investment of \$17 million – a 50% increase – to annual base funding from the Province, the first increase to provincial operating funding in over 20 years.
- Beginning in January 2018, municipal councils and library boards across Ontario passed resolutions in support of this much needed funding.
- This investment will ensure that our libraries – in rural communities, small towns and cities alike – are sustainably funded.
- **Maintaining current annual base funding for public and First Nations libraries** will empower libraries to address immediate issues and support long-term planning to address the evolving needs of our communities.

2. Creating Ontario's Digital Public Library

- Ensuring that all Ontarians have equitable access to accurate, comprehensive online resources is more important than ever.
- Ontario is following in the footsteps of other provinces – Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia – in

DID YOU KNOW?

- Every year, 74% of Ontarians of all ages access programs and resources through their local public library.
- Every dollar invested in libraries generates over \$6 in local economic impact benefitting regular Ontarians.

recognizing that a provincially-managed digital library is the most cost-effective and efficient way to provide all Ontarians with access to a suite of high quality online resources, no matter where they live.

- Ontario's Digital Public Library will make digital library services such as e-books, audiobooks, digital databases and learning resources available for free through the over 300 public libraries across the province including those in rural, remote and Indigenous communities.
- It is critical to maintain the \$28 million that the Province has committed for the creation of Ontario's Digital Public Library.
- Stable, ongoing funding is necessary to ensure that Ontario's Digital Public Library is professionally managed and responsive to new technology and emerging resources.

3. Protecting and Ensuring Student Access to School Libraries and Teacher-Librarians

- Qualified teacher-librarians and properly resourced school libraries are a critical part of student success.
- However, flexible spending decisions made by many local school boards have seen about 50% of the money earmarked for teacher-librarians and libraries diverted to other purposes.
- Many school boards have eliminated teacher-librarians and libraries from their schools altogether.
- Mandating the allocation of existing funding will protect and ensure that all students have access to teacher-librarians and school libraries – and is equal to a critical injection of \$100 million in annual funding across Ontario without requiring a cent of new provincial spending.

Have any questions or want more information? We'd love to connect with you. Email Shelagh Paterson at spaterson@accessola.com and Stephen Abram at sabram@fopl.ca.