Memorandum

To: Library Board
From: Terri Watman
Date: March 22, 2018
Re: Increased Funding for Ontario Public Libraries

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Background:

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) have been actively lobbying Provincial Government officials regarding the reinstatement of funding for public and school libraries. There has not been an infusion of funding to public libraries in over 20 years; in fact, the net present value of Ontario’s investment in public libraries has decreased by over 60%, threatening the long term sustainability of libraries across Ontario. They have recommended three funding priorities that are essential for ensuring a modern, sustainable library sector in Ontario.

A. Provide sustainable, predictable funding for all public and First Nations libraries across Ontario by increasing annual base funding from $33 million to $50 million – an increase of $17 million in annual funding.
B. Dedicate $25 million in new, annual funding for the development and implementation of Ontario’s Digital Library, a suite of high quality databases and learning resources, available to all students and residents.
C. Mandate the use of funding allocated by the Ministry of Education for school libraries and teacher-librarians for its intended purpose. This mandate will inject an estimated $100 million in annual funding to school libraries across Ontario without requiring any new provincial funding, while ensuring that school libraries get their fair share.

OLA and FOPL are requesting support from Public Library Boards and Municipal Councils to educate Ministers, MPPs and staff about the importance of libraries for education, poverty reduction and community economic development.

Discussion:

On March 2, 2018, the Board Chairs and CEOs from Bradford West Gwillimbury, East Gwillimbury and Georgina Public Libraries met with MPP Julia Munro to emphasize the importance of libraries and build support and commitment to a modernized approach to library funding in Ontario. We shared stories of the impact of public libraries’ programs and services to our residents and highlighted how the OLA and FOPL budget ask will benefit our local communities. MPP Munro acknowledged that sustainable funding is a difficult commitment to achieve but she would bring the libraries’ concerns forward where possible in discussions with her colleagues.

Recommendation:
“That the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library Board approve the motion outlined below:

Whereas public libraries provide safe, inclusive, and vibrant community spaces where everyone is welcome to learn, work, connect, and have fun; and,

Whereas the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library is a community gathering place, providing access to knowledge, ideas and cultural events; and,

Whereas the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library continues to have a limited resource budget despite an increase in circulation of 4.5%, an increase in database uses of 42.5%, an increase in wifi usage of 18.3% and the addition of many technology help and discovery programs within existing budgets; and,

Whereas the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library continues to manage public resources with the utmost care and is committed to the sustainability of its services;

Therefore be it Resolved that the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library Board urges the Province of Ontario to recognize the contribution of local libraries within their communities and to cease the 20 year budget freeze to local libraries in acknowledgement of the services they offer to all residents; and,

Be it Further Resolved that the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library Board urges the Province of Ontario to reinstate adequate and appropriate funding for local libraries, increasing each year going forward in line with the consumer price index; and,

Be it Further Resolved that the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library Board urges the Province of Ontario to commit funds to a shared and efficient Ontario Digital Library in order to provide equitable online services to all Ontarians; and,

Be it Further Resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury; and,

Be it Finally Resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Minister of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, to the Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs, to the local MPP, to the Ontario Library Association, and to the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries."

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Watman, CEO

MOTION PASSED BY BWG PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MARCH 26, 2018