

20 YEAR FUNDING FREEZE FOR ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES ENDS

NEWS RELEASE

TORONTO, ON (March 28, 2018): The announcement this afternoon of the 2018 Ontario Budget included a major new sustainable investment of \$79 million over three years in Ontario's Public and First Nations Libraries and in the Digital Public Library. This investment marks the end of a more than two decade funding freeze for Ontario public libraries. This budget provides critically important and sustainable funding for public libraries and their communities throughout Ontario.

"Ontario's libraries are for everyone. This investment recognizes their significant contribution to learning, training, cultural vitality, and digital access for all Ontarians, regardless of where they live," states Kerry Badgley, president, Ontario Library Association (OLA) and board member, North Grenville Public Library.

Public and First Nations Libraries across Ontario rely on funding from both municipal governments and band councils and the Ontario Government for their operating funds. Provincial funding was cut in half in 1996, and the annual base funding from the province for Public and First Nations Libraries has been unchanged until now.

Leading up to this Budget Announcement, the Ontario Library Association (OLA) and Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) put forth [three funding recommendations](#) for ensuring a modern, sustainable library sector in Ontario. These recommendations were supported by dozens of municipal councils and library boards across the province.

We are thrilled that the government has listened to librarians, local elected representatives and the people of Ontario. The 2018 Ontario Budget increases annual base funding for Public and First Nations Libraries by \$17 million each year for the next three years. This budget also pledges \$28 million over the next three years to support the creation of the Digital Public Library.

The Digital Public Library will act as a centralized digital resource that will provide all Ontarians, including those living in rural, First Nations and remote communities, with digital content such as e-books, e-learning, music and audiobooks; research databases; special collections; and accessible and alternative format materials across a common web platform.

"The Digital Public Library ensures that no matter where you live you will be able to access the same world class digital information resources from your library," states Julia Merritt, Chair, Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and CEO Stratford Public Library.

Ontario's library sector looks forward to working with the provincial government in the implementation of the Digital Public Library.

We are also pleased to see an investment of an additional \$500 million over three years to

expand broadband connectivity in rural, First Nations and northern communities

Although the 2018 Ontario Budget does not address the important need to ensure that all schools in Ontario have a funded and resourced school library, we look forward to the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Education to address this important issue.

[Read the 2018 Ontario Budget](#)

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*The **Ontario Library Association (OLA)** is the oldest continually-operating non-profit library association in Canada, with over 5,000 members comprised of library staff and supporters from public, school, academic, and special libraries.*

*The **Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL)** represents all public library systems in Ontario, including 45 First Nations public libraries, in communities throughout the Province.*

Together, OLA & FOPL are committed to ensuring that libraries are able to continue to play a critical role in the social, education, cultural and economic success of our communities and schools.

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