



:. ontario library association

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Ontario Culture Strategy  
Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport  
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**Ontario Culture Strategy Team:**

**Ontario Library Association Response to the draft Culture Strategy.**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft Culture Strategy. We agree with the principles, goals and strategies as outlined in the draft, and have a number of specific recommendations to ensure that public libraries are key partners in supporting this strategy:

**Does the Vision for culture in Ontario and the Principles to guide government support for culture reflect what is important to you? Why or why not?**

Public libraries support this Vision because we are also committed to ensuring that all Ontarians have the opportunity for learning, expression, and personal growth. The Principles also speak to values that public libraries hold. Moreover, we believe public libraries are exemplary players in fostering innovation, inclusion, and collaboration, with a very high public value for a modest investment.

**Do you think that the three overarching goals will help to grow and strengthen the culture sector in Ontario? Why or why not?**

We believe these broad goals speak to the value of culture and the impact of cultural institutions like ours on all Ontarians.

**Do you have any feedback on the proposed initiatives in the document?**

We have feedback on:

**Goal 1: Help build strong community-based culture organizations:**

*“Work with government partners and culture stakeholders to maximize the use of public libraries and other culture facilities as community hubs, and explore opportunities to integrate arts and culture activities and spaces into schools and other community hubs”*

- OLA members include people who work in school and public libraries. In Ontario, 67% of public libraries have shared programs with schools (in larger communities this number is 90%). These collaborations include reading programs, author visits and other initiatives that support culture. There is an opportunity to create a stronger strategy with existing relationships to advance this action item. We support any actions that facilitate libraries as community hubs, and believe that libraries provide excellent

value for money.

- We support the Ontario Association of Architects (a partner in the OLA Library Building Awards program) in their request of government to improve support of architecture and design. The inclusion of architecture and design in the Culture Strategy will help to ensure that the government's goals of building a strong economy and vibrant communities, attracting tourists and investment, and contributing to job creation are met; and will be a clear signal to other jurisdictions that Ontario values the contributions of design industry. As public libraries undergo renovations or new builds, they become even stronger civic spaces that our communities are proud of.

*“Review and update provincial funding programs for public libraries to build the capacity of libraries serving rural and remote communities, improve digital services, and support leadership and innovation.”*

- Improving digital services: we strongly support this action. Without a provincial strategy to support equity of access to digital services for our smaller communities (particularly communities serving populations of 20,000 and under) we risk inequitable levels of digital and media literacy in our province – a key competency in supporting innovation. For the 2016 budget consultation, OLA and the Federation of Public Libraries (FOPL) with input from Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (OSAPAC) submitted a proposal to encourage purchasing of digital resources across the school and public libraries sectors to provide more seamless access to e-resources. The strategy could result in a 35% cost saving and supports equity, particularly crucial for students in smaller communities transitioning from high school to post secondary education.
- We support a funding program to that builds capacity and addresses any inequities in per-capita funding. We recommend that the funding be structured to ensure local communities (municipalities and counties) that may have an increase in provincial funding do not reduce their local contributions.

*“Work with First Nation public libraries to better understand their unique needs and identify how we can respond through improved supports.”*

- We welcome any improved supports to First Nation public libraries and recognize their unique potential to support community and cultural development in these challenged communities. Specifically we recommend:
  - An investment by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to fund a needs assessment, feasibility study and business plan for the First Nation libraries. This would include, for example, consultation with band councils, Aboriginal Affairs, and Chiefs of Ontario.
  - A revised granting and reporting structure that enables longer-term stability and planning for Public Libraries in First Nation Communities. This would include implementing a simplified process for reporting that takes into account limited time staff have and the challenges of broadband, connectivity and access to appropriate software that many smaller First Nation communities encounter.
  - A digital strategy supporting equity for Ontario's smaller communities (populations of 20,000 and under) that includes sustained support for broadband and e-

resources.

- Implementing a strategy for public libraries to partner with local Native Friendship Centres to build awareness and understanding of our First Nation communities.

And,

- OLA has implemented an Indigenous Libraries Task Group and welcomes any opportunity to work with the provincial government to support access to library services for First Nation people.


*“Collaborate on the continued implementation of the Ontario Volunteer Action Plan and promote the Partnership Grant Program, which helps build the capacity of the not-for-profit sector including cultural organizations.”*

We agree with the purpose of the Partnership Grant program and endorse the [Ontario Nonprofit Network vision](#) for evaluation (reporting and accountability when securing grants) as:

- Building a shared vision for evaluation in the nonprofit sector
- Building capacity among nonprofits, funders and others to negotiate evaluation plans
- Building capacity within nonprofit networks to share what is learned
- Building a culture within nonprofits that values critical reflection and sharing and not just measurement

We thank the ministry for the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy and appreciate that this initiative that will strengthen culture in Ontario.

Best Regards,



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