



:. ontario library association

January 15, 2018

The Honourable Michael Coteau
Minister of Children & Youth Services
Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism
56 Wellesley St W., 14th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2S3

RE: Ontario Middle Years Strategy - *Gearing Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario Middle Years Children Thrive.*

Dear Minister Coteau,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ontario Library Association's Child and Youth Services Committee to congratulate your Ministry on the release of the Ontario Middle Years Strategy in December 2017.

Founded in 1900, the Ontario Library Association (OLA) is the oldest continually operating non-profit library association in Canada. We represent more than 5,000 members, including Public and School libraries across the province. In 1995, Ontario Public Library Association (OPLA), a division of OLA, established the OPLA Child and Youth Services Committee. The Committee is the provincial vehicle through which children's and youth services in the public library may be analyzed, understood and proactively planned for.

Libraries are Ontario's farthest-reaching, most cost-effective resource for empowering positive change on provincial priorities, including supporting both children and their families across Ontario. Public Libraries offer a wide breadth of programming for children ages 6 to 12 in communities of all sizes. These include Maker programs, reading clubs, creative writing, STEM (science, technology, engineering, math), Arts & crafts, among many more. Participation in library programming supports children's love of learning, creativity, literacy skills and much more! You can learn more about the children's programming offered across Ontario Libraries in [OPLA's 2016 Children's Services Benchmark and Statistical Report](#). As children take part in programming, libraries can also support their families, providing an important access point for computers to work on school work, workshops on finding employment, and opportunities for connection with the wider community. Ontario's Public Libraries rely on funding both from municipal and provincial governments to make this important work possible.

Libraries in Ontario's schools likewise play a critical role in supporting children's development, and fostering their curiosity and love of learning. Libraries are a safe and welcoming space for children's learning and growth. Access to libraries and teacher-librarians has a demonstrable

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impact on the learning outcomes of students across Ontario. Teacher-Librarians can support students in developing their skills in critical literacy, research, and digital citizenship. Schools with trained library staff are more likely to see better reading outcomes on the Grade 3 and 6 EQAO assessments.

We were pleased to see in the ‘Ontario’s Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing’ the inclusion of percentage of children who like to read as a key metric in the Middle Years Profile of Wellbeing. We were alarmed, however, to see that currently only 47.1% of children like to read. This is a steep decline from 1997 when it was reported that 76% of children like to read. Research has shown that a child’s love of reading has a positive impact on their literacy scores, their success in science and math, as well as their social and civic engagement. This drop is closely aligned with the declining presence of teacher-librarians in Ontario schools over the same period.

You will have received last week OLA and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL)’s 2018 Pre-Budget Submission, outlining the need for modernized and sustainable funding for Ontario’s Libraries. As the Ministry of Children and Youth Services works towards implementing its Middle Years Strategy, it will be essential to collaborate with the Ministries of Education and Culture, Tourism and Sport to ensure that libraries, as a key collaborator, have the support they need to help children in their communities thrive.

We appreciate your leadership in developing this comprehensive strategy for supporting Middle Years children, and look forward to collaborating in making progress on the goals set out within it.

Sincerely,

Cameron Ray and Amanda Wilk
Co-Chairs 2017-18, OPLA Child and Youth Services Committee

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OPLA's Child and Youth Services Committee

Amanda Wilk - Burlington Public Library

Kelley England - King Township Public Library

Amy Kay - County of Lennox and Addington

Brooke Windsor - Richmond Hill Public Library

Ryan Eduardo Moniz - Markham Public Library

Cameron Ray - Toronto Public Library

Jane Venus - Ottawa Public Library

Jordan Graham – Woodstock Public Library

Kate Marczynski - Mississauga Library System

Sara Forsyth - Georgina Public Library

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