



# ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

## MAUREEN MCGRATH, PRESIDENT

# OSLA

**2020 OSLA Membership: 961**

2020 was an unprecedented time in the school library sector, and the work of OSLA Council. With schools physically closed for almost 4 of the 10 months and most School Library Learning Commons closed for 8 of the 10 months, as Educators, we had to re envision how we provide the many aspects of our job in a virtual and hybrid world.

The results of our Member Outreach Survey were invaluable in informing council as to how to help our members. We provided the virtual opportunity to connect in #ONLibChats through the summer and we worked hard to share, connect and advocate online (@OSLAcouncil). To offer professional support, council members actively ran webinars in their own communities as well as through the OLA Education Institute and in partnership with OTF. Current and past members of OSLA contributed to the ETFO Summer Academy, ECCO Camp 2020 and the 2020 Child & Youth EXPO: Virtual Conference. An incredible resource to our members through this year has been the *Teaching Librarian* magazine, which has also pivoted to virtual, led by editor Caroline Freibauer.

OSLA Council, with the amazing initiative and support of OLA, continues to advocate to the Ministry of Education to keep School Library Learning Commons in mind as they plan and allocate funding. We met virtually with Ministry representatives of both policy and curriculum last June, July and August to discuss the role of SLLC's professionals and the continued ask to designate funding given to school boards more specifically so that it translates into library budgets for resources both human and other. OSLA continues to take a stand on the importance of trained professionals in the SLLC and encourages our members to advocate with their unions. Council member Johanna Lawler has been at the forefront of this advocacy partnership and is an invaluable resource for those who would like to work with their union to do the same.

When we returned in September, a letter was sent to Minister of Education Stephen Lecce outlining the threat to the future of school libraries after the decision was made by numerous Ontario school boards to repurpose all school library staff and close access to school libraries as part of their fall re-opening plan. We also reached out by letter to Directors of School Boards in August and Trustees in December to remind them of the important role of the school library on student achievement and to urge them, as planning moves forward for

the 2021-2 school year, to protect funding for the school library program in their school boards.

In response to library closures, the *Save School Libraries Coalition* was created through the initiative of a dedicated and passionate group of Ontario publishers, educators and authors who recognize the impact the loss of school libraries will have on children. With the help of OSLA council they have initiated a social media campaign and outreach plan to the ministry, news organizations and parents.

This past year challenged us in many ways and reset our priorities moving forward. OSLA Council committed to anti-black racism work. We are reading, viewing and learning and are working on ways to put this learning into action. We are pleased to offer an initial session with Dr. Andrew B. Campbell for our members during Super Conference to support their journey in this work. We have a powerful and pivotal role as leaders of change in our schools; we must take on this responsibility with humility and passion.

We took on an exciting project last spring, initiated by Greg Harris of Lakehead University, to create a presentation for teacher candidates on the integral role of the School Library Professional. Thanks to Ruth Gretsinger and Shelley Merton for contributing their time and expertise to this work. Currently, the presentation is being given across Ontario Teacher's Colleges to plant the seed of the power of collaboration with their school library educators in our soon to be colleagues.

This year has certainly been full of challenges, and I give great thanks for the unending collaborative spirit, commitment, and support of the OSLA council. A special thank you to OSLA Super Conference planners Kate Johnson-McGregor and Dawn Telfer for their resiliency, hard work, and enthusiasm in building an amazing program in this unprecedented pivot to a virtual conference. I am honoured to have served as your President of OSLA for 2020 and look forward to the year ahead.