



# ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

## MAUREEN MCGRATH, PRESIDENT

# OSLA

**2021 OSLA Membership: 443**

2021 was another unprecedented time in the school library sector, and the work of OSLA Council. With elections on hold, our group agreed to hold their council roles for an extra year. This brought welcome continuity in uncertain times. The job however was less certain as school libraries are still in states of flux as we move from virtual to in-person learning and respond to the many restrictions and limitations that impact our work with students and educators. Your council worked to be responsive in these tumultuous times.

The feeling of disconnection was prevalent in our members as we worked in isolation either from home or our closed spaces. Social media can help to fill this gap and OSLA council tried to stay connected through our messages on @OSLAcouncil and through your sharing #schoollibraryjoy. It is always amazing to see the incredible work of our members! We provided the virtual opportunity to connect in #ONLibChats to discuss the work of dismantling structures of oppression in our library, long range planning in the School Library Learning Commons (SLLC) and professional learning in pandemic times. These were great opportunities to connect with a range of library professionals across the province. 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 Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF). Current and past members of OSLA contributed to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) Summer Institute, ECCO Camp 2021, and BIT 21. We also continue to represent our members on The Association of Library Consultants of Ontario (TALCO), OTF and the Indigenous Advisory Council. An incredible resource to our members through this year has been the *Teaching Librarian* magazine, which has continued in a virtual format, led by editors Caroline Freibauer and Kasey Whalley.

We continued to advocate to the Ministry of Education to keep School Library Learning Commons in mind as they plan and allocate funding. Good news arrived on May 4 when the Ministry of Education released its [2021-22 Grants for Student Needs \(GSN\)](#). Included in this year's GSN are new, enhanced reporting requirements for library staff funding:

- These reporting requirements are intended to provide the ministry with greater insight into how school boards are funding school libraries;
- They will apply to both the funding provided for library staffing through the Pupil Foundation Grant, as well as the enveloping provision of the Library Staff Allocation in the School Foundation Grant, which also remains in place.

- School boards that are not fully utilizing the funding provided for library staffing through both grants will be asked by the Ministry of Education to prepare and submit a multi-year plan highlighting their vision and next steps to address any underspending.

OLA is advocating on our behalf to ensure the government strengthens these allocations by establishing a clear reporting system by boards on monies spent.

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. The letters we sent 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 elicited a good response. We met with many boards to discuss their school library learning commons programs, and promoted OLA and OSLA services.

The Save School Libraries Coalition created through the initiative of a dedicated and passionate group of Canadian publishers, educators and authors who recognize the impact the loss of school libraries will have on children continues its work. With the help of OSLA council they have initiated a social media campaign and outreach plan to the ministry, news organizations and parents.

OSLA Council committed to anti-Black racism work which began with our commitment to learning and the initial session with Dr. Andrew B. Campbell brought to you at Super Conference last year. We hosted two more sessions for our members during the year and have plans to continue learning from him this year. We have a powerful and pivotal role as leaders of change in our schools; we must take on this responsibility with humility and passion.

This year has certainly been full of challenges, and I give great thanks for the unending collaborative spirit, commitment and support of OSLA council. A special thank you OSLA Super Conference planners Kate Johnson-McGregor and Dawn Telfer for their resiliency, hard work, and enthusiasm in building an amazing program for year two of a virtual conference. I am honoured to have served as your president of OSLA for 2021, wholeheartedly welcome Beth into the role of president, and will continue to serve as past president in the year to come.