

BACKGROUND: HOW LIBRARIES ARE FUNDED

School Libraries

- Municipal Jurisdiction: School Trustees (elected)²
- Provincial Jurisdiction: Ministry of Education

The Ontario Ministry of Education administers the publicly funded elementary and secondary education system in Ontario through the Core Education Funding (CEF) model. School boards receive funding primarily through provincial grants, which are informed by a range of factors such as student enrolment, demographics, and local needs. While education funding was historically supplemented by local property taxes, the province now plays the central role in determining overall funding allocations.

Under the current CEF model, funding is no longer allocated using specific staffing benchmarks for teacher-librarians. Instead, funding is provided to school boards in broader categories, offering flexibility in how resources are distributed at the local level. This means that decisions about staffing, including teacher-librarians and library programming, are made by school boards based on their priorities.

As a result, there is no longer protected or dedicated funding for school libraries within the provincial model, and boards are not required to report specifically on library spending. This increased flexibility places greater responsibility on school boards and senior administration to prioritize and support school library programs within their overall budget decisions.

To learn more and support advocacy efforts, visit the [Save Our School Libraries](#) campaign.

Public Libraries

- Municipal: Public Library Board Directors (appointed and includes some municipal councillors who are elected)
- Provincial: Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming administers the Public Libraries Act and statutory grants under the Act, as well as developing provincial policies for public libraries. Municipal

Councils are responsible for appointing public library boards, and provide most of the funding for libraries (municipal tax dollars).

A funding formula consists of a mix of provincial and municipal funding based on population sizes.

Municipal Councils are responsible for determining the composition of library boards and for appointing library board trustees immediately following municipal elections and when vacancies occur. Municipal Council can appoint its own members to the public library board, up to one less than 50% of the total number of library board members. The majority of a library board must be comprised of citizens appointed from the community.

² In the current legislative context, the Ministry of Education has expanded its authority to intervene in school board governance, including [placing boards under supervision](#) or otherwise [limiting the role of trustees](#). As a result, decision-making authority may rest with a provincially appointed supervisor, and trustees may no longer be accessible or appropriate contacts for advocacy at the local level. If this is the case, school library professionals may choose to engage with stakeholders beyond school board trustees, including those at the provincial-level (e.g., appointed supervisor).

First Nation Public Libraries

- Band Councils
- Provincial: Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming
- Federal: Education funds

The traditional source of tax revenue for municipal public libraries does not exist for public libraries in First Nation communities.

Instead, provincial funding for these libraries is administered by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming through the Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG) and the First Nation Salary Supplement Grant (FNSS). In recent years, the Province has committed new and enhanced investments—including an [additional \\$1.25 million annually](#)—to help stabilize and strengthen FNPLs. These funds provide on average \$35,000/year to each of these existing libraries.

Federal funding for First Nations libraries is typically drawn from broader on-reserve education allocations, which have historically been lower than off-reserve funding levels. As a result, there are limited resources available to establish and sustain library services. Band Councils and local leadership therefore play a critical role in supporting operations, often covering essential costs such as facilities, utilities, connectivity, and other core services.

Academic Libraries

- Provincial: Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security

The Minister of Education and the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES) are responsible for the administration of laws relating to education and skills training. MCURES is responsible for distributing funds allocated by the provincial legislature to colleges and universities. Colleges and universities are also fee-based. The funding of academic libraries is at the discretion of the academic institution.

Health Libraries

- Provincial: Ministry of Health

Most health libraries in Ontario are embedded within hospitals, public health units, research institutes, or academic institutions, and do not receive dedicated provincial library funding. Instead, they are funded through the operating budgets of their parent organizations, primarily hospitals and health agencies, which are themselves funded by the province through the Ministry of Health. As a result, health library funding is often discretionary and tied to broader institutional priorities. In some cases, shared service models—such as partnerships coordinated through Public Health Ontario—help extend access to library services across multiple organizations, improving cost-efficiency and access to evidence-based resources.