



Huntsville Public Library

November 11, 2016

The Honorable Eleanor McMahon,
Minister Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
9th Floor, Hearst Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2E1

Dear Minister McMahon,

On behalf of the Huntsville Public Library (HPL) Board I am writing to express their concerns about the decision to drastically reduce broadband funding for public libraries through the Connectivity Fund which is administered by the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS).

As noted in the recent correspondence you received from the Ontario Library Association (OLA) (copy attached), this funding is critical to libraries like the Huntsville Public Library in order to offset the high cost of broadband access in Canada.

The Huntsville Public Library Board would like to reiterate the concerns raised by the OLA. We are very concerned about the negative service impacts this cut will have in the community. Huntsville is in the heartland of Muskoka and serves a large rural population whose access to reliable connectivity is limited. Many residents rely on the access provided by the Library to pursue education, employment, benefit, and health matters. The area is also home to many seasonal visitors who rely on the internet connectivity at the Library to remain in contact with family.

In 2016 Huntsville Public Library, which serves a population of 19,056, narrowly meets the criteria for funding. The 2016 Census population statistics may see the population increase to 20,000 or more, and the impact will be the pulling of funding to HPL. The funds pulled will impact collection development, facilities management, and other areas.

We can appreciate the need to address the financial challenges faced by the Government of Ontario. We ask that the Ministry recognize that by achieving these financial objectives through cuts to local Boards and municipalities that have limited tools available to address such cuts could have significant and negative consequences to the economic, social, and cultural health of our community.

Sincerely,

Sue Dixon, Chair
Huntsville Public Library Board