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Date: April 24, 2024

Resolution 2024-12: Provincial Libraries Operating Grant

Background:

Libraries serve a very important role in enhancing quality of life for small communities in Northwest Ontario.

WHEREAS public libraries are Ontario's farthest-reaching, most cost-effective public resource; and

WHEREAS millions of Ontarians rely on local public libraries in their communities to learn, to connect to community and government services, and to find or train for a job; and

WHEREAS public libraries provide thousands of no-cost and low-cost programs, activities, and supports for young children, families, and seniors in the community; and

WHEREAS public libraries provide equitable, reliable access to broadband internet in underserved areas; and

WHEREAS public libraries offer maker spaces and computer coding labs to help children learn and help adults develop modern job skills; and

WHEREAS public libraries are the most basic of democratic institutions providing free and accurate information to everyone; and

WHEREAS public libraries find themselves on the front lines of many of the most critical challenges facing our communities, including homelessness, addiction and mental health, newcomer integration, re-skilling in a changing economy, and overcoming the digital divide; and

WHEREAS more than 90 percent of public library funding is provided by the local municipal government; and

WHEREAS the combined impact of the pandemic, the pressure of inflation on public library and municipal budgets, and growing social and economic challenges in communities across the province have brought public libraries to a critical point; and

WHEREAS public libraries in Ontario have received no increase in provincial funding (the Provincial Libraries Operating Grant, or PLOG) in more than 25 years, during which time the value of the province's investment in public libraries has decreased by more than 60 percent.

Recommendation:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association supports the request by the Ontario Library Association and the Federation of Ontario Public

Libraries for an increase to the PLOG of an additional \$25 million annually, on top of the existing \$21 million grant, to restore the PLOG to a present-day value, addressing the impact of inflation, rising costs of living, and other pressures accumulated over more than 25 years.

Moved By: Lisa Teeple, Councillor of Emo

Seconded By: Alex Crane, Councillor of O'Connor

CARRIED



President