

December 22, 2010

To: The Honourable Michael Chan, Minister, Tourism and Culture
Laura Albanese, MPP, York South-Weston and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Culture
Toronto Area MPPs

Re: Provincial Funding Proposal of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries

I am writing to you to express the Toronto Public Library Board's endorsement of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) funding proposal for increasing provincial operating grants to public libraries which was presented to Ministry officials on December 15, 2010. The proposed funding model uses a universal per capita rate of \$2.80 and a fixed supplement for northern and rural libraries of \$4,500 (\$9,000 if both northern and rural). The Board is in full support of FOPL's proposal.

In the case of Toronto Public Library, this would mean an increase in our provincial operating grant from \$4,059,355 to \$7,009,187. This increase would allow the Library to improve services to our community. Specifically, the extra \$2,949,832 could be used to support increased library open hours, targeted collections and improved access to technology.

In January 2006, the Library Board adopted a vision for open hours in response to public demand. The *Doors Wide Open* plan would expand open hours in library branches throughout the city. The goal is to improve access to library services by increasing branch open hours across the City by 25%.

Extending open hours is very desirable as it responds to community needs, e.g. more access to computers, collections and quiet study space. It supports community safety by offering a welcoming community space where people can connect. Reading and achievement at school are promoted for children and youth. Newcomers are integrated into Canadian life. It contributes to economic development by meeting the information needs of job seekers and small business owners. Everyone is offered opportunities to enjoy the city's cultural and literary life. Overall, expanding open hours maximizes the investment in library branches in neighbourhoods across the city by making them more accessible to all.

\$2.9 million could increase open hours on Sundays at the current 27 locations, add 24 new Sunday locations and extend Sunday service year-round supporting the *Doors Wide Open* goal of increased access to library services.

Library Board

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Library collections provide universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas that engage residents in the democratic, cultural, educational and economic life in Toronto.

Customers expect collections to be available in a variety of formats – books, large print books, audio books, magazines, newspapers, CDs, DVDs – and languages, including an ever-increasing demand for e-collections such as e-books and e-audiobooks. **\$2.9 million** for collections in a variety of formats would allow the Library to add 170,520 new items for preschoolers, children and teens to support early literacy and success in school.

Public libraries have embraced the 21st century with changes in the way technology is used. The Library fulfills a critical role in addressing the digital divide and by ensuring that access to up-to-date technology and e-resources are available to all. Access to technology, the Internet and e-resources is critical to full participation in social, economic and community life.

\$2.9 million could support the annual replacement of 1,400 heavily used public computers; and the associated bandwidth that supports Internet connectivity.

An increase to our provincial operating grant is long overdue. The grant has not been adjusted for inflation or population growth since it was cut by 40% in 1996-1997. The inadequacy of the existing grant has limited our ability to meet the needs of the new generation of users with fundamentally different information seeking habits. FOPL has identified an equitable formula that provides a concrete road map for realizing much needed funding improvements.

Thank you for taking seriously the funding model proposed by the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries. The incremental funding calculated for Toronto Public Library would have a positive impact on library service for the residents of our community.

Sincerely,

Matthew Church
Chair, Toronto Public Library Board

cc: Donna Ratchford, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Culture Division, Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Suzanne Rowe Knight, Acting Director, Culture and Strategic Policy Branch, Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Rajesh Khetarpal, Sr. Policy Advisor, Office of Hon. Michael Chan, Minister of Tourism and Culture

David Allen, CEO, Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, c/o North York Central Library,