



To: Toronto Public Library Board – September 26, 2005

From: City Librarian

Subject: **Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Update**

Purpose:

To provide the Toronto Public Library Board with an update on the activities of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) since its inception in February 2005 and with particular reference to its activities related to a recently announced reduction in Ministry of Culture funding to support library services in Ontario.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

The current report has no financial implications for or impacts on the Toronto Public Library. The Board pays an annual membership fee of \$15,000 based on the Federation's tiered fee structure by population served.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board receive the *Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Update* for information.

Background:

The Federation is a unique organization of public and first nation libraries in the province of Ontario in that it is owned and directed by libraries for the benefit of library users. The Federation's mandate is to enhance and improve public library services by creating a new capacity for change and a framework for collaborative action. Its four strategic priorities are:

- advocacy: for higher levels of funding from all levels of government; to present a strong voice in government initiatives of importance to libraries; to raise awareness of the important role libraries play in community development; and to negotiate with potential partners in the public and private sectors to advance the interests of public libraries
- research: to make use of existing research and commission new research into issues relevant to libraries and their services
- marketing: to raise awareness of the important roles public libraries play in their communities in order to engender public support for libraries

- consortia purchasing: to facilitate the availability of electronic information resources and services in all Ontario communities.

Toronto Public Library has four seats on the 22-member Governing Board and is currently represented at the trustee level by Gillian Mason and Matthew Church and at the staff level by Josephine Bryant and Linda Mackenzie.

Comments:

Membership:

After some fifteen years of discussion and planning, the FOPL was founded at an inaugural meeting on February 3, 2005. Of the approximate 312 public and first nation libraries in the province, 159 libraries joined the Federation in its inaugural year, exceeding the year one target membership of 125. Members are broadly representative of size and geographical distribution of libraries in the province. To date, three library organizations have joined the Federation as Associate members. Membership fees have provided the Federation with operating revenue of \$180,000 in 2005.

Operations:

As with any new organization, there are many necessary administrative actions required in the early days to establish roles and operations. Considerable progress has been made to date:

- The full Board met for a workshop and meeting in Toronto in May to create a shared understanding of FOPL's role and to agree on strategic directions for its first year of operations. Several telephone conference meetings have taken place since.
- A bylaw has been written, reviewed by legal counsel and adopted.
- A part-time Interim Executive Director has been hired to advance the Federation's agenda for 2005 and an office established.
- Caucus membership lists were created and listservs for electronic interactive member communication have been created and implemented for the full membership, the Board and each of the seven individual caucuses.
- FOPL applied for and received incorporation under the Ontario Corporations Act as a non-profit corporation with objects and powers that are charitable in nature.
- Board representatives met with the Minister of Culture in September to begin a dialogue and working partnership for the further development of library services in the province. .

Research:

In 2000, as part of the province-wide strategic planning that ultimately led to the creation of the Federation, a telephone survey of more than 1,000 Ontario residents was undertaken to ascertain public views on library service and user and potential user needs. The Federation is currently planning to issue a Request for Information to update and replicate this survey to provide library

boards with current research to support local planning and service development. Valuable statistical comparisons can be gained by replication that will begin to build longitudinal data.

Advocacy:

The need for an effective organization to advocate on behalf of all public libraries in the province was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the FOPL. Unfortunately, the Federation was faced with responding to a funding issue in its infancy. In June 2005, as a result of the tabling of the 2005-06 Ministry Estimates in the Ontario Legislature, the Ministry of Culture announced budget reductions of \$1.2 million to library sector support. Fortunately, public library operating grants were not affected and remain at the previous year's level of \$18.7 million province-wide.

In 2005, TPL received an operating grant of \$4.1 million and a special conditional grant of \$1.4 million to support the Virtual Reference Library.

The Ministry of Culture announced funding reductions in three areas:

- **Ontario Library Service (North and South) annual budgets reduced by \$700,000 to \$3,900,000**

The Ontario Library Service – North (OLS-N) and Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) are agencies of the Ministry of Culture. On behalf of the ministry, they provide a wide range of support services to public libraries throughout northern and southern Ontario, excluding Toronto. Their mandate is to deliver programs and services by increasing co-operation and co-ordination among public library boards and other information providers, and to promote the provision of library services to the public by assisting public library boards with services and programs that reflect their needs, including consulting, training and development services. These services are used primarily by small and medium-sized libraries.

TPL does not use the services of SOLS other than for its participation in interlibrary loan and the use of the supporting courier service to move loans between libraries in Ontario.

- **Library Connectivity grant funding reduced by \$340,000 to \$660,000**

Since 1999, the Ministry of Culture has provided \$1,000,000 annually in support of improved public library Internet connectivity in recognition that public access to the Internet is a critical service for public libraries and that increased bandwidth is essential to libraries' ability to provide services that their communities need and demand. The Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) administers the funding under the guidance of a Steering Committee from the public library community. Expenditures target increasing public library bandwidth so that all public libraries have a minimum of 56K Internet access.

TPL has not received funding from this program in the past.

- **Library Strategic Development Fund reduced by \$160,000 to \$226,700.**

This program is a mechanism through which the public library community can both achieve its goals to better serve users and support key provincial government priorities. New technical support services for the public library sector, research initiatives, increased capacity

to address emerging issues, innovative projects to improve access to the public library system, new standards and guidelines, partnerships for new products or services, and digital collections and services are examples of projects that can be considered for funding.

Since 2000, TPL has applied for six and received four LSDF grants ranging from \$20,000 to \$40,000 for digital projects.

SOLS announced a budget reduction strategy that included staff reduced work-weeks over the summer and staff lay-off, reduced consulting services for libraries and reduction to the interlibrary loan and delivery service. In response to the budget reduction, the Federation mounted a survey on its website seeking member input into how the reductions to the Ontario Library Service could be implemented with the least negative impact on library users across the province. The results identified clear consensus from all types of libraries on the top three priorities they wished to see protected from service reductions: interlibrary loan, courier and training. These priorities were in marked contrast with the service reductions that had been announced by SOLS. The survey findings formed the basis of a letter to the Minister of Culture (Attachment 1) setting out the public library community's desire to see interlibrary loan and its supporting courier service protected from budget reductions at SOLS. A press release on the survey findings is also attached (Attachment 2) along with the Minister of Culture's reply (Attachment 3). The library community priorities were also underscored in the meeting of FOPL Board representatives with the Minister of Culture in September. The FOPL Board has also written to the SOLS Board asking the latter to reconsider its budget reduction strategies to protect the services most valued by library users.

In a second advocacy initiative and in cooperation with the Ontario Library Service North and the Ontario Library Association, the Federation staffed a booth at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario annual conference in August to communicate the role of the Federation and to advocate on behalf of public libraries to municipal Councillors from across the province.

Conclusion:

In the space of six months and with limited staff resources, the Federation has made progress in organization, structure, administration and communication vehicles that will form a solid basis on which to build. On the advocacy brief, the Federation's ability, for the first time, to quickly gather input on which to base recommendations for informed advice to the Minister of Culture regarding library service funding priorities was a very timely and powerful indication of the potential for the Federation to become an increasingly strong and effective united voice for public library service in the province.

Contact:

Linda Mackenzie; Director, Research and Reference Libraries; Tel: 416-393-7133;
Fax: 416-393-7083; E-mail: lmackenzie@torontopubliclibrary.ca

Josephine Bryant
City Librarian

List of Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Letter to The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Culture, dated July 12, 2005, from Jane Horrocks, Chair, Federation of Ontario Public Libraries.
- Attachment 2: Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, Press Release "Public Library Boards Send Message to Ministry of Culture".
- Attachment 3: Letter to Jane Horrocks, Chair, Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, dated July 22, 2005 from The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Culture