

To: Toronto Public Library Board – November 15, 2004

From: City Librarian

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

Purpose:

To place before the Toronto Public Library Board the Strategic Directions Council's request to the Board to become a founding member of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries in the context of the Strategic Directions Council response to the questions and issues that the Board has identified.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

The Toronto Public Library Board's proposed membership fee for the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) in 2005 is \$15,000.00, and can be accommodated in the 2004 operating budget.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

- (1) become a founding member of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries at the cost of \$15,000.00 for 2005; and
- (2) communicate its membership decision to the Chair of the Strategic Directions Council.

Background:

Since 2000, the Board has received reports on the proposed Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and the strategic planning activities that led to its ultimate development. In recent months, these have included a staff report on the *Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Business Plan* and a presentation on the Strategic Directions Council's (SDC) *Spring 2004 Report to the Library Community* from SDC members.

At its meeting on September 20, 2004, the Board received the Strategic Directions Council's call for Federation membership that was sent to all public library boards in the province. The Board also viewed a video presentation prepared by the Strategic Directions Council that spoke to the need for the Federation, its history, mandate, governance and benefits. Supporting documentation from the membership package is attached to this report (Attachment 1). At the

September meeting, the Board identified a number of concerns and questions about the Federation that required additional information from the Strategic Directions Council in order for the Board to be able to assess potential membership. A decision on membership was deferred and a Board Working Group of Meyer Brownstone, Mizan Ibrahim and Gillian Mason was struck to prepare a letter to the Strategic Directions Council identifying the Board's concerns and requesting a response from that body. The draft communication was circulated to all Board members prior to its being sent to the Strategic Directions Council (Attachment 2).

As of November 4, 2004, in response to the membership call, 104 library boards have committed to membership in 2005; 13 boards have advised they will not become members in 2005. Additional Boards will be considering membership in November and December. Members represent libraries of all sizes and regions of the province. The member numbers and fees generated make the Federation a viable organization for 2005. The Strategic Directions Council, as a transition body to the Federation, is continuing the necessary work to draft interim bylaws, incorporate the Federation, etc. in order that members will be able to hold an Annual General Meeting early in the new year and elect a Board of Directors.

Comments:

A representative of the Strategic Directions Council will be in attendance at the Board meeting to respond to the Board's concerns and questions about the Federation.

A ten-year highly consultative process and many thousands of volunteer hours have brought the library community to the point of realizing an organization that has the potential to strengthen Ontario public libraries both collectively and singularly.

In the Federation membership information package, SDC has set out the major membership benefits that individual Library Boards may reasonably expect. These include:

- a knowledgeable, credible, consistent voice to advance the interests of libraries with Government;
- a radar-like capability to evaluate trends and monitor important developments
- an ability to advocate public library participation in new federal government initiatives;
- realization of cost-savings through consortium purchasing;
- recruitment of interested and talented people outside the library community to become advocates for public libraries;
- the recruitment of new funding from non-traditional sources like corporations and foundations;
- improved research and province-wide marketing initiatives; and
- new connections with AMO and better relations with constituent municipalities.

Weighed against these potential benefits of a Federation are the questions and concerns that Board members have voiced. With the exception of the membership fee structure, the Federation proposal has not changed substantially from the Business Plan launched at the Ontario Library Superconference in January 2004. The existing Federation proposal attempts to provide enough detail on structure and areas of priority focus for Boards to be able to decide on membership and

constitute the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries early in 2005. After that it would be the responsibility of founding members to shape and detail the organization, its activities and relationships in a manner that best meets member library needs.

Conclusion:

The Board has heard from the Strategic Directions Council that for the Federation to succeed as a voice for libraries province-wide, it is important that the Toronto Public Library Board be a member. The \$15,000.00 annual membership fee can be accommodated in the 2004 operating budget.

The Strategic Directions Council believes that investment in the Federation will serve to both strengthen libraries collectively and at the individual member library level. Toronto Public Library may accrue some benefit in each of the Federation's four areas of focus: advocacy, research, marketing and consortia purchasing. With TPL's deep resources and specialized expertise, it may not experience the same degree of direct benefit from Federation research and marketing initiatives, for example, as would be the case for smaller libraries. However, it is in the area of heightened and more effective advocacy and improved access to government funding that TPL would reap the greatest benefit of Federation membership. Participation in a province-wide organization of public libraries supports TPL's unique legislated role to provide library service to the entire province, a role that is supported by annual funding from the Government of Ontario. As a member, and with four seats on the Federation Board of Directors, TPL would have a strong voice in the ongoing development of the Federation and the identification of its future structure and priorities.

It is therefore recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board become a founding member of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and communicate this decision to the Chair of the Strategic Directions Council. Once the City of Toronto Council has finalized the appointment of citizen representatives to the Library Board, the Board could, in turn, name its two members to the Federation Board of Directors.

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List of Attachments:

Attachment 1 is unavailable electronically. Paper copies will be available at the meeting or can be arranged for by contacting Nancy Marshall at nmarshall@tpl.toronto.on.ca

Attachment 2: Letter to Gay Kozak Selby, Chair Strategic Directions Council from Gillian Mason, November 1, 2004