



November 1, 2004

Gay Kozak Selby, Chair  
Strategic Directions Council  
c/o County of Brant Public Library  
12 William Street  
Paris, Ontario N3L 1K7

Dear Ms. Kozak Selby:

The Toronto Public Library Board is committed to the development and delivery of high calibre library services that meet the needs of its community and in so doing contribute to the strength of the City of Toronto. However, the Board also recognizes that there is a distinct absence of the library voice in the public discourse on the future of our cities, our province and our country. The Board has therefore followed with interest the development of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, an emerging organization that has the potential to strengthen library service across the province for library users in every community however large or small.

In its review of and discussions about the Federation to date, Board members have identified a number of concerns and questions about the organization that has been developed by the Strategic Directions Council (SDC). In order to assess fairly the Toronto Public Library Board becoming a founding member of the Federation, it is essential that these questions, as set out below, be answered. We are therefore seeking your assistance as Chair of the Strategic Directions Council in this regard.

#### 1. Alternative Options

The Strategic Directions Council with its own corporate status has a fairly lengthy history of addressing ways of improving library service in Ontario through cooperative approaches. Yet, the SDC has presented library boards in Ontario with a single future option, the federation of Ontario Public Libraries, as an organization to build capacity in the public library community. Was positive consideration given to, or is SDC prepared to consider other options such as the continuation of the Ontario Library Boards' Association with significant modifications related to representation, staff support and budget, for example, with perhaps the continuation of the Strategic Directions Council as a redefined Council with system-wide responsibilities as determined by the members?

### Library Board

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## 2. Governance/Federation Board of Directors

There are concerns about the proposed governance structure that reflects both library trustees and administrators on a twenty-two member governing Board. Was consideration given to Chief Executive Officers participating on the Board with advisory and implementation roles, but without voting responsibility and accountability?

The proposed Board structure does not reflect the legislative control of libraries by trustees as set out in the Public Libraries Act. Within the existing proposal, what assurances can this Board have that the fundamental tenet of trustee governance will not be undermined through the Federation and its structures? Will there be mechanisms within the Federation, such as a separate trustees' caucus perhaps, that will ensure that trustees continue to have a forum for ongoing development and discussion of common interests?

In the supporting material on Governance Structure provided by SDC there is reference to member library boards naming their Chair (or designate) and CEO (or designate) as representatives to the Federation. But the form with a suggested resolution on membership calls for the Chair and CEO to be named. Can you clarify for us the provisions for naming designates for the Chair and CEO? When a caucus elects Chairs and CEOs (or their delegates) to the Board, are the Chair and CEO representatives elected as pairs from the same Board or can they be elected individually from different Boards as chosen by the caucus members?

## 3. Library Staff and Union Representation

The Federation will undoubtedly have a profound impact on the provision of library service in Ontario. It will therefore have significant implications for library workers across the province. To date, unionized library staff have had a representative voice on the Strategic Directions Council through the C.U.P.E. Library Workers Committee's seat on that Council. How can this potentially constructive and representative voice for a large constituency in the library community, one that is not really represented by trustees or administrators, participate fully and directly in the Federation?

## 4. Caucus Structure

In the material that the Board has seen to date, the role of the caucuses is poorly defined other than for electoral purposes. Geography and the limited resource base of libraries mitigate against many actively participating in meeting and discussion forums that are so beneficial to the development of library services. If the Federation is to be truly member driven, more work must be done on how far-flung Federation members are to participate effectively and gain full benefit of Federation membership. What does the Strategic Directions Council propose to ensure that small, rural, northern and First Nations Libraries, for example, can participate rather than just be represented? How will the Federation, for example, ensure the funding necessary to ensure that all members will be able to actively participate in the work of the Federation whether annual meetings, work groups or discussion forums?

## 5. Federation Roles

One of the most critical roles for library boards across the province is advocacy for library services, an activity performed by local boards on an on-going basis in each of their communities. The value of strong and effective advocacy initiatives at the provincial and federal government levels is recognized and would clearly augment the very important advocacy undertaken at the municipal level. In seeking to establish a strong clear voice for public library service, how would the Federation ensure that local and provincial advocacy initiatives are conducted in harmonious and complementary, rather than contradictory, fashion? What level of advocacy autonomy (of function) is envisaged at these various levels with their differing advocacy issues?

## 6. Federation Budget and Fee Structure

The Board recognizes that some categories of Federation membership fees have been reduced from the original proposal in order to make membership more equitable and accessible for Library Boards. As a result, the first year operating budget of the Federation has been reduced. Can the Federation realistically achieve the deliverables and benefits it ascribes to Federation membership with this reduced operating budget? What optional fee structures were considered and rejected and on what grounds?

The annual budget proposed for the Federation relies heavily on a significant commitment of in-kind resources. However, no details have been provided on the nature, source and commitment for these in-kind contributions to assist boards with assessing all of the ramifications of Federation membership. Can you provide this Board with information about the nature and volume of in-kind resources that members will be expected to contribute in addition to their annual membership fees?

## 7. Performance and Benchmarks

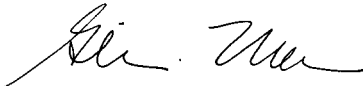
Federation members will be called upon to pay significant amounts annually in membership fees at a time when taking on any additional financial commitment will be a challenge. In addition, there is an expectation of some degree of in-kind contribution. However, SDC has provided little information on the specifics of Federation deliverables and performance measurement. How will the Federation determine and communicate success on those deliverables identified in annual work plans?

## 8. Federation Viability

Does the Strategic Directions Council have a threshold for the number of members and resulting budget necessary to establish the Federation in January of next year? If the Federation were not to be constituted in 2005, what becomes of the membership fees that have been paid?

The need for greater recognition and financial support for the very important roles that libraries play in their communities is clear. With its focus on advocacy, research, marketing, and maximizing purchasing power, the Federation has the potential to advance libraries in significant ways for the benefit of all. The Toronto Public Library Board recognizes the important leadership role it can play in the Ontario library community and in organizations like the Federation that are based on shared objectives in support of library services. The information you are able to provide in response to our questions will be critical to the Board's deliberations on Federation membership.

Yours truly;

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gillian Mason". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

Gillian Mason, Chair  
Toronto Public Library Board