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To: Toronto Public Library Board – March 29, 2004
From: City Librarian
Subject: **Ontario Library Association Block Discount Membership**

Purpose:

To establish an Ontario Library Association (OLA) block discount membership program for employees and members of the Toronto Public Library Board.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

The cost of the membership subsidy is estimated to be between \$1,000 and \$1,500, and can be accommodated within the Library's training and development budget. The additional five percent subsidy is estimated to be between \$1,000 and \$1,500, and will be funded by the Centennial Trust fund.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Toronto Public Library Board approve the Library's pilot participation in the Ontario Library Association's block membership program; and
- (2) a supplement of five percent from the Library's training budget and a further five percent supplement from the Centennial Trust Fund be added to the Ontario Library Association's discount of thirty percent to provide a combined membership discount of forty percent.

Background:

Both the Library's strategic plan and succession planning report point to the importance of providing professional development opportunities for employees. Providing discounted membership fees to professional associations is one means of contributing to employees' development.

The Ontario Library Association is Canada's oldest and largest library association and provides members with educational, networking, political action and information-sharing opportunities.

Over the past four years, OLA has entered into block membership programs with a number of school boards involving Toronto, Halton Peel and Waterloo Region Districts. The OLA has a number of different discount membership arrangements in place with the school boards and these vary depending on the total number of memberships the organizations provide. In the school systems, the representative teachers' unions have contributed funding to further enhance the OLA discount.

The block discount membership program was also discussed by the Ontario Library Boards' Association, one of the divisions of OLA, and Board Member Meyer Brownstone expressed an interest in the Toronto Public Library pursuing this opportunity.

Comments:

The Library recently approached OLA to discuss providing discounted block memberships for Library staff. Toronto Public Library would be the first public library system to enter into a block membership arrangement with OLA. The OLA's primary goals for providing the discount block membership program are to grow their membership and encourage involvement in their professional association. The program is not intended to increase revenues for OLA, although, they have stated that at a minimum it needs to be revenue neutral. It is estimated that OLA would need to attract 65 new TPL members in order to achieve revenue neutrality.

There are currently 169 TPL Union employees, managers and board members who have OLA memberships. Discounted membership rates will be available and promoted to all TPL staff.

Based on TPL's potential growth in membership numbers, OLA anticipates being able to provide Library employees with a thirty percent discount off regular membership fees. Presently, fees are paid on a sliding scale from a maximum of \$100 to a minimum of \$40 with rates geared to earnings. The Toronto Civic Employees Union (TCEU), Local 416 has agreed to a proposal to use money from a Toronto Public Library joint trust fund, the Centennial Grant Trust Fund, to match the Library's five percent supplement making a forty percent discount off members' fees available. The TCEU's agreement is conditional upon a paid OLA Super Conference registration being provided to a representative of the Union's choice. The Centennial Grant Trust Fund will be used to provide an additional discount until the Fund has been exhausted. There is currently \$38,000 available in this fund.

Receiving a block membership discount is dependent on the Library assuming responsibility for the several related administrative functions including canvassing new members, administering membership renewals, distributing block membership information packages and collecting payment from individual Library employees for bulk shipment to OLA.

An initial membership registration drive is proposed from September to October 2004. This timeframe will allow TPL and its' OLA employee members to take advantage of OLA's Early Bird conference rate available until the end of November. OLA's Super Conference is Canada's largest library event and offers a significant opportunity for professional development. The full OLA conference cost is \$205.00 for individual members. In addition to the discounted

membership fees, block members receive a preferred conference rate at half the cost of the full conference rate.

TPL will designate OLA “champions” to assist with recruitment. In OLA’s experience, new members are frequently attracted by endorsements from existing members. TPL employees who are already key OLA members will be invited to provide testimonials about the benefits of OLA membership at meetings or in promotional materials.

Conclusion:

The OLA provides many opportunities to become involved in committees and to participate in special projects. These experiences give employees an increased understanding and exposure to a wide range of library issues and how they may impact both the profession and TPL.

As the largest circulating library in North America, TPL needs to ensure its employees are involved in the work of the OLA. The Library shares an interest in keeping professional library associations vital and strong, in that these organizations play a key role in representing and furthering issues of significance to the Library’s future and well-being. Making it more affordable for Library staff to participate in the OLA will allow them to take advantage of opportunities for development of expertise and leadership skills that will in turn benefit TPL.

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List of Attachments:

Not applicable.