

To: Toronto Public Library Board – September 20, 2004

From: City Librarian

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

Purpose:

To place before the Board the Strategic Directions Council's request to the Toronto Public Library Board to become a founding member of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

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

Recommendation:

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 several reports on the proposed Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and the strategic planning activities that led to its ultimate development. Most recently, the Board received a staff report on the *Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Business Plan* at its meeting on May 10, 2004 and a presentation on the Strategic Directions Council's (SDC) *Spring 2004 Report to the Library Community* from SDC members at its June 14, 2004 meeting. At that time, it was indicated that SDC would be preparing a membership package over the summer that would be sent to all Ontario public library boards asking that they consider membership in the proposed Federation at fall meetings.

The SDC membership package has been received by the Toronto Public Library Board Chair with a request that the Board become a founding member of the proposed Federation in 2005. The membership package includes a SDC video presentation that speaks to the need for the Federation, its history, mandate, governance and benefits that will be presented at the Board

meeting. Supporting documentation from the membership package, much of which the Board has previously seen, is provided in Attachment 1.

Comments:

As the Board has heard on previous occasions, it has been a ten-year highly consultative process and many thousands of volunteer hours that bring 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;
- 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 about some aspects of the proposed organization in previous discussions. These have included: elements of the governance and administrative structure; relationships with existing library organizations; representation of library staff and unions; the consultation process. 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. Some of the answers to the Board's questions can come only from the Federation, its members and Board of Directors, if realized. In the existing proposal, SDC has attempted to provide enough detail on structure and areas of priority focus to encourage membership and constitute the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries in early 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.

SDC firmly believes that investment in the proposed Federation will serve to both strengthen libraries collectively and at the individual member library level. Toronto Public Library would likely accrue some benefit in each of the four areas of focus for the Federation: 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 smaller libraries. However, it is in the area of heightened and more effective advocacy and improved access to government initiative funding that TPL would reap the greatest benefit of Federation membership. As a member and with four seats on the Federation Board of Directors, TPL would also have a strong voice in the initial structuring and ongoing development of the Federation as well as in the identification of its future 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 appointment of citizen representatives to the Library Board has been finalized by City of Toronto Council, 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. If you require copies, please contact Nancy Marshall at nmarshall@tpl.toronto.on.ca