TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

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To: Toronto Public Library Board – April 19, 2004

From: City Librarian

Subject: **Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Business Plan**

Purpose:

To introduce the Business Plan for the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries to the Board and solicit Board comments or concerns about the Federation that can guide staff in the ongoing planning.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

The current report has no financial implications for or impacts on the Toronto Public Library. A future decision on Federation membership will involve consideration of a proposed TPL annual membership fee of $15,000 and any potential impacts on TPL resources, its provincial service mandate and funding received for that purpose.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board receive the report on the *Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Business Plan* for information and discussion.

Background:

Over the last four years, the public library community of Ontario has collectively engaged in strategic and consortia planning initiatives that have now culminated in the development of a Business Plan to establish a Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL). The Board has previously received information reports on these activities. The current report provides an early introduction to the Federation and its Business Plan for the Board's review and discussion prior to a formal call for membership that is anticipated to be extended to all 350 Library Boards in the province in the Fall of 2004.

No decisions are required by the Board at this time. Presentation of the Business Plan provides the Board with an opportunity to consider what is being proposed, and identify issues or concerns that will guide staff in the ongoing planning for the creation of a Federation.

One Place to Look: the Ontario Public Library Strategic Plan 1990

The Federation concept can be traced back to the first strategic plan developed by the public library community in Ontario. *One Place to Look: the Ontario Public Library Strategic Plan*

was released in 1990 following 18 months of intensive community involvement. The Plan included specific recommendations to establish an office "to coordinate and develop an integral province-wide public library network" and "a Strategic Planning Council with representation from all library organizations in Ontario, to provide community-based input" to the proposed coordinating office.

The Strategic Directions Council (SDC)

The "coordinating office" recommended in the strategic plan has never been achieved and as a result, many of the first plan's other goals and objectives were not realized.

The planning council was established in 1990 in the form of the Strategic Directions Council (SDC) with a mission to further develop public library services for the people of Ontario. The SDC was later incorporated in 1998. With representation from all public library organizations in the province, and including staff and trustees, its mandate is to:

- provide coordinated, cooperative, province-wide leadership and direction to ongoing strategic planning and to respond to issues of immediate concern to public libraries;
- encourage participation and support for province-wide initiatives; and
- coordinate the public library response to province-wide issues of concern.

It is under this mandate that the SDC has had carriage of the strategic planning process at the provincial level and subsequent planning for the Federation.

The SDC membership is provided as Attachment 1 for information. It reflects the multiplicity of organizations associated with public libraries in the province. TPL, as the largest public library in the province and the only library mandated to provide provincial services, is the one public library with direct representation and a permanent seat on the Council.

Building Value Together: a Vision for Change for Ontario Public Libraries 2002 (BVT)

Early in 2000, the SDC inaugurated a second strategic planning process for public libraries in Ontario. Again, the process broadly engaged the library community, included demographic and environmental research and a province-wide telephone survey. What emerged after 18 months of planning and consultation was a move to a single strategic focus – the creation of a viable organization with responsibilities and the authority to act in the collective interest of Ontario public libraries. It was generally believed that only such an organization, properly financed and resourced, could build capacity for public libraries to successfully address the threats and opportunities that had been identified through the planning process.

BVT, released as a discussion paper late in 2001, was formally presented at the OLA Superconference in 2002, and was the subject of extensive stakeholder consultation. The Board received *Building Value Together* for information in 2002 and directed that staff continue to be involved in the planning process.

With broad community interest in the creation of a coordinating body and clear consensus on the priority roles for such a body, the SDC adopted the federation concept in principle and created a

task group of trustees and staff to further refine the concept and develop a business plan for what would ultimately become the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries.

Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Business Plan 2004

One of the challenges for the library community in sustaining this type of long-term planning and indeed, a strong rationale for a federation, is the necessary reliance on volunteer effort from those who are already fully engaged in their local responsibilities. In this case, in the fall of 2003, the SDC issued a call for financial support from the community to hire a consultant to assist in the development of a business plan for the federation. As an indication of interest and support, some 100 libraries contributed a total of $30,000 for this purpose. The *Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Business Plan* was launched at the OLA Conference in January 2004. A copy of the *Business Plan* is provided as Attachment 3.

Comments:

The Business Plan sets out the need for a federation and provides the kind of details that Library Boards will need in order to ultimately assess the value of federation membership to their local library service. At the same time, the Business Plan tries not to proscribe definitively as it will ultimately be the Federation members who determine priority roles and deliverables. Key areas for the Board to consider are the need for a Federation and its mission and mandate, governance, membership, fees and funding. The Federation's relationship with other organizations and its impact on TPL are also areas of interest.

Case for a Federation

Prior province-wide research and public surveys identified a number of challenges to the future of library service:

- a decreasing number of people who see the library as an essential service and positive instrument for public policy development;
- a growing perception, particularly among youth, of the irrelevance of library service in the Internet world;
- funding to meet current and future needs and sustainability issues particularly in the technology and digital service areas; and
- need for alternate revenue streams.

It should be noted that the results of TPL's own public survey and recent round of community consultation do not reflect the same negative perceptions of the relevance of TPL to its community.

The Business Plan sets out how the Federation can take the challenges identified and turn them into opportunities to improve library services across the province for the benefit of all Ontarians. The current multiplicity of library organizations creates a very fragmented public library sector with no clear voice to speak for libraries. Attachment 2 provides a list of the major extant organizations with a brief description of their roles. None of these organizations can speak for all libraries in the province. The Federation would provide a clear and strong voice to lobby funders and create partnerships in both private and public sectors to strengthen existing services

and facilitate the development of a broader range of services across the province. The Federation would, for the first time, unite Trustees and CEOs in a single organization to address both advocacy and operational/planning needs. The Federation, unlike all of the existing organizations, would have dedicated human and financial resources to support its mandate.

Economies of scale achievable through consortia purchasing of materials and supplies orchestrated at a provincial level can maximize local purchasing power. Fundamentally, a Federation creates capacity for all public libraries to plan, develop new services, build support and awareness of the important role the public library can and does play in community development. With effective provincial leadership, strong local public libraries and a collective capacity, the total investment in public libraries could be maximized to improve library service for all users in the province.

Design

A set of broadly endorsed guiding principles served as a framework in designing the Federation. These included:

- demonstrable value for membership;
- inclusive in representing the diversity of Ontario's public libraries;
- collaborative work with existing organizations;
- voluntary membership;
- membership-driven;
- affordable and equitable fee structure;
- sustainable; and
- scalable growth.

Mission and Mandate

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. Four roles have been identified for the federation: research, marketing, advocacy and consortia purchasing.

Governance

The proposed governance model is founded on four key principles. The Federation must be:

- inclusive and reflect the diversity of public libraries;
- transparent and accountable in processes for representation, decision-making and approval;
- responsive to key issues and changing environment; and
- recognition of local autonomy.

The governance model is based on that of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) with the addition of Francophone and First Nations library representation. The AMO model offers several advantages and there were three key factors leading to its adoption. First, it is familiar to municipalities and councillors and would therefore be understood by those who fund libraries. Secondly, the structure builds on a long tradition in Ontario of administrative

"communities of interest" that currently exist and meet regularly to share information, discuss issues of common concern and undertake cooperative ventures. And finally, while there has been an emerging consensus about the need for a federation, there is an equally strong feeling that the clear voice for libraries must include representation of the many community of interest voices. The caucus structure (six are proposed for libraries with Toronto not requiring a caucus) reflects the range of size, geographic realities, varying interests and priorities of libraries in Ontario. When a Board becomes a member of the Federation, it would select the caucus it wishes to join. Each caucus, in turn, would elect its representatives (a mix of Trustees and CEOs) to the 22 member Governing Board. As a member, TPL would be able to name four members to the Governing Council. A president or CEO would serve ex-officio as the 23rd member of the Board.

The Governing Board would nominate an Advisory Council drawn from the broader provincial community who would bring seasoned experience and advice to the work of the Federation. Issue related Task Forces and Working Groups drawn from the Federation's membership would be struck as needed. A President/CEO with some administrative support would form the nucleus of Federation staff at the outset. As the Federation grows and funding is available, program officers would be added to lead and coordinate the work of the task groups.

Membership, Fees and Funding

Full voting membership would be open to all public and First Nations libraries that pay an annual Federation membership fee. Affiliate membership would be available for library organizations, municipal bodies, labour organizations and partners etc. that support the objectives of the public library community or are important to its future.

A tiered fee structure based on population served has been proposed as the most equitable and affordable approach. This is a familiar structure to libraries and takes into account local ability to pay. It is important that both small and large libraries join the Federation if it is to be successful and be truly representative of the province's public libraries. The annual fee proposed for TPL is $15,000.

Funding for the Federation is expected to come from membership fees in its first year with subsequent years' revenue to include an increasing proportion of revenue from governments, foundations, sponsorships and partnerships with the private sector. Thus a more modest start up strategy has been proposed for year one based on a revenue projection of $150,000 rather than the fuller plan originally set out in the three-year funding plan in Attachment 2 of the document.

Delayering the existing multiplicity of organizations and the Federation's relationship with existing bodies are also important issues. The Federation is not intended to be an additional library organization in the province. From the outset of the strategic planning process in 2000, the reduction or elimination of the splintered organization structure in the province has been a key objective and necessary step in strengthening library service in the province. Ontario is one of the few North American jurisdictions that does not have any kind of consortia or coordinating body to advance library service. The Business Plan does not suggest how this delayering/ reduction be done, but rather recognizes the need for it to occur. Existing organizations currently provide some of the services that may ultimately be provided by the Federation. It would be the

Federation, once in place, that would work in consultation with existing organizations to determine what could be eliminated, where partnerships would be appropriate and effective, and where responsibilities could be reassigned. TPL, for example, negotiates partnerships such as the TD summer reading club that serve all of Ontario. Discussion with the Federation might leave this relationship and responsibility with TPL.

As a member of the Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA), the Board may be particularly concerned about a Federation with advocacy responsibilities that appear to overlap an important part of OLBA's mandate. The Federation and OLBA together would determine if both organizations should continue and, if so, what the respective mandates would be. As one example, the Federation could take on all advocacy responsibility and OLBA, as part of OLA, could assume responsibility for trustee development.

TPL has by far the broadest and deepest expertise and resource-base of all public libraries in the province. It is the one public library in the province with a legislated mandate to provide services at the provincial level. It is not surprising therefore, that TPL plays, and is looked at to play, an important leadership role in the Ontario library community. There is a strong perception from outside Toronto, that for the Federation to succeed as a provincial voice for libraries, TPL is an essential member. Membership in the Federation would certainly allow TPL to continue to play a strong leadership role and help shape the work of the Federation in the four priority areas of advocacy, research, marketing and consortia purchasing.

Conclusion:

Planning for the implementation of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries is continuing with the SDC taking the lead and serving as a transition body to the Federation. The Ministry of Culture has just approved the SDC's application for a $30,000 grant from the Library Strategic Development Fund to complete the planning and facilitate broad community communication. A major communications initiative to all Library Boards and First Nations libraries in the province is being developed and will include written communication and presentations to as many Boards and library organizations as possible beginning in May. The SDC will continue to refine details of the Federation and draft interim bylaws. In the Fall, the Board, with all others in the province will be formally asked to consider membership in the Federation. A founding meeting for members with the election of the Governing Council is expected in early 2005. The SDC cannot create the Federation. Ontario's public library boards will determine if the Federation comes to life through their decisions on whether or not to become members. The Board's comments and concerns about the Federation Business Plan at this time will be a valuable guide to staff in the ongoing planning work.

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List of Attachments:

Attachment 1: Strategic Directions Council Membership
Attachment 2: Major Public Library Organizations and Associations in the Province of Ontario
Attachment 3: Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Business Plan, January 2004