



Media Release

MAKE PARTNERSHIPS WITH PUBLIC LIBRARIES A PRIORITY IN LITERACY PROGRAMMING

Toronto, Ontario, February 4, 2010 – The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries has just completed a study of literacy programs provided by public libraries across the province. The key findings of the study are:

- The survey identified 688 core literacy programs offered across Ontario in 2008. Those programs encompassed: early literacy for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers; remedial reading and writing assistance for school-aged children and teens; beginning literacy and remedial reading and writing assistance for adults; and ESL instruction for both children and adults. Many program hours used computers to provide on-line instruction.
- 78% of the public libraries surveyed provide core literacy programs. When supporting literacy programs are included, the total rises to 96%. The service areas represented by responding libraries account for 87% of the Ontario population.
- A total of 1.2 million hours of instruction were provided for these core literacy programs.
- A high percentage of core literacy programs offered by public libraries (86%) are instructed by library staff who in many cases have specialized training.
- 65% of public libraries are members of community literacy partnerships. Almost all of these partnerships (98%) involve in-kind donations such as staff time and library space, and direct funding from the library in one-third of cases.

“It is crucial that government decision-makers appreciate that public libraries already play an active role in literacy programming, especially for children between the ages of zero to six years of age”, said Marzio Apolloni, Chair of the Board of the Federation. “Because public libraries have demonstrated their ability to partner well and provide cost effective literacy programs for decades, they should be integral to the delivery of future pre-school literacy initiatives, thereby avoiding the need for government to create parallel structures.”

“Although the Ministry of Tourism and Culture has primary responsibility for public libraries in Ontario, stakeholders from other provincial ministries should take notice of our study findings”, said Federation CEO, David Allen. “When ministries such as Education, Child & Youth Services, and Training Colleges & Universities are developing and implementing policy and programs related to literacy, public library representatives need to be at the consultation table. Too often in the past, the voice of public libraries has

been overlooked.” The Federation believes the eligibility criteria for receiving literacy funding from all ministries should be broadened to include partnerships with public libraries in order to take advantage of their existing infrastructure and expertise and to reduce costs overall.

The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries is a not-for-profit membership association established in 2005 to provide a single, strong voice for public and First Nations libraries in Ontario to enhance library policies and programs. The Federation’s 190 members include public library boards serving large and small communities from all geographic regions, representing 84% of Ontario’s population.

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