



September 17, 2009

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

On behalf of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, I want to thank you for the position you are taking related to Bill 202, Education Statute Law Amendment Act (Electronic Sexual Material), 2009 that was introduced in the Ontario Legislature yesterday. Your statement that responsibility ultimately lies with parents for dealing with the important and complex issue of Internet filtering is supported throughout the library community.

The Federation's position on this matter is consistent with Internet access policies of the Ontario Library Association (OLA) and the Canadian Library Association (CLA). We believe public libraries have a basic responsibility to uphold Canada's Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable.

The Internet has many wonderful resources for children, but it is unregulated. Since there is no foolproof way to eliminate inappropriate material, public libraries are taking special measures to instruct and protect children in their use of the Internet. Most public library boards have approved policies and procedures on Internet access for children.

While filters can have a place in a broader program to protect children from inappropriate materials, they do not guarantee that all inappropriate material will be blocked. Filters can also block useful material. With the features available today on wireless devices such as cell phones and with the variety of other public places without filters, controlling a child's access to the Internet has become a complex societal issue. We believe the best and most reliable filter is a child's parent or guardian.

It is noteworthy that municipalities fund, on average, 85% of the on-going operations of public libraries in Ontario. Also relevant is how municipal councils reacted when the City of Cambridge passed a resolution in support of Internet filtering in February 2009 and wrote every other municipality in Ontario asking that they pass similar resolutions. To our knowledge, none of those municipalities did so.

Again, thank you for your public support against mandatory Internet filtering in public libraries. If we can provide you with additional information or resource materials, please do not hesitate to contact David Allen, our Chief Executive Officer at 416-395-0746.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Apolloni".

Marzio Apolloni  
Chair of the Board of Directors

cc. The Honourable Aileen Carroll, Minister of Culture