

June 27, 2011

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky  
Minister of Education  
900 Bay Street  
22<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mowat Block  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Dombrowsky:

We at the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (Federation) are writing in support of strong school libraries. This letter is prompted by the decision of Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board to lay off their school library staff and disperse library collections to classrooms.

This is not just a school library issue, but a student success issue. Strong school library teaching programs promote reading engagement, digital media literacy and critical thinking skills. Lack of access to these resources will impact students negatively.

Accordingly, we support the recommendations of the Ontario Library Association and the Ontario School Library Association to:

- Designate and protect specific funds for school library staffing and resources.
- Release the remaining school library funding promised by Premier McGuinty in 2007. Currently only \$25 million of the promised \$80 million for books and e-resources have been provided. And his promise of \$40 million for school librarians over four years has not been acted upon.

In this period of financial restraint, the Federation recognizes the pressures on all government-funded services to look for opportunities to improve efficiencies and outcomes through collaboration with other service provider organizations. In many Ontario communities strong partnerships have already been established between public libraries and school libraries.

Examples of collaboration include:

- Locating public libraries within or adjacent to school buildings;
- Organizing regular visits to public libraries by school classes;
- Having public libraries organize certain resources according to curriculum and grade; and
- Facilitating access by schools to the libraries' collection of e-books, and vast array of government documents, from genealogy to architecture.

But more can be done in this area. We attach an article published recently in [YorkRegion.com](http://YorkRegion.com), which describes the partnership potential being explored in Newmarket.

The Federation invites your Ministry to consult with us in the identification and adoption of complementary policies and practices that would benefit literacy development of students in formal education. Everyone wins when Ontario students are supported by both strong school libraries and strong public libraries.

We will contact your office in two weeks to arrange a meeting with you to explore the partnership possibilities.

Yours truly,

David Allen  
Chief Executive Officer

cc. Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario  
Hon. Michael Chan, Minister of Tourism and Culture  
Steven Davidson, Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture