



CEO's Report to Members September 26, 2011

Meetings with MPPs

Over recent months, the Federation has been extremely successful in securing meetings with MPPs and senior provincial bureaucrats. Board Chair, Jim Bennett compiled the attached list of 18 such meetings that have occurred since February 2011, including the topics discussed. From these meetings it is clear that the issue of public library operating grants (PLOGs) is on the government's radar.

Of particular note were the meetings held in conjunction with the AMO (Association of Municipalities of Ontario) Conference in August, where Federation representatives met with Minister of Tourism and Culture, Michael Chan. In our discussion with the Minister, we shared the Federation membership's disappointment with the way Capacity Building Grants were calculated and distributed. The main complaints were that these grants were not equitable, were not calculated per-capita (as recommended by the Federation's model), and did not reflect the needs of some larger, urban library systems. Minister Chan shared that he was unable to convince Cabinet that they should adopt a per-capita model. Federation representatives requested to have increased input in any future changes or additions to PLOG distribution, including potentially holding a joint press release or media event to illustrate collaboration between the government and Ontario public libraries.

At AMO the Federation's delegation also met with the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Representatives from both these ministries felt it was positive that the Federation has undertaken research projects (Capital Needs Analysis and Early Literacy) to support our claims of the impact of public libraries.

Profile at AMO Conference

FOPL received its highest profile yet at the AMO Conference held in London, Ontario from August 21 to 23, 2011. For two days, we had a booth in the exhibit hall and many councilors and cabinet ministers dropped by. Helping to work the booth were Jim Bennett, David Allen, Barbara Clubb, Bill Manson, Alastair Neely and Julie Brandl.

Barbara Clubb represented the Federation on a panel at a session called "Ties that Bind" with the topic of Public Libraries and Local Governments: creating sustainable communities for the 21st Century. Chairing the panel was Marolyn Morrison, Mayor of Caledon. Other panelists were Jennifer Grass, Senior Director, Communications and Public Affairs, Council of Ontario

Universities and Dan Mathieson, Mayor of the City of Stratford. About 50 people attended, mostly elected officials. This was the first time public libraries were part of the AMO program.

London Public Library hosted a very successful Ice Cream Social in the Library Garden on August 23rd from 12 noon to 1:30 PM. AMO delegates arrived throughout the event, and several participated in tours of the library. When the tours finished, Federation Chair Jim Bennett made a presentation, emphasizing many statistical facts about London Public Library, Ontario public libraries in general, as well as delineating the contributions and services that Ontario public libraries provide in developing vibrant communities. An extremely well received teen band played during the Social.

As mentioned earlier, the Federation was also granted three opportunities to make delegations to Cabinet Ministers. Last year we were only granted one delegation opportunity.

Library Tours for DM and ADM

On August 24th, Jim Bennett, David Allen and Erin Menzies staged a tour of three public libraries for Ministry of Culture DM Steven Davidson and ADM Donna Ratchford. They visited Newmarket, Markham, and Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Libraries from 12 noon to 5:30 pm. Each facility was humming with activity, and showcased many progressive services.

Newmarket PL (built in 1950s, last renovated in 1995) profiled its:

- Community 211 and volunteer management service
- Digitization lab
- Computer assistance facilities for users with special needs
- RFID
- Public announcement screens
- Online demo of virtual services
- Mobile access to the catalogue

Whitchurch-Stouffville PL (built in 2001) profiled its:

- Summer reading programs
- Daycare centre activities
- Knitters group
- Community employment workshop
- Other traditional services

Markham PL (Milliken Mills Branch) profiled its:

- Children's camp
- CIC partnership and settlement service to newcomers, including literacy
- Multi-cultural, multi-lingual collections
- Bibliocommons
- Social environment online
- Need to upgrade this older facility to meet standards and demand

Davidson and Ratchford seemed very impressed and said they gained a better appreciation of the range of contemporary public library services and their relevance to broader provincial priorities.

Advocacy for First Nation Libraries

The Federation has been helping to schedule several meetings to advocate for First Nation libraries. On September 13th, we met with Peter Dinsdale, COO of the Assembly of First Nations in Ottawa. On October 18th we will meet with Lori Jacobs, CEO of Chiefs of Ontario in Toronto. Meeting dates will soon be confirmed with James Cutfeet, Director of Education and Social Programs at the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and with MP Rob Clarke who Chairs the Conservative Aboriginal Caucus.

Mr. Dinsdale will help our First Nation Caucus put a resolution forward at the Special Chiefs Assembly. This resolution will be in support of new federal funding for First Nation libraries. Mr. Dinsdale will also facilitate a meeting with the National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education.

Meanwhile, First Nations librarians from across Canada finalized the terms of reference for the National Aboriginal Public Library Organization (NAPLO). NAPLO was established to promote the creation and sustainability of public libraries on reserve. Federation Board member Sheri Mishibinijima currently chairs NAPLO.

Capital Needs Analysis

Working with consultants Monteith Brown, our Research Task Force developed a draft questionnaire and cover letter for the survey that will gather data to quantify the infrastructure obligation for public libraries. The following five libraries served as beta testers of the survey:

- Ottawa Public Library
- Bruce County Public Library
- Fort Frances Public Library
- Newmarket Public Library
- Wikwemikong Library

After integrating suggestions from the test group, the survey launched to all libraries across Ontario on August 12th. Letters containing more information about the survey were sent from the Federation to the attention of library CEOs across the province on August 5th. Reminders to participate were sent to libraries by email, on the Federation's Twitter feed and on the Federation's Facebook page. The original deadline for participation was September 14th, but was later extended to October 5th. As of September 26th, 206 libraries have participated, which is a response rate of 64%.

Study results will be released at the OLA Super Conference in February 2012.

Research on Literacy Programs Outcomes

We have begun our research study in conjunction with the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The study will examine the benefits of preschool literacy programs in Ontario public libraries. It is expected that there will be a correlation between the delivery of these preschool programs and positive literacy outcomes. The research findings will be used with government funders to encourage them to work more closely with public libraries as program partners in their early literacy and healthy community initiatives. Ten sites have been selected for the study, which reflect a mix of libraries of different types and sizes.

The Federation was successful in its application for a Cultural Strategic Investment Fund (CSIF) grant of \$24,967 to assist with the cost of this study. The University of Toronto required the Federation to sign a research agreement, which stipulates that the University owns the intellectual property from the study.

CSIF Grants

Recipients of the latest round of grants from the CSIF were announced in August 2011. Only 12 (24%) of the 51 projects totalling \$207,839 (14% of all funds distributed) were awarded to public libraries. These results are lower than the previous round of CSIF grants, when 15 (33%) of all projects totalling \$401,903 (31% of all funded distributed) were awarded to public libraries. And in the last round of LSDF, public libraries received 10 grants totalling \$285,529. While it might appear that public libraries did not fare well in the August 2011 announcements, in fact all public libraries that submitted applications were successful in acquiring funding under the CSIF. Perhaps our sector did not take full advantage of this funding opportunity.

Ontario Public Library Week (OPLW)

Posters and bookmarks have been distributed, and high resolution copies can also be downloaded. Members were also sent a draft proclamation that they could ask their mayor(s) to issue, a draft media release that they could issue to local news organizations, and a list of 25 suggestions for celebrating OPLW at their libraries. Arrangements are in place for the OPLW launch at Whitby Public Library on October 17th, this being a collaborative effort by the eight Durham Region public libraries. OPLW coincides with Municipal Government Week.

Status of Capacity Building Grants

According to SOLS, 204 (64%) of public libraries have been mailed their cheques, as of September 1st. This represents a total of \$1,020,442 (54% of the \$1.9 million). Libraries must sign and return the terms and conditions agreement to SOLS, indicating how they wish to receive the funds (by cheque or through reimbursement of expenses, direct payment to vendors for expenses incurred, or a combination). All requests received by SOLS thus far have been processed.

Role in Branding Initiative of Libraries 2020

As part of the Ministry's \$15 million grant given to the public library sector in 2008, OLS-North received funding to examine the future demands and services of Ontario public libraries and how to best equip the sector to meet that future. This project was called Libraries 2020. OLS-North hired Wendy Newman as project consultant, and on several occasions OLS-North asked SOLS, OLA, KO and FOPL for input on the planning and execution of this project. A report on recommended initiatives for Libraries 2020 will soon be released. One of the recommended initiatives relates to pursuing a single brand identity for Ontario public libraries. The Federation has agreed to assume a leadership role in the collaborative process of determining the scope of this initiative. Once the scope is identified, it is recognized that significant resources will be required to realize the vision and deliverables.

New Web Hosting and Content Management System

The Federation's new website was launched in early August. It can be easily updated and allows integration of social media. Erin Menzies, our staff librarian deserves special recognition for her leadership of this successful project.

Federation's New Display Unit

With the assistance of Oakville Public Library, who generously donated the time of specialized graphic design staff, the Federation purchased four new zip banners to replace our aging display unit. These zip banners were used at our exhibit booth at the AMO Conference. They are portable and effectively portray the objectives of the Federation.

New Appointments to the Federation Board

Since the June meeting of the Federation Board, resignations were received from two directors of the Board, Francine Ste. Croix and Lori Sims. Lori was also Chair of the Advocacy Task Force. Over the summer we followed due process to fill these vacancies.

A call for nominations was issued to the Francophone Caucus on June 29, 2011. A similar call was issued to the Large Urban Caucus on July 21, 2011. In both cases, only one nomination was received, from Claire Dionne and Liz Rossnagel, respectively. No elections were required. Claire and Liz were acclaimed. Claire is the CEO of Russell Public Library and a former Director of the Federation Board. Liz is CEO of Sault Ste. Marie Public Library and member of the Advocacy Task Force.

At the meeting of the Advocacy Task Force on September 8, 2011, nominations were invited for the position of Chair. Larry Stewart was nominated and consented to assuming this role. There were no other nominations. Larry Stewart was acclaimed. Larry is a trustee of Brant County Public Library, and has served on the Federation Board and its Advocacy Task Force for many years.

Submission to Commission on Broader Public Service Reform

The secretariat has been established for the new Ontario Commission on Broader Public Service Reform. The Commission is now accepting submissions, but has not yet established timelines or formats for submission. The Federation intends to make a submission in October, highlighting how the information and referral services of public libraries could lighten the workloads of providers of specialized government services.

Correspondence

Over the summer, three letters of note were issued by the Federation. One was to Education Minister Leona Dombrowsky in support of strong school libraries. Another was to Tourism and Culture Minister Michael Minister Chan outlining the Federation's official position on his announcement of Capacity Building grants totalling \$1.9 million. The final letter was to London Public Library, as input to a community consultation process for reviewing the library's Internet service policy. All three letters are posted on the Federation's website.