

## SOLS CEO'S Invitation to Consultation re \$15 million provincial investment in Libraries to provide equitable access

### Fort Erie Public Library Submission – Gord Thomson, CEO

Public Libraries throughout Ontario have been negatively impacted by the significant reduction in provincial funding in the mid-nineties and subsequent flat-lining of that funding to support operations of public libraries for more than a decade. In view of the global impact of those political decisions, an important element of the allocation of the \$15 million in new funding should be a universal formula distribution of a significant portion of the funding to all public libraries in Ontario to be used within defined parameters.

A portion of the funding should be designated as available for support of special local and regional projects representing key strategic initiatives and investments in future public library service delivery such as Open Source ILS Consortiums.

At a province-wide level some portion of the funding should be allocated to marketing of public libraries and their economic and social value to communities, and funding should also be allocated to key research projects overseen by the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries.

In terms of “services to the community”, funding to support after school programs and homework help clubs in public libraries should be a priority, and, if the goal of the \$15 million investment “is to provide equitable access” as stated, then some measure of the funding should be allocated to address the requirements of the new Accessibility legislation, especially training and policy vis-à-vis “service standards” in the short term.

The overall priorities for “new” funding for the Fort Erie Public Library would include:

1. Investments that will improve services and access by supporting the implementation of new technology in particular the creation of regionally based Open Source ILS Consortium.
2. Financial support to FEPL's very successful and very valuable after school program.
3. Enhancing access to community collections, in particular, multicultural, health and literacy and digitization of local history collections.
4. Strengthening public library professional's capacity to meet and keep pace with the library service and digital information needs of our community (i.e. professional training).

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input to the consultation on the \$15 million investment in Libraries in Ontario.

