

# \$100,000 Approved for Ontario School Library Study

**Roberta Henley**

**O**n November 18 and 19, school library leaders were invited to participate in a session with Dr. Ross Todd, of Rutgers University in New Jersey, to learn more about evidence-based practice as it pertains to our school library programs. The workshop was timely and very inspiring. Although we have seen some promising signs from the Ministry – the Junior Reading Document, *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4-6*, for example, which acknowledges the role of the teacher-librarian and the school library – we still need real support from our current government. To obtain that, we need to provide the Ontario evidence that the decision-makers require.

At our last Council meeting, which followed closely on the heels of Ross Todd's session, councilors discussed the idea of stepping up the gathering of evidence across the province. We decided to focus part of OSLA's strategic plan for the upcoming year on designing and producing models and templates for evidence-based practice for use by our teacher-librarians. We also discussed putting a motion forward to the OLA's Board of Directors which would address the need for an Ontario study, similar to those done by Dr. Ross Todd, Stephen Krashen, and Keith Curry Lance.

With the assistance of Liz Kerr, who provided background information on OSLA's advocacy efforts and highlighted the activities of the Ontario Coalition for School Libraries, another

OLA-supported initiative, a motion was presented. After considerable discussion and some key changes, our proposal was accepted. The OLA is committed to providing \$100,000 for the completion of an Ontario Study!

What does this mean to you? It means that over the next two years, you are going to be asked to participate in developing the evidence. An Ontario study using evidence-based research methodology to assess the benefit of school library programs and their impact on student achievement will be the final result. The study will be done in large part by a Canadian researcher, which will in turn provide access to Canadian research funds and to the creation of acknowledged Canadian experts on school libraries.

The relationship between the School Library Program and student achievement has been an issue much discussed in the media over the last few years. Both the Canadian and Ontario Coalitions for School Libraries have talked about the need for a study to show that there is a real connection. This is the part of the puzzle that we've been missing.

Now, through this remarkable gift by our library peers throughout the OLA, we have our chance to develop the evidence.

2005 is going to be an exciting year for us! Can't you feel the energy?! ■



OLA 2004 President Ken Roberts, OLA 2003 President Liz Kerr, 2004 public library President Sam Coghlan, 2004 academic library President Delia Antonacci, 2005 public library trustee President Sue Culp, OLITA's 2004 President Jenn Horwath, and OLA 2005 President Cynthia Archer provided key encouragement to the OLA Board approval of the school library study.

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