

2005 OSLA COUNCIL

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The Ontario School Library Association has had an extraordinary year. Energized by the positive developments achieved under Bobbie Henley's leadership in the previous year, we have made major strides in advocacy and curriculum, and have reached a critical crossroads in moving forward with school library issues in Ontario.

In my remarks as the incoming president at last year's Annual General Meeting, I talked about the need to transform decision-makers' understanding of school library issues. We were coming out of several years of tireless advocacy on the part of OSLA, OLA, TALCO (The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario), OCSL (Ontario Coalition for School Libraries) and many other individuals and groups. We had conveyed our message loudly and clearly, and there were some hopeful signs that perhaps we were being heard, but did that mean that we were going to see concrete improvements in the school library situation in Ontario? All indications are that we are potentially at the beginning of major improvements and broadening support.

Investment in School Libraries, K-12

Last spring, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of the Ministry of Education announced a \$17 million

dollar grant for school library resources, to be allocated on a per-school basis. This meant that every school library was to receive approximately \$3500 to invest in resources. The memo issued to school boards recognized "the critical role that school libraries play in improving student achievement". There were very clear indications that not only was the provincial government becoming engaged in improving school libraries, but that they were also very interested in having the support of OSLA and OLA. Representatives of both organizations were consulted before the memo was issued. The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, TALCO and OLA cooperated in supporting under-resourced school boards in selecting resources, with the creation of OLA's on-line database of recommended resources, created by OSLA past president Cathi Gibson-Gates.

A further indication of the government's desire for our support came when we were invited to participate in the public announcement of the grant, which took place on May 26, 2005. OLA Past President Liz Kerr was invited to introduce Education Minister Gerard Kennedy, who made the grant announcement. As OSLA President, I was invited to respond. The OCSL