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Toronto Public Library Workers' Union Local 4948 (CUPE)

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December 6, 2011

BU19.1.189

City of Toronto Budget Committee
City Hall
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Del Grande, Chair, and Members of the City
of Toronto Budget Committee:

RE: TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD 2012 OPERATING BUDGET

I want to touch on four (4) issues today:

1. Listening to Toronto
2. This City has a Revenue Problem
3. It's Always Been About the Staff
4. Library Workers are Torontonians Too

Listening to Toronto

From the outset, Torontonians were engaged in the debate
around city services and especially around the library service.

It began in May and June of 2011, when the city received
13,000 responses to its own survey conducted by KPMG
regarding city services. The library service ranked in the top
ten (10) for "Priority Service Areas" and in the top five (5) for
"Services to be Delivered by the Municipality". The library
was not only considered an essential service, but necessary, to
make this city liveable and prosperous.

The library workers undertook an online petition where we
generated over 50,000 signatures in support of our public
library campaign. This in turn generated thousands of emails
to city councillors. **I am told it is the most emails received
on a single issue at city hall, ever.**



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On July 19th and September 19th, dozens of deputants came forward in support of our public library.

Late in the summer the library workers launched a contest where we had over 800 Torontonians participate, both young and old, as to why their library matters to them.

In October, the library board approved its own public consultation process, where over the next month, thirteen (13) sessions were held, and over 1,000 citizens participated.

There was also an online component to this consultation process, whereby, over 7,000 people filled out surveys.

I personally attended almost all of the public consultation sessions and I only heard four (4) people speak in favour of the cuts to the library. 4.

For the November 21st board meeting, 8,645 communications were received in addition to 246 emails. Twenty one (21) members of the public deputed.

For every library board meeting since September, there has been an overflow room of over 100 people watching the library board meeting live. This has been unprecedented.

You were elected to represent all of the people of Toronto. You say time and time again, that your people are hardworking and do not have time to come down to city hall to depute. I challenge you to ignore the thousands of Torontonians who have made the time to make their views known to you.

This City Has a Revenue Problem and this Administration has been Part of the Problem

Mr. Cam Weldon, Treasurer, at the launch of the City of Toronto budget last week said this city has both a spending problem and a revenue problem.



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Budget Chief Del Grande said he wanted deputants to only come with solutions to the city's financial woes as he was tired of hearing Torontonians speak in support of their Toronto. He had hadn't heard enough ideas on how to fix things.

We haven't heard from you either. We have been asking, no imploring you, to take this discussion to a higher level, to broaden the discussion, but, there has been no acknowledgement of that and there has been a paucity of ideas coming forward from this administration on how to solve the city's revenue problem.

You will not be able to solve the city's budget woes off of the backs of the library budget, and you will not, be able to do it by limiting the number of DVDs we purchase, and, especially those in other languages. Torontonians who speak Chinese, Hindi, Tamil, Russian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Spanish, Gujarati and Polish deserve library materials. (that's the top ten (10) list of circulating library materials in other languages by the way). **Do their tax dollars not count as much as yours?**

What this city needs above all else is a more diversified tax base to support the economic, culture and social infrastructure needed for such a complex and diverse city as ours.

So we need:

- A Property tax increase
- The reinstatement of the vehicle personal tax or some other comparable tax
- The continuation, not the elimination, of the municipal land transfer tax
- Payroll tax
- Income tax sharing
- Development charges in keeping with GTA communities
- Sales tax



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I have heard nothing from this administration on addressing these shortfalls, except a cancellation of the first two, and, a promise to cancel the third, which will drive us into greater economic turmoil.

I presented you Mr. Del Grande with a list of suggestions this past summer on issues involving the library budget. I have had no feedback from you.

As a library worker, I have delivered to you the most well used public library system in the world.

As a taxpayer, I am looking to you to deliver to me a sustainable and great city. You've got at most six weeks to deliver on that.

As for coffee shops in every library, this has been a concept that has been suggested from the beginning, so let's put money in the capital project to begin construction, just like we have put money into the RFID project, and let's realize the revenues from this private sector initiative as soon as we can. I like coffee as much as the next person.

But really, it's all been very simple.

This has not been about listening to the public about the kind of city they want.

This has not been about solving our revenue problem here in the city.

This has always been about the elimination of staff.

It's Always Been About Staff

Mayor Ford proudly declared in his speech to launch the budget last week that his administration's greatest accomplishment was to reduce the size of government in Toronto by laying off 2,300 city workers.



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This will only drive our local economy to the brink, and, it will increase the odds in the case of another recession that, it will be felt worse here in Toronto than elsewhere.

While the federal government has attempted to manage a well orchestrated stimulus plan to get the Canadian economy growing again, the Ford administration is looking to take our municipal government out of that mix and drive it further into economic hardship.

At amalgamation, the library workforce was reduced by 10%. If you go forward with the reduction of another 152.5 or 161 library workers, you will have reduced the workforce by 17%. This will be the biggest reduction in a direct service delivery department, and dare I say, the most popular one at that.

Not surprising that it is the library. We are a helping profession after all. Attacks on nurses and teachers have been experienced already, so why not librarians? After all, we gals surely cannot be the primary income earners in our homes?

In other city department budgets, savings are calculated by the deferral of hiring. We haven't had any hiring in the library really since 1998. We lost 198 ftes then and have only hired thirteen (13) since then – a half a position a year. Yet our business, using that crude circulation measurement, has gone up 24%.

Councillor Del Grande surely as an accountant you can do the math. The library is Toronto's most efficient service and at the risk of repeating myself, it's most popular service.

Library Workers are Torontonians Too

Let me tell you who some of those library workers are. 86% of all library workers live here in Toronto. So that means we are your neighbours, your friends, that family down the street. Half of all them are already part-time workers in receipt of no benefits or pension to begin with.



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So can anyone explain to me, how laying off Torontonians who pay taxes and putting them out of a job so they can no longer do that, can no longer afford to shop in the local economy, can no longer purchase items from their local stores, can someone please explain to me, how this helps Toronto?

So I just want it to be clear, you will be laying off your fellow citizens and taxpayers.

On a final note, library service costs Torontonians just 19 cents a day. No matter how many DVDs you cut from the budget, no matter how many open hours you cut from a neighbourhood library, no matter how much you charge for not picking up a hold, you will still not solve the city financial issues unless you look at the revenue issue on a bigger scale. The last administration had the guts to try.

All I ask from you is to show some leadership and do what is right for Toronto the Good. I miss her.

Yours truly,

Maureen O'Reilly
President
TPLWU Local 4948