

EX8.1.89

From: Ari Gross <ari.gross@utoronto.ca>
To: <exc@toronto.ca>
Date: 2011-07-28 12:05 am
Subject: Toronto Agenda Item for July 28, 2011

Dear Mayor Ford and the Executive Committee,

Let me begin by praising your commitment to fiscal responsibility. Borrowing beyond one's means, and, while it is sometimes necessary, it is not a sustainable long-term municipal policy.

However, I am extremely upset with council's decision to balance Toronto's budget on the backs of its many services. As I recall, one of Mayor Ford's election promises was that the budget could be balanced with no loss of funding towards services. Whether the Mayor's decision to cut services is the result of ignorance or dishonesty I can only begin to speculate.

There are many services for which I would like to advocate, but I have decided to discuss one in particular: funding for Toronto's libraries, which Doug Ford said he would cut "in a heartbeat".

Libraries, especially my local community library, were the backbone of my childhood. My local library provided me (and my mother), with a place that I could learn, as well as be involved in a number of activities and programmes in which I participated. I think back on how much I learned about the world and how the library provided me, a bookish kid, with a place to educate myself and to socialize with others. Also, my time spent at my local library was time spent in a safe environment staying out of trouble, and my mother always knew where I was.

It has been recently mentioned that closing local libraries might not be a problem, since there is always another nearby. This may be the case if one has a car to drive there – growing up my parents only owned one car, which my dad took to work, and my mother and I walked everywhere. Simply put, proximity matters.

It is easy for many to question the necessity of libraries in our digital age, yet libraries cover this as well. Libraries provide internet access as well as books. For many, private internet access still remains a luxury. Also, contrary to popular belief, most books cannot be found online for free – as a former businessman, would you give away your intellectual property? Libraries purchase subscriptions to electronic licences and provide paid information to the community, information which would be beyond the financial reach of many of Toronto's citizens.

I understand that my experience might not have been that of the Mayor or perhaps even most of you on city council. Yet I implore you to consider my perspective before you make your decision.

Mayor Ford, as a self-styled populist, I hope that you will listen to myself and others, the people of Toronto, and keep our libraries open for the public good.

Sincerely,

Ari Gross

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Ari Gross
Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology
Victoria College, University of Toronto
Room 316, Victoria College
91 Charles Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1K7
Canada