



**Toronto Public Library
Workers Union**
Local 4948

Affiliated with
CUPE and the
Toronto & York Region
Labour Council

Maureen O'Reilly
President

Brendan Haley
Vice-President

Viveca Gretton
Recording Secretary

Carmela DeGiorgio
Secretary-Treasurer

Brian Raymer
Toronto Reference Library

Joanna Cristini
North York Central Library

Nahid Rahnavard
North Region

Karen Smith
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December 10, 2012

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

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

RE: TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD (TPLB) 2013 OPERATING BUDGET

I want to touch on five (5) issues today:

1. Listening to Toronto – Again
2. This City Continues to Have a Revenue Problem
3. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Report "The Great Equalizer: The Case for Investing in the Toronto Public Library"
4. The TPLB 2013 Budget Recommendation and the City Manager's Recommended Budget
5. A Path Back to Recovery

Listening to Toronto

Last year, Torontonians were engaged in the debate around city services and especially around the library service.

The library workers undertook an online petition where we generated over 60,000 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.**

City Council last year stopped the budget cut for the library at 5.9%.

Torontonians clearly told this administration that the library service was important to them and to the city. The library for many makes this city more liveable and prosperous. Yet we have another round of a disappointing budget exercise which again delivers cuts to the library service if the City Manager's recommendation is adopted.

**This City Continues to Have a Revenue Problem and
This Administration Has Been a Part of the Problem**

This city continues to have a revenue problem.



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

We still haven't heard from you either on "how to fix things". We brought those suggestions forward and there was no follow up.

The 2012 budget process itself ended with the final vote at council on January 17th, 2012. Over the past year, there have been no public consultation meetings or special council meetings to discuss revenue sources. There has been a paucity of ideas coming forward from this administration on how to solve the city's revenue problem. Talk continues to this day about the elimination of the land transfer tax. And once again, the city is working at a disadvantage due to the mayor's premature announcement of municipal tax figures before the budgets are even submitted, nonetheless reviewed.

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

**The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Report:
"The Great Equalizer: The Case for Investing in the
Toronto Public Library"**

This report documents how the Toronto Public Library system has been reeling under years of real cuts to staffing, operating, capital and acquisitions budgets. The report shows that the 1990s, in particular, were a disastrous decade for the funding of Toronto's libraries and that we have turned back to the same slash and burn mentality. The report is especially important because it examines what has happened to the Toronto Public Library over a twenty year period instead of just the current year.

Here are some of the findings from the "Great Equalizer":

- The operating budget of Toronto's libraries were **cut from \$166 million to \$129 million** in 1997 (2002) dollars
- The **cumulative operating cuts** since 1992 for the city's library budget totals **\$800 million**



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- The cumulative cuts to the acquisitions budget since 1992 have taken **\$51.6 million in materials off the shelves**, resulting in a narrower selection of materials, even as demand grows
- Since 1992, Toronto has **lost 532 library staff** and its nearly 25% below what it was years ago
- In the 1990s, many of Toronto's libraries were forced to **cut service hours. We have never regained those lost hours** (see: p. 7)

The report goes on to state: "By 2010, the library had come **within \$7 million of its 1992 levels of funding** (in 2002 dollars). **It wasn't sufficient to serve the larger populations and increased operating requirements**, but it appeared that, at long last, the Toronto Public Library Board was back on the right track.

But in 2010-11, the politics of gravy trains and tax cuts plunged the Toronto Public Library back into a crisis". (see: p. 8)

All of this was done against the backdrop of the Toronto Public Library system being the busiest library system in North America and often the world.

I would just like to leave you with one more fact from the report: **More people visit the TPL every year than the annual total for 10 culture, arts and entertainment facilities in the Toronto area combined** including the Air Canada Centre (events, Leafs and Raptors), the Rogers Centre (events, Blue Jays), the CN Tower, the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada's Wonderland, the Toronto Zoo, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ontario Science Centre, the CNE, and the Toronto International Film Festival. (see: pp. 11-12).

If you have not read this report, I encourage all of you to do so before you make any more decisions about the Toronto Public Library budget. (See: <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/great-equalizer>)

The TPLB 2013 Budget Recommendation and the City Manager's Recommended Budget

The staff at the library has recommended a .3% increase. The citizen members of the TPLB Budget Committee said this was too much and that the library needed to cut more. In a very puzzling reversal, the citizen members came back with a .4% increase to the budget which now



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included a .1% increase to expand library open hours. The reason given was that the one of the citizen members stated that he wanted his legacy for the board to be one of fiscal responsibility as well as contributing to the enhancement of the service.

The local, on the one hand, was happy to see the expansion of service hours and the addition of 4 ftes to bring this about. In TPL's 2006 report "A Best Thing a Library Can Be is Open", a statement was made in the implementation plan that **"Plans including staffing requirements and costs will be further developed and refined."** To date, this analysis has not been provided. The 4 ftes seem to be an arbitrary number and we cannot see how 4 undefined positions can over the expansion of 1,794 hours in 8 district libraries. **We don't think it is fair that an already overstretched staff will be stretched again.**

The City Manager recommended that the library budget be approved at a .2% increase. This recommendation does not include any economic adjustment for collections or any funding for the open hours enhancement. **If this recommendation is approved this will mean that the library collections budget has been cut five (5) years in a row.**

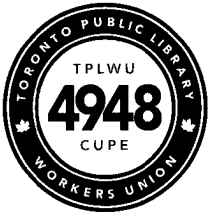
The budget document presented at the last library board meeting on November 29th represented the budget at a .6% increase which now included management and exempt staff COLA increases. The board had been assured that the city would absorb this cost. Therefore, if you take the City Manager's recommendation at face value it seems to suggest that the library operating budget is sitting at 0%. **Yet another cut for our public library.**

A Path to Recovery

We know that Torontonians love their library. We know that we are the busiest public library system in North America. (We circulated 33 million items last year and 19 million people came through our doors).

And now we know that Toronto's public library has been reeling under chronic underfunding for the past 20 years.

We need the staff recommended budget of .3% approved. Personal legacies are not a good enough reason to act in haste and approve monies where proper cost analysis has not been done. We cannot tolerate any more cuts to our collections budget.



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We need a multi-year comprehensive, detailed plan put together on how we can restore the Toronto Public Library.

We need future budget debates, while remaining fiscally responsible, to turn to city building.

Toronto deserves nothing less.

Your truly,

Maureen O'Reilly
President
TPLWU Local 4948