



**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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East Region

**Mary Bissell**  
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# BV6.1.3

January 12, 2016

Via email

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

Dear Councillor Crawford, Chair, and Members of the Budget Committee

## **RE: TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD 2016 OPERATING BUDGET**

Toronto Public Library is the busiest urban public library in North America. Something we all can be immeasurably proud of. TPL : great library, great people, great city.

We have had our ups and downs over the years as we have made our way through this budget process. However, I truly find this year the most strange of all. I found it bizarre that on the same night in September when the library board was unanimously endorsing the Poverty Reduction Strategy, they were also unanimously endorsing another cut to library staff.

Irony abounds. In the Poverty Reduction Strategy we would like to draw your attention to the chapter entitled "Quality Jobs & Living Wages". The report cites that 43% of workers in Toronto are precarious. TPLWU Local 4948 maintains that 50% of all workers in Toronto Public Library are part-time and meet the agreed upon definition of a precarious worker as defined by the PEPSO Project. From disclosure that we received from our employer, our pages now average 43 years of age. This is no longer an after school job for high school students looking to make a few bucks.

The report states: *"Toronto cannot achieve its vision of being an equitable and inclusive city while so many residents are unable to find quality jobs."* 86% of library workers live and work in the City of Toronto. Most of our members who are trapped in precarious jobs in the library are young and come from Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods according to TPL's Diversity Survey (2010, as yet unpublished). You will meet two of those young workers shortly.



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We respectfully ask that you reverse the decision to cut 6.9 FTEs in the page classification which I understand represents a cost of \$250,000 and restore the possibility of a future to a worker in the library. Those FTEs actually represent jobs for 14 to 18 pages.

The library budget itself remains at 70% the rate of inflation since amalgamation and we have experienced a 17% staff cut. We've already done our share.

But you have heard all of these figures before, the business cases, the pleas, the rationalizations, to change the library budget.

I would like to turn the presentation over to Alice and to Tori. And I would ask them to introduce themselves to you and for you to hear what it means to be a precarious worker in the library, in our great city of ours.

**Alice Schonblum's Story:**

My name is Alice Schonblum and I work at the Toronto Public Library as a page at the Sanderson Branch. I am 25 years of age and I have been working at TPL for a few years now.

I work 9-1 on Wednesdays, 1-5 on Thursdays, and 9-1 on Fridays for a total of 12 hours per week. I earn just above minimum wage. I hold down another job in retail to make ends meet and for now that other employer is willing to work around my TPL schedule. This allows me to be able to continue to work for the library.

As a library worker, as a precarious worker, I really don't earn enough to be able to live in Toronto, hence the two jobs. I have come to terms with the fact that I will never own a house. I worry about visiting the dentist and getting the bill - that is a pay cheque and a half.

My life's aspirations? Well my dream was always to work in the library & it took 10 years of applying to achieve that so my new goal is to get a full time position in the TPL so maybe another 10 years

**Tori Macdonald's Story:**

My name is Tori Macdonald, I work as a part-time public service assistant in the Children's Department at North York Central Library. I live in Ward





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28 (Toronto Centre-Rosedale) Pam McConnell is my councillor. I am 31 years of age and I have worked at the library for 15 years now.

I have worked in over 80 branches in TPL. A typical work week for me is working all over the city, sometimes doing split shifts: morning in Etobicoke, evening in Scarborough. Sometimes I'm not working beyond my regular shifts of 17.5 hours, due to a lack of extra hours.

I rely on public transit and spend hours travelling to and from work daily. I often get home at 10 pm at night or later.

This kind of work affects my sleep, as I work mostly evening shifts. This in turn affects my health.

As a library worker, as a precarious worker, I do face many challenges as a precarious worker. The lack of stability--I worry about money sometimes, and whether there will be a steady stream of extra hours or not. I worry that my position will be phased out, in order to be replaced by express check-out stations. Increasingly there are fewer staff members doing more and more work. This is a current issue that I see taking place across branches all over Toronto and it makes me extremely nervous.

When I do extra hours, I am sometimes standing on my feet for the entirety of a seven-hour shift, interacting with patrons all the while. It's exhausting and it makes my body worn out. I pay into benefits, but it's expensive. I can't take days off easily because of no paid sick time.

This has an effect on my ability to spend time with my family and friends, because I'm working a lot of evening and weekend shifts. Until recently, I was working every Saturday and Sunday. I sometimes work seven days a week.

What are my life's aspirations? Pretty generic stuff here! Family, children, owning a home in Toronto. All of these things are impossible as a single person in the city. I would really like to have children one day and I couldn't do that on the sole income of a part-time worker. Rent, childcare, living expenses are through the roof.

Would also love to travel more, but I'm conscious of every dollar and I only have unpaid vacation

I seriously considered attending library school in order to move up in pay. Again, this is an expensive venture. I have to think about how I would



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continue to support myself and make it through school in one piece without going into debt.

I continually feel a sense of panic and worry, and carry a concern that I may always be struggling with money and these terrible shift options. How many years as a part-timer must I work before I'm able to have a half-decent schedule and the same respect as a full-timer with regards to benefits and schedule.

**In Conclusion:**

I would implore Toronto City Council to change this situation for these workers, Tori and Alice and their colleagues. This situation largely effects the female dominated workers in the City of Toronto. The city must show leadership on this issue and change now. After all as our Prime Minister has said, its 2016.

Yours sincerely,

*Maureen O'Reilly*

Maureen O'Reilly  
President  
TPLWU Local 4948

cc. TPLWU Executive Board