

February 02, 2021

Mayor John Tory and Councillors
City of Toronto
100 Queen Street West, 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Tory and City Councillors,

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Public Library Board with respect to the 2021 operating budget. First and foremost, we would like to express our appreciation for the 3.8% budget increase that will help us serve and support Toronto residents, including vulnerable populations, and address the financial impacts and recovery from COVID-19.

At the January 25, 2021 meeting of the Toronto Public Library Board, it was recommended that I communicate with City Councillors to strongly urge you to reconsider funding for the two enhancements currently not recommended: Community Librarians and Digital Literacy for Seniors. These programs support the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy and the City's Seniors Strategy respectively, and would have a significant positive impact on people's lives in the challenging year ahead.

While working onsite in partner agency locations, **community librarians** work closely with agency staff and clients. The intent is for the librarians to learn about and understand these clients' information needs, and respond by providing the best possible mix of the full range of library services and programs. Community librarians have worked in many settings including Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, The Toronto East and South Detention Centres, Toronto Employment and Social Services. A 2021 budget enhancement would allow us to focus on delivering

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City Librarian

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the services in shelters, work with agencies to support individuals recently released from the correctional system and focus on confronting anti-black racism by working with agencies dedicated to serving black communities in Toronto.

Digital Literacy for Seniors supports social connectedness by expanding digital literacy programs for seniors, both in branches and in the community. The in-branch program targets disadvantaged seniors who are socially isolated, with low income, and lacking digital literacy and likely both devices and home connectivity. The community-based program is designed in partnership with Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) to engage socially isolated seniors by bringing regularly scheduled library services, delivered by a community librarian, directly to the TCHC seniors' buildings where they reside. Both in-branch and community programs will address the diverse needs and challenges among Toronto's seniors as identified in the City of Toronto Seniors Strategy.

As outlined in TPL's [operating budget submission](#), the Community Librarians' budget enhancement totals \$0.107 million net and gross (2021-2022 total cost of \$0.411 million net and gross) and the Digital Literacy for Seniors budget enhancement totals \$0.212 million (2021-2022 total cost is \$0.723 million net and gross to support eight additional branches each year).

We are asking you to reconsider these budget enhancements because we know the meaningful impact they will have on Toronto and particularly on our most vulnerable residents. If we can answer any questions or provide any information before City Council meets on February 18 and 19, please don't hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



Sue Graham-Nutter
Chair, Toronto Public Library

cc: Vickery Bowles
City Librarian