

January 26, 2022

Budget Committee
City of Toronto
Toronto City Hall
10th Floor, West Tower
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair Crawford and Members of the Budget Committee:

Re: Toronto Public Library Board – 2022 Operating Budget – City Staff Recommended

Pursuant to the Toronto Public Library (TPL) Board meeting of January 24, 2022, where a report on the [2022 Operating Budget - City Staff Recommended](#) was considered and the adopted recommendations are listed below, this communication requests City Council to fund the shortfall of \$0.500 million to implement the Adult and Teens Fines Elimination, and also requests funding for two other service enhancements totaling \$0.311 million in 2022 for Digital Literacy for Seniors and Community Librarians Outreach programs which were not included in the City staff recommended budget but were included in the Board-approved budget submission.

The recommendations adopted by the Board are:

The Toronto Public Library Board:

- 1. endorses the City staff recommendation to eliminate teens and adults overdue fines, and request that the \$0.500 funding shortfall be provided by City Council for a total funding of \$1.100 million net, or 0.5%, in 2022; and*
- 2. requests Council to consider funding for the Digital Literacy for Seniors and Community Librarians Outreach service enhancements totalling \$0.311 million net and gross, or 0.2%, including 4.0 positions, in 2022.*

The Adult and Teen Fines Elimination, Digital Literacy for Seniors and Community Librarians Outreach service enhancements will have meaningful impact on Toronto residents,

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particularly the City's most vulnerable, and support many of the City's key equity strategies including the Poverty Reduction Strategy, TO Prosperity and the Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0.

Further details on these service enhancements are provided below:

Adult and Teens Fines Elimination

Library fines pose a significant barrier to library use for many vulnerable populations, especially racialized groups, people living in poverty and persons with low-income. Fines create social inequity as the library cards of people from racialized and low-income (high priority) communities are blocked from library use at a higher rate than others. Taken together with the Council approved funding for eliminating fines for children in 2021, this means that all overdue fines will be eliminated in 2022, which brings Toronto in line with hundreds of other libraries across North America.

The Adult and Teens Fines Elimination requires \$1.4 million of funding of which \$0.3 million was raised by the TPL Foundation to help spread the budget pressure over two years. Of the remaining \$1.1 million required in the 2022 budget, only \$0.600 million was included in the City staff recommended budget leaving a funding shortfall of \$0.500 million.

Digital Literacy for Seniors

This service supports social connectedness by expanding social inclusion and digital literacy programs for seniors. The community-based program is designed in partnership with Toronto Community Housing (TCH) to engage socially isolated seniors by bringing regularly scheduled library services, delivered by a community librarian, directly to the TCH seniors' buildings where they reside. This City of Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0 initiative will address the diverse needs and challenges among some of Toronto's most vulnerable seniors. The Digital Literacy for Seniors program would add two full-time positions and equipment in 2022, and two additional positions in 2023, to support the community-based program in TCH locations, for a cost of \$0.206 million in 2022, with full year costs of \$0.671 million in 2023.

Community Librarians Outreach

While working offsite 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, and Toronto Employment and Social Services. The 2022 service enhancement would allow TPL to focus on delivering 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. The Community Librarians Outreach program would add two full-time positions in 2022 and two additional positions in 2023, for a cost of \$0.104 million in 2022, with full year costs of \$0.422 million in 2023.

The Board appreciates your consideration.

Sincerely,



Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

Attachments:

Board DRAFT Minutes (Excerpt) No.: 22-020

Board Report No. 19: *2022 Operating Budget - City Staff Recommended*