



Toronto

Councillor Joe Mihevc

Toronto City Council
St. Paul's West
Ward 21



MEMO

TO: Josephine Bryant, Chief Librarian, Toronto Public Library

FROM: Councillor Joe Mihevc

RE: **TPL's HARMONIZED ROOM BOOKING POLICY**

DATE: January 17th, 2001

I have attached a copy of a letter from Peter Mutchler, a retired librarian, regarding Toronto Public Library's proposed harmonized room booking policy. I request its distribution at the next Board meeting.

Sincerely,

Councillor Joe Mihevc
Ward 21, St. Paul's West

JM/sh

Councillor Joe Mihevc
Toronto City Hall,
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2



Dear Councillor Mihevc:

It was reported in a November issue of *The York Guardian* that the Library Board is considering charging non-profits and other community groups \$20.00 an hour for use of library space for meetings. The reason reported in the *Guardian* was this was the policy the former North York Library Board. And the inference in the report was a policy good enough for North York is now good enough for the new City of Toronto.

I would like to protest this proposed charge to community groups for several reasons. First, just because North York had such a policy, and such high charges, does not mean that it is in the best interest of the rest of Toronto. Prior to Amalgamation, community groups, even in North York, had the alternative opportunity of using schools after hours. This was in keeping with the concept of the open school, or the "lighthouse" school, a building always open to the community. The community had paid for the building through their taxes, and taxes were also used for the day-to-day operations of the school system. Longer hours of use enabled schools to become more involved with the total community, and spread the costs over a longer period. Schools were becoming more than just anonymous buildings where children disappeared from nine to three thirty, and then were closed.

With the seizure of the Toronto's school buildings by the present government, and the requirement that the School Board charge 'economic rent' for the use of school facilities after hours, if this policy and the charges recommended, \$20.00 an hour, is adopted, small community groups and non-profit organizations will be denied inexpensive meetings areas. You cannot always meet in someone's basement or living room.

Second, a library is a service organization, and its primary function should be to provide a wide range of services as possible, not just limited to the providing of books and other materials. Meeting rooms, lectures by non-profits, adult education, display of works by local artists, are but a few of the services that a library should be providing at a nominal fee to its citizens.

Third, a library is a public building, owned by the public, not the organization in charge; they are caretakers on behalf of the public, and should ensure that the non-profit public has use of the building, within reason. Libraries have been built with very little, if any, provincial government funding. Unless ordered by City Council to charge full economic rent to all users, I firmly believe that the Library Board should try and encourage the public's use of the various facilities available. And in the case of community groups charge a nominal fee of, perhaps, \$10.00 for the evening.

Fourth, I see no contradiction in charging for profit groups full economic rent, including a profit for the Board.

Yours truly
Peter Murcher

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Peter Murcher", written over the typed name.