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COMMUNICATIONS GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING – April 30, 2018

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives Communication (a) from Vickery Bowles, City Librarian, Toronto Public Library to The Honourable Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance, dated March 20, 2018, expressing support for the Ontario Library Association's and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries' budget request to the Ontario provincial government, for information.
2. receives Communication (b) from Michael Shiravand to Toronto Public Library Board members, dated March 26, 2018 regarding a meeting room booking at the Fairview Branch on March 23 and 24, 2018, and requests the City Librarian to respond, incorporating the following points:
 - a) The Library learned on the evening of the first booking that the event was attracting protesters who objected to the presence of Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush. At the March 23rd event, some of the protesters entered the event, attempting to disrupt it. Police maintained order.
 - b) The Library takes the concerns raised very seriously and assessed the situation from a legal, library and public perspective. The purpose of the event was a lecture about Iranian studies by a visiting international scholar. A staff member monitored both events and confirmed the content of the events was consistent with the purpose of the booking. It was confirmed the organizers of the event agreed to the terms and conditions as set out in the booking contract.
 - c) Dr. Soroush is described as an Islamic scholar, intellectual and a former professor of philosophy at the University of Tehran and Imam Khomeini International University. Investigations indicated Dr. Soroush has been a visiting scholar in the United States with affiliations at Princeton, Yale and Harvard Universities and has been an invited guest speaker at the London School of Economics. Dr. Soroush was in Canada legally and has a history of speaking internationally.

- d) It is determined the event bookings with Dr. Soroush as a guest speaker was in compliance with the law and the Library's Community and Event Space Rental Policy and Rules of Conduct. To deny access to booking library space for an event on the basis of the views or opinions of those who oppose Dr. Soroush contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the principles of intellectual freedom, both cornerstones of the Library's mission and values.
- e) In making this decision, the Library took the concerns expressed about these bookings very seriously and took the necessary measures to ensure the safety and security of the public and staff were not compromised.

March 20, 2018

The Honourable Charles Sousa
Minister of Finance
Province of Ontario
7th Floor, Frost Building South
7 Queen's Park Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Y7

Dear Minister Sousa:

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) have submitted a budget request to the Ontario provincial government for sustainable, predictable funding for all public libraries and First Nations libraries across Ontario by increasing annual base funding from \$33 million to \$50 million – an increase of \$17 million in annual funding. Currently, the Toronto Public Library receives \$4.1 million in annual operating funds, which has been flat-lined since the 1990's.

In addition, OLA and FOPL have requested \$25 million in annual funding for the development and implementation of Ontario's Digital Library. This initiative will support the development of digital content and make additional resources available to Ontarians.

The Toronto Public Library urges the Province of Ontario to:

- recognize the contribution of public libraries within their communities and to cease the 20-year budget freeze in public library funding;
- reinstate adequate and appropriate funding for public libraries, increasing each year going forward in line with the consumer price index; and
- dedicate \$25 million in annual funding for the development and implementation of Ontario's Digital Library.

Public libraries provide safe, inclusive and vibrant public spaces that offer digital inclusion, cultural programming and lifelong learning opportunities, where all are welcome to learn, work, connect and collaborate.

Public libraries serve residents and communities in ways no other institution can. They empower Ontarians to thrive in the digital age and global knowledge economy through expanded access to technology, lifelong learning and diverse cultural and leisure experiences, online, in our branches and in the community. No other public institution has the mandate and reach, physical and technical infrastructure, talent and community presence to support digital inclusion and literacy for all.

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Office of the City Librarian

Public libraries engage with the community and contribute to a culture of economic and social equity by providing free and open access to a diversity of information and resources in a welcoming and safe environment.

Public libraries continue to transform and modernize their services to meet the changing needs of Ontarians and support provincial initiatives such as poverty reduction, lifelong learning and skill development, local economic development, health literacy, and equitable access to provincial government websites, e-resources and services.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vickery Bowles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Vickery" on the top line and "Bowles" on the bottom line.

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

/nrm

c: Premier Kathleen Wynne
Province of Ontario

Minister Daiene Vernile
Tourism, Culture and Sport

Mayor John Tory
City of Toronto

Sue Graham-Nutter, Chair
Toronto Public Library Board

Dear Members of the Board of the Toronto Public Library,

Background

“Cultural Revolution”: Islamization and Purging of universities in Iran

In early March post the 1979 Revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini announced, "do not use this term, 'democratic.' That is the Western style," In addition Khomeini labeled opponents with term use Takfir (declaring someone guilty of apostasy, a capital crime) and threatened to deal with them with the death penalty for apostasy "if they did not repent."

In succession, oppositions were considered to be Moharebeh (person in "war against God and the state," a capital crime), the political parties were banned starting in August 1979, the freedom of speech, assembly and association came under attack in February 1980, forced Hijab was imposed and universities across country were declared to be contaminated with Gharbzadegi ("the Western plague").

In February 1980 concentrated attacks by hezbollahi thugs (Islamic Militia) began on the meeting places and bookstores in Iran.

March 1980 was the beginning of the Islamic State "Cultural Revolution" which lasted for three years (1980–1983) - a period following the Iranian Revolution when the academia of Iran was purged of Western and non-Islamic influences and brought in line with the Islamic State's ideology.

Directed by the Cultural Revolution Council, and later by the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council, universities were closed and after reopening, many books banned, burnt and thousands of students and over 700 lecturers were purged from universities.

During this period, the Cultural Revolution involved torching books, brutally beating and killing students in taking over the university campuses. In addition to suppressing the freedom (freedom of thoughts, speech, assembly and association), education and professional livelihood of many, the Cultural Revolution was a major blow to Iran's cultural and intellectual life and achievement.

There are many Canadians including Dr. Reza Moridi, the Ontario Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, fell victims to of the purging by the Islamic “Cultural Revolution Council” (CRC). Prior to purging, DR. Moridi, a physicist, was the Dean of the School of Sciences, Chair of the Physics Department and Chief Librarian and member of the Senate at Alzahra University (Queen Farah Pahlavi) in Tehran.

Numerous political figures, clerics and academics were involved in the Cultural Revolution. The following individuals are known as main players:

Ruhollah Khomeini – founder;

Ali Khamenei - founder and head of the Council;

Mohammad Javad Bahonar - member of Council;

Ahmad Ahmadi - member of Council;
Jalaleddin Farsi - member of Council;
Mehdi Golshani - member of Council;
Hassan Habibi - member of Council;
Ali Shariatmadari - member of Council;
Mostafa Moin - minister of science and member of Council;
Hassan Arefi - member of Council - mostly involved in expelling medical scientists;
Mohammad Ali Najafi - minister of science and member of Council;
Asadollah Lajevardi - "Bucher of Evin Prison";
and infamous:

Abdolkarim Soroush (born Hossein Haj Faraj Dabbagh) – master mind and spoke person of “Cultural Revolution Council”; “an Islamic thinker, reformer, Rumi scholar, public intellectual, and a former professor of philosophy at the University of Tehran and Imam Khomeini International University.” (Personal Biography)

Dear Board Members,

Unfortunately, we have witnessed that an Islamic propaganda organization, “Sohrevardi Foundation” with strong attachment to the regime in Iran, has used Fairview Public Library as venue to organize and host speeches by Mr. **Abdolkarim Soroush** on 23rd, 24th and 28th of March 2018.

I am sure that you and the management of the Fairview Public Library are not aware who really Mr. **Abdolkarim Soroush** is; however, the victims, those who are still alive and managed to escape brutality, remember him vividly and still suffering and hunted by the terror and crimes committed against them.

It must be noted that Mr. **Abdolkarim Soroush** is well-known for his role as mastermind and spoke person of [Islamic Republic of] “Iran Cultural Revolution” - Council in charge of Islamization and Purging of all universities in Iran.

The victims still remember him for atrocities committed under his leadership and his Council; atrocities such as: Human Rights violations, brutal suppression of Freedom, closure and Islamization of universities, purging, expelling students, denial of access to higher education, sexual segregation, banning entrance of minorities (ethnic, religious, non-believers) – a policy which still in practice today by the Islamic state in Iran.

Dear Board Members, on behalf of Mothers against Execution Institute and thousands of the victims of atrocities committed by the members of the Islamic “Cultural Revolution Council”, particularly Mr. **Abdolkarim Soroush**, I am writing to you to express our sadness, frustration and disappointment in permitting an Islamic propaganda organization, “Sohrevardi Foundation” to abuse Toronto Public Library in facilitating speeches given by an Islamic criminal.

We believe that Public Libraries is a democratic, intellectual and humanistic place which provide an environment for respectful exercise of freedom of expression: thoughts, speeches ...; a sanctuary for people, knowledge and books - a place that books are safe and people protected -

NOT a venue for a Book Burner who has promoted brutal suppression, censorship, segregation ... and propagated Crimes against Humanity.

It is comforting to know the Toronto Public Library cherishes its Vision, Mission and Values in preserving and promoting universal access to "human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment ... in a democratic society, protecting intellectual freedom and respecting individuals' rights."

In this regard, we kindly ask that the Toronto Public Library uphold its Code of Conducts and Values (accountability), in conducting due diligence in permitting dubious and ill-founded alien propaganda organization to abuse the generosity of the Library; furthermore, to cancel this particular event and such events in the future.

Thank you for your cooperation and please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Sincerely Yours,

Michael F. Shiravand
Investigative photo-reporter



CC:

- Honorable Dr. Reza Moridi, Ontario Minister of Research, Innovation and Science
- Ms. Sue Graham-Nutter (Chair)
- Mr. Strahan McCarten (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Paul Ainslie
- Councillor Sarah Doucette
- Councillor Mary Fragedakis
- Councillor Jim Hart
- Ms. Dianne LeBreton
- Mr. Ross Parry
- Ms. Archana Shah
- Ms. Eva Svec
- Ms. Diana Arras - Library Service Manager, Fairview District