
**COMMUNICATIONS
GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE**

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING – September 27, 2021

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives Communication (a) from Lucas Emirzian and Arturo Luque, Co-chairs, TPL's Pride Alliance, to Vickery Bowles, City Librarian, TPL, dated July 10, 2021, thanking the City Librarian and the Toronto Public Library Board for the new Gender Affirmation Benefit provided to TPL staff through the TPL employee health insurance carrier, for information;
2. receives Communication (b) from Sue Graham-Nutter, Chair, Toronto Public Library Board, to Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board, dated July 20, 2021, as an example of the letter sent to the Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy and to the Hon. Lisa MacLeod, Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, asking the Ontario government to meet with TPL and other Ontario public libraries in order to collaborate on the achievement of the Ontario government's digital and data strategy, Building a Digital Ontario, for information;
3. receives Communication (c) from Minister Bethlenfalvy's office to Philippa Williamson, Library Board Officer, TPL, dated August 04, 2021, advising that responsibility for the Ontario government's digital and data strategy, Building a Digital Ontario, falls under the purview of the Hon. Kaleed Rasheed, Associate Minister of Digital Government. A meeting between the

Associate Minister's Office and TPL Directors took place on September 17, 2021;

4. receives Communication (d) from Dina Stephens, Executive Director, Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, to Vickery Bowles, City Librarian, Toronto Public Library (TPL), dated July 29, 2021 thanking Toronto Public Library for its years of support and assistance, including IT support, printing services, and use of hardware (like telephones and computers) as well as facilities and maintenance, for information;
5. receives Communication (e) from Krista Wilcox, Director General, Office for Disability Issues, Income Security and Social Development Branch, Employment and Social Development Canada, on behalf of Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, to Sue Graham-Nutter, Chair, Toronto Public Library Board, dated August 11, 2021, confirming continued funding support for the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS), for information. This letter was sent in response to a letter from Sue Graham-Nutter to federal ministries in support of the CELA and NNELS public advocacy campaign;
6. receives Communication (f) from Shaun Chen, MP, Scarborough North to Sue Graham-Nutter, Chair, Toronto Public Library Board, dated August 19, 2021 confirming continued funding support for the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS), for information. This letter was sent in response to a letter from Sue Graham-Nutter to 24 local M.P.s in support of the CELA and NNELS public advocacy campaign;
7. receives Communication (g) from Sue-Graham Nutter, Chair, Toronto Public Library Board, dated September 9, 2021 to Sarah Fulford, Chair, Toronto Public Library Foundation, thanking her for her dedication and contributions as her term as Foundation Board Chair comes to a close.

July 10, 2021

Dear Vickery,

On behalf of Pride Alliance, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to the City Librarian and the Toronto Public Library Board for the new Gender Affirmation Benefit offered through Green Shield Canada. Your efforts and thoughtfulness to make Trans and Non-binary staff feel welcome is greatly appreciated. Gender affirming procedures are life affirming and lifesaving, and this benefit helps cover some of the costs not covered by OHIP, which can be a significant barrier for people in their transitioning journey.

Sincerely,

Lucas Emirzian and Arturo Luque

Co-Chairs of Toronto Public Library's Pride Alliance

20 July, 2021

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, M.P.P.
Minster of Finance and President of the Treasury Board
Treasury Board Secretariat
Whitney Block
Room 4320, 4th Floor
99 Wellesley St. W
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1W3

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

On behalf of the Toronto Public Library Board, I am writing to congratulate you on the launch of the Province's first digital and data strategy, *Building a Digital Ontario* – a significant achievement. I am also writing to call on the Province to collaborate with Toronto Public Library (TPL) and other public libraries across Ontario to help achieve the goals and outcomes articulated in the Strategy.

TPL and public libraries across Ontario align with the Strategy's core vision: *to ensure that everyone in Ontario has access to the digital basics they need, like reliable and affordable internet, and training that gives them the skills to succeed in the new digital economy* as a foundation to becoming the most digitally-advanced jurisdiction in the world. **Public libraries are critical to achieving this vision**, and collaboration has the potential to accelerate our shared goals and outcomes, advancing digital access, literacy and inclusion for all Ontarians.

With 374 systems in neighbourhoods and communities throughout Ontario, public libraries serve people where they live, work, learn and come together. Core to their mandate and mission is to provide critical digital access and digital literacy skills and supports. Recent data gathered through the provincially-supported [Bridge Technology Services Assessment Toolkit](#) demonstrates the value that public libraries provide:

- 53% of respondents reported that the library was their only point of access to the technology that they used

Library Board

Chair

Sue Graham-Nutter

Councillor Paul Ainslie

Jonathan Hoss

Tamara Balan

Jennifer Liu

Vice Chair

Alim Remtulla

Sarwar Choudhury

Alison Menary

Andrea Geddes Poole

Councillor Gord Perks

City Librarian

Vickery Bowles

- 80% of respondents indicated increases in their level of digital comfort after receiving technology service(s) and support at the library
- 59% of respondents used the library's technology service(s) for educational activities
- 33% of respondents used the library's technology service(s) to access online government resources
- 34% of respondents used the library's technology service(s) to develop employable skills
- 46% of respondents who used the technology service(s) to improve their job skills were successful in finding a job.

As the largest public library in Ontario, and with a unique provincial mandate set out in the Ontario Public Libraries Act, TPL is well positioned to work with the Province and other Ontario public libraries to advance the goals of the Province's Strategy.

There are five key areas the Board has identified as potential opportunities where public libraries can be working with the Province to help it achieve its strategic outcomes:

1. **Increase bandwidth and technology in public libraries** for Ontarians to access digital government services and data as well as to ensure equitable access to education, health and workforce opportunities across the province;
2. **Incubate innovative program models in public libraries to address a range of shared goals** including:
 - a) increase Ontarians' understanding of digital privacy rights and risks, and methods to increase online safety;
 - b) increase Ontarians' access to reskilling and retraining opportunities, with a particular focus on equity deserving groups, so they can succeed in the digital economy.
3. **Expand current public library evaluation practices to measure the impact of broadband efforts, digital government services, and digital literacy programs** in bridging the digital divide and advancing digital equity in communities. TPL currently leads the [Bridge Project](#) started in July 2016 through a research and innovation grant from the Ontario Government. It currently collects and analyzes similar data and these efforts could be leveraged to meet provincial needs.
4. **Establish public libraries as a trusted “curator” of open data collections** whereby the public can easily access a comprehensive catalogue of open data in-branch or online. Libraries can also provide access to technologies not readily available or affordable by the general public to analyze the data. Finally, librarians as knowledge

workers can support the public in their data queries and analysis to support good decision-making in health, education, life or business.

5. **Capitalize on the public library's understanding of its communities by including public library representation on Ontario Strategic Data Leadership Councils.** In this role, public libraries could provide targeted, sector-specific advice to the government on how to harness data more effectively to increase people's participation in the digital economy, find new opportunities for growth, and support more Ontario businesses.

By pursuing the above initiatives, public libraries can help to accelerate the progress of Ontario's digital and data strategy while achieving better outcomes and a greater impact for Ontarians.

The Board looks forward to further discussions about these collaborations. Our City Librarian's Office will be in touch with your Office to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sue Graham-Nutter".

Sue Graham-Nutter
Chair, Toronto Public Library Board

Cc: Kevin Finnerty, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

Vickery Bowles, City Librarian, TPL

C.

From: Zikic, Borjana (MOF) [mailto:Borjana.Zikic@ontario.ca]
Sent: Wednesday, August 4, 2021 9:11 AM
To: Philippa Williamson <pwilliamson@tpl.ca>; Kaminska, Kasia (MOF) <Kasia.Kaminska@ontario.ca>
Cc: White, Edward (MOF) <Edward.White@ontario.ca>; Timoshenko, Julia (MOF) <Julia.Timoshenko@ontario.ca>; Swiatowiec, Anna (MOF) <Anna.Swiatowiec@ontario.ca>; Hogeveen, Emily (MOF) <Emily.Hogeveen@ontario.ca>
Subject: 1453 -FW: Correspondence: Letter from TPL Board Chair: Building a Digital Ontario and the role of public libraries

Good morning Phillipa,

Thank you very much for reaching out to Minister Bethlenfalvy with a meeting request on behalf of Toronto Public Library Board. The Minister and his team appreciate hearing your views and concerns, consider every invitation or request with great interest and try to attend, schedule permitting.

Unfortunately, due to the Minister's extremely demanding schedule, we are unable to accommodate your request at this time. The Minister sends his regrets and he also wishes you every success in the future endeavours.

Since the issues you have raised fall into the purview of Digital Government, Minister Bethlenfalvy is happy to defer your communication to Hon. Kaleed Rasheed, Associate Minister of Digital Government and his team for their review and consideration. Should this be acceptable for you, I am cc'ing @Kaminska, Kasia (MOF) from Minister Rasheed's office and a member of their staff will get in touch with you shortly to follow up on your request.

Thank you again for reaching out to Minister Bethlenfalvy.

Sincerely,
Borjana

Borjana Zikic
Minister's Scheduler
Office of the Minister of Finance
416-314-6331

July 29, 2021

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian
Toronto Public Library
789 Yonge St.
Toronto, ON M4W 2G8

Sent via email

Dear Vickery,

On behalf of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries I would like to thank Toronto Public Libraries and yourself for the years of support and assistance. FOPL is truly appreciative as without this support our organization would not have had the foundation necessary to flourish. Thank you for the IT support, use of printing services, hardware such as telephones and computers as well as facilities and maintenance. Though I have been with FOPL for a short time, these contributions have not gone unnoticed and as we migrate to our own network and hardware, it has become even more apparent.

We remain ever appreciative for the ongoing contribution of physical office space at the Toronto Reference Library. Thank you for your continued support as it is integral to the ongoing success of our organization.

Kind Regards,



Dina Stevens, MLIS
Executive Director

Federation of Ontario Public Libraries
c/o Toronto Reference Library
789 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON M2N 5N9
Phone: 416-873-8139
Email: dinastevens@fopl.ca

e.

From: EDSC.SM.CORR.DEPT-MS.CORR.DEPT.ESDC@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca
[mailto:EDSC.SM.CORR.DEPT-MS.CORR.DEPT.ESDC@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca]

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 11:15 AM

To: Philippa Williamson <pwilliamson@tpl.ca>

Subject: Funding for the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS)

Dear Ms. Williamson and Ms. Graham-Nutter:

On behalf of the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, I am responding to your correspondence, which the Office of the Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, forwarded to her. You wrote regarding funding for the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS) to provide accessible materials to Canadians with print disabilities. I regret the delay in replying.

I understand the circumstances that prompted you to write. Improving the social and economic inclusion of Canadians with disabilities is a priority for the Government of Canada. Please be assured that the Government is committed to fostering inclusion and to preventing and removing barriers for persons with disabilities so they can enjoy the same quality of life as those without disabilities. In doing so, we are building a stronger economy and country.

The Government of Canada continues to be committed to the principle that everyone should be able to access information and reading material. In keeping with this commitment, the Government joined the Marrakesh Treaty four years ago. At that time, the Government set up a working group that included disability groups, CELA and NNELS, and the publishing industry to develop a long-term strategy on the production of alternate format materials in Canada.

Since 2015-2016, the Government has provided approximately \$20 million in funding for the production and distribution of alternate format materials. CELA and its partner organization, the CNIB Foundation, as well as NNELS, have received funding to ensure that those with disabilities have accessible materials available to them through public libraries. However, as library services fall under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, there has never been a dedicated source of funds for the production and distribution of alternate format materials and services through the Government of Canada.

In Budget 2019, the Government of Canada announced \$22.8 million over five years to fund the Transition Strategy for the Production of Alternate Format Books in Canada. The Strategy was developed based on the results of the Working Group on Alternate Format Materials for Canadians with Print Disabilities, of which both CELA and NNELS were contributing members, as were other disability organizations, the publishing sector, and

provincial and territorial governments. There was a general agreement among the Working Group that a strategy should support the transition of alternate format production from the not-for-profit sector to the publishing industry. As a result, the Strategy aims to:

- enable the production of accessible reading materials by independent Canadian publishers so that digital books are “born accessible” when they go on the market;
- support the development of new technologies so that access to alternate formats is quicker and cheaper; and
- provide transitional funding for CELA and NNELS as independent Canadian publishers prepare to produce accessible digital books.

Transitional funding of \$10 million was announced in the Fall Economic Statement 2020 to support the not-for-profit sector. This funding will enable access to alternate format materials, such as braille, e-books and audiobooks, while Canada’s independent book publishing industry continues to increase the production and distribution of accessible books. This funding will also support Canadians with print disabilities in developing technological skills and their capacity to use new digital tools in an ever-changing world.

In recognition of the challenges the pandemic has created for the accessible publishing industry and the importance of reading materials to decrease isolation for persons with print disabilities, the Government of Canada announced an additional \$1 million for CELA and NNELS in 2021-2022. Together, these investments provide stable and predictable funding for these organizations and represent the fulfillment of the Transition Strategy.

These investments are early action items under the Government of Canada’s Disability Inclusion Action Plan, announced in the September 2020 Speech from the Throne. The Action Plan also includes a commitment to bring forward the Canada disability benefit, a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities, and a better process to determine eligibility for government disability programs and benefits. On June 22, 2021, the Government introduced legislation that would establish the framework for the proposed Canada disability benefit.

The Government of Canada recognizes that while we have made great strides in fostering inclusion and equality for persons with disabilities, there is still much work to do be done as we move toward a more accessible and inclusive Canada.

To that end, the Government of Canada will continue to work together with the disability community, including CELA and NNELS, other governments, stakeholders and all interested citizens, to improve the social and economic inclusion of Canadians with disabilities.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

Krista Wilcox
Director General
Office for Disability Issues
Income Security and Social Development Branch
Employment and Social Development Canada

From: Chen, Shaun - M.P. [mailto:Shaun.Chen@parl.gc.ca]
Sent: Thursday, August 19, 2021 11:43 AM
To: Philippa Williamson <pwilliamson@tpl.ca>
Subject: RE: Letter from Toronto Public Library Board Chair re: CELA and NNELS funding

Dear Ms. Graham-Nutter,

Thank you for your e-mail and attached letter regarding funding to the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS). Your advocacy on this matter is deeply valued.

Please accept my apologies for not responding sooner, as my office unfortunately misplaced your e-mail, and it was recently located. I apologize for any inconvenience caused.

Earlier this year, our federal government announced an additional \$1 million under the Social Development Partnership Program – Disability component, to support the activities of the NNELS and the CELA in providing accessible reading materials to people with print disabilities across Canada.

We also announced an additional investment of \$10 million over four years for CELA and NNELS, to support the transition towards industry-based production and the distribution of accessible reading materials for Canadians with print disabilities.

You can be rest assured that our government has and will continue to support equitable access to library services for people with disabilities.

With that said, your feedback is well taken, which is why I am taking the liberty of sharing your concerns with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth for their review and consideration.

Thank you once again for your invaluable advocacy. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me, and I hope you remain safe and healthy.

Sincerely,
Shaun



Shaun Chen

Member of Parliament
Scarborough North

4386 Sheppard Avenue East, Unit C
Scarborough, Ontario M1S 1T8
416-321-CHEN (2436)

September 09, 2021

Sarah Fulford
Chair
Toronto Public Library Foundation Board
789 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario M4W 2G8

Dear Sarah,

On behalf of the Toronto Public Library Board, I would like to thank you for your extraordinary contributions to the Toronto Public Library Foundation over 10 years of service on the Foundation Board, including three years as Board Chair.

The ongoing hard work and success of the Foundation has delivered enormous benefits to TPL's customers through expanded access to technology and resources, lifelong learning and diverse cultural experiences, in our branches, online and in the community.

Sarah, through your outstanding connections across the City, your advocacy, and your proud support of TPL, you have raised the profile of the Foundation significantly and taken its critical philanthropy work to the next level. Your instrumental role in the launch of Biblio Bash, including placing Victoria Webster at its helm, has ensured great success for this event and I know this legacy will continue for years to come.

Even more recently, I am particularly proud of the way the Foundation and the Library continue to work together to support Torontonians through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Foundation's fundraising for Internet Connectivity Kits, for example, was crucial in helping to bridge the digital divide in our society, which was only exacerbated by the pandemic, and this proved to be essential to many living in Toronto's communities during an unprecedented and difficult year for us all.

Library Board

Chair

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Councillor Paul Ainslie

Jonathan Hoss

Tamara Balan

Jennifer Liu

Vice Chair

Alim Remtulla

Sarwar Choudhury

Alison Menary

Andrea Geddes Poole

Councillor Gord Perks

City Librarian

Vickery Bowles

Please accept our heartfelt appreciation for your dedication to the Toronto Public Library Foundation, and for ensuring the Foundation is in good hands in the years to come. We are exceedingly grateful to you for all you have done in support of TPL.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sue Graham-Nutter".

Sue Graham-Nutter
Chair
Toronto Public Library Board