
February 20, 2014

Mayor Rob Ford and City Councillors of Toronto
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Rob Ford and City Councillors of Toronto,

We were heartened by the support we saw Torontonians and City Council display for their library during the recent budget process, and we are confident that the City's ongoing investment in the library will continue to ensure the excellent service that Torontonians have come to expect, and that we at the library are so proud of.

During the budget process, it came to the Board's attention that the "Our Public Libraries" advocacy campaign that Toronto Public Library Workers Union Local 4948 ran in support of the Toronto Public Library contained inaccuracies about the library's budget and services, and misrepresented the voting records of some city councillors.

The Board would therefore like to take the opportunity now to correct the record with respect to errors and inaccuracies in several campaign claims. This fact-check document was prepared by TPL staff.

We are at the beginning of an exciting year, with two new branches opening and increases to the library's collections budget and open hours made possible by new investments made by City Council in the Toronto Public Library. The Board is looking forward to these expanded opportunities to better serve the residents of Toronto, and we look forward to another successful year.

Sincerely,



Michael Foderick
Chair, Toronto Public Library Board

Library Board

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Michael Foderick

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“Our Public Library” Campaign Fact-Checking Document

“Our Public Library” Campaign Claims and Toronto Public Library (TPL) Fact Checks

Union campaign claims taken from materials provided at the November 24, 2013 Toronto City Hall Forum on the Future of Our Public Library event, and from the ourpubliclibrary.to website.

Note that all facts provided by TPL are based on library activities and budgets since amalgamation. Since this is the time that the library became the Toronto Public Library, the facts and figures are more relevant and pertinent to the services delivered today, and to the funding and budget processes established since amalgamation.

Campaign Claim #1:

“Last year, Mayor Ford wanted Council to cut \$17 million from the Toronto Public Library Budget. The impact would have been devastating. The vote was close. 21 Councillors supported the 10% cut. 22 did not.”

TPL Fact Check:

In the 2012 budget year, the library’s budget target set by the City was a 10% reduction, or \$17 million. The Toronto Public Library Board put forward a recommended budget with a \$10 million reduction, to be achieved through savings, efficiencies and increased revenues, and without any significant service impacts. Council voted for the \$10 million reduction as part of the overall recommended City budget.

Of the remaining \$7 million, \$3.2 million was restored by Executive Committee, and the remaining \$3.8 million was restored by Council, in the 22/21 vote the “Our Public Library” campaign refers to. (The Executive Committee motion that was being voted on was to reduce the library’s budget by \$3.8 million as an unallocated budget reduction, so those councillors who supported the Executive Committee motion were voting for the library to find the savings in its budget without cutting library services.) Full text of the motion can be found in [2012-01-12 Minutes - City Council, Motion #9](#).

Campaign Claim #2:

“Altogether, our public library has absorbed more than \$800 million in cumulative funding cuts”

TPL Fact Check:

From 1998 to 2013, the TPL budget has increased from \$117.1 million to \$180.8 million on a gross basis and \$104.5 million to \$165.4 million on a net basis.

Campaign Claim #3:

“More service reductions are being planned for 2014 and beyond.”

TPL Fact Check:

The TPL Board-proposed and Council-approved 2014 Operating budget contained a 1.3% or \$2.2 million increase to the Toronto Public Library budget. This funding supports the ongoing maintenance of existing library services, collections, programs and staffing, and also allows for the following enhancements to library service:

- The opening of two new branches in 2014 (Fort York and Scarborough Civic Centre), with 20 new positions
- Additional 34.5 hours per week at seven district branches and the Toronto Reference Library, with four new positions

Campaign Claim #4:

“At the time of the merger in 1998, TPL’s share of the city budget was just over 2 cents of every dollar spent. Over time, that share has declined 26%, shortchanging Our Public Library today by \$46 million a year. Every year.”

TPL Fact Check:

If you look at TPL’s share of the city budget over time in terms of **gross** dollars (total City funding from the property tax base *and* funding from other sources), then TPL’s share has declined 21% since amalgamation (from 2.4% in 1998 to 1.9% in 2013). TPL’s share of the city’s **net** budget (funding that comes from Toronto’s tax base only), on the other hand, has increased 4.7% (from 4.3% in 1998 to 4.5% in 2013).

Campaign Claim #5:

“The TPL’s acquisition budget has been cut in each of the last four years and has suffered cumulative cuts of more than \$50 million.”

TPL Fact Check:

Several factors affect the library’s collections budget and its buying power. In several of the years since amalgamation, the value of the Canadian dollar, alternate funding sources (such as grants and donations from the Foundation), and TPL’s participation in library consortium buying have all increased the library’s spending power and augmented the City’s contribution to the library’s budget. As a result, even when City funding has been reduced in some years, the overall impact to the library’s budget has been minimized.

Over the past four years, TPL has forgone some economic adjustments with the collections budget reduced from \$17.401 million to \$17.376 million, a \$35,000 reduction, and, as a result, has seen a reduction in its buying power. Since 2011, when the current Board was appointed, the collections budget has gone from \$17.12 million to \$17.37 million in 2014, which is an increase of \$250,000.

The approved 2014 operating budget includes a 3.6% or \$621,000 increase to the library’s collections budget for a total budget of \$17.987 million.

Campaign Claim #6:

“525 TPL staff positions have been cut since 1992, including all children’s librarians (more than 300 since 1998).” Also, “... all children’s librarian positions have been eliminated from our public library.”

TPL Fact Check:

TPL has had net staffing reductions of 299 FTEs from 1998 to the end of 2013. This consists of a gross decrease of 339.08 FTEs, offset by increases of 40.08 FTEs over that period. 24 new positions will be added in 2014.

Much of these staffing reductions have been managed through investment in new automation and self-service technologies, and the introduction of efficiencies.

Children’s services remain a high priority for the library. In fact, they’ve been enhanced over the years by the introduction of Ready For Reading (services designed to build early literacy skills in children) and the introduction of KidStop early literacy centres at branches across the city. Earlier this year, the library introduced its Middle Childhood Framework, which provides the foundation for the development and delivery of a comprehensive suite of programs and services for Toronto’s children ages six to 12, and their families.

Over the years, several staff positions were created to deliver and support children’s services at Toronto Public Library, including: librarians, service specialists, and a Children and Youth Advocate. We continue to have a full complement of staff to support these services, with several new positions having been created and children’s services staffing expanded.

Campaign Claim #7:

“Branch hours cut dramatically in the 1990s and never fully restored; literacy programs eliminated.”

TPL Fact Check:

Since amalgamation, library open hours have increased, supported by the Library Board’s open hours vision, “Doors Wide Open”. Since 2007 the library has increased open hours by 396.5 hours per week, adding additional days of service as well as more morning and evening hours at many branches. The 2014 budget includes funding for an additional 34.5 hours per week at seven district branches and the Toronto Reference Library, and funding to support the opening of two new library branches in 2014 – Fort York and Scarborough Civic Centre – which will increase open hours by an additional 124 per week.

TPL has increased its focus on literacy programs over the years, and it is a major area of focus for the 2012 – 2015 strategic plan. Family Literacy, Adult Literacy, Leading to Reading and Ready for Reading early literacy services for children birth to five and their parents and caregivers are all good examples of the significant investment the library has made in building and supporting literacy for Torontonians of all ages.

Campaign Claim #8:

"The TPL faces a \$165 million tab to return our public library branches to a state of good repair."

TPL Fact Check:

The \$165 million appears to be based on the Board's 2011-2020 Capital Plan submission which had gross funding of \$235.9 million and debt funding of \$165.7 million, which covers all capital needs including information technology, electronic services and buildings.

The approved 2014-2023 capital plan approved by City Council is \$242.8 million gross, \$154.5 million debt funding. This funding addresses the library's annual capital needs, including on-going building state of good repair needs, and also partially addresses the library's state of good repair backlog, reducing it from \$47.9 million (beginning of 2013) to \$29.5 million by the end of 2023, a 38.4% decrease over the 10 years.

Campaign Claim #9:

"Increased user fines and advertising schemes have been introduced to address its [TPL's] financial shortfall. For the first time ever, our public library is losing users, especially children and teenagers. Left unaddressed, this will have long-term negative consequences for our city."

TPL Fact Check:

The library tracks its usage statistics very carefully, and monitors registration rates of each user group, with a particular focus on children and youth. Registration rates fluctuate year over year, affected by a variety of factors, and we have seen drops in registration rates in past years. However, in 2013, customer registration was up 3% over the year before, and although teen and children registration dropped in 2012, it rose again in 2013. The library's strategic plan has a focus on increasing registration, and we are also working to capture all kinds of customer usage through card registration. (In 2012, 72% of Torontonians reported using the library, while only 51% were registered cardholders, so capturing this other usage beyond the library card – programs and in-branch study, for example – is important.)

Campaign Claim #10:

"... the TPL has been forced to cut literacy and other programs that help newcomers land on their feet, as well as to reduce third language publication acquisitions."

TPL Fact Check:

While some public sector funding allocated for newcomer programs has been reduced, the library has been successful in finding other funding sources to maintain services, including sponsorships and donations, and we remain committed to the continued investment in these important services.

There has been a small reduction in spending on multilingual print collections and audio/visual materials; however, this has not be as a result of any collections budget reductions. Trends in use, developments in publishing and the availability of material published in languages other than English and French are some of the considerations when allocating budgets for the library's various collections. Use of TPL's multilingual collections has been decreasing in recent years, reflecting demographic shifts. At the same time, there have been changes in publishing with more multilingual content available in electronic formats such as e-books. In response to these trends, the library has shifted funds from traditional formats such as books and periodicals to more electronic content.

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