

October 6, 2008

Toronto, Ontario

Dr. Kathy Gallagher Ross, Chair
Toronto Public Library Board
789 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 2G8

Dear Dr. Ross and Members of the Board:

We are writing to you on behalf of individuals connected with the board and staff of the former Scarborough Public Library. Our purpose is to solicit the Toronto Public Library Board's co-operation in commemorating the late Peter J. Bassnett, who passed away in February of this year.

Peter Bassnett served as Chief Executive Officer of the Scarborough Public Library from 1975 until his retirement in 1995. His tenure spanned almost half the life of the Board, which was founded in 1955 and dissolved at the end of 1997. For people in Scarborough who had some connection with its library system during the 1970s, 80s and 90s, Peter's name was synonymous with public library service.

Peter's influence in the development of public library service extends beyond the municipality of Scarborough. In 1980, he was seconded by the Province of Ontario to lead a program review of public library service. In the course of his work, Peter travelled to every municipal library in the province and consulted widely within the public library community. His report formed the basis of substantial revisions to the Public Libraries Act of 1984, which continues to provide the legislative and regulatory framework for public library service in the province.

Scarborough was a rapidly expanding suburban municipality when Peter was recruited from North York to take charge of Scarborough Public Library. Peter brought order to the process of managing this growth with the publication in 1978 of *Framework for the Development of Library Service in the Borough of Scarborough*. This planning and policy document conveyed a clarity of purpose which was appreciated not only by the library board but also by municipal council. Indeed Peter's calm, reasonable, straightforward approach to his work was acknowledged and appreciated among municipal councillors and administrators. He was the first CEO of the library to participate regularly in municipal department heads' meetings and was able to use this opportunity to gain recognition for the important contribution of public libraries to the life of the municipality.

When Peter addressed staff meetings, he frequently introduced his remarks by saying, "Libraries are firstly about people." He made it a priority for the library to reach out to and engage the community. For example, a number of public libraries had established staff positions to develop multilingual collections to better serve growing immigrant populations. Peter took the idea one step further by establishing the first staff position to develop not only multilingual collections but also multicultural services.

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It is the desire to recognize Peter's remarkable role in the development of public library service that has inspired us, his former friends and associates, to come to you with a proposal to honour his memory.

We are proposing that Peter's memory be honoured in two ways:

1. That Peter's contribution to Scarborough be commemorated in one of the library branches in the former municipality of Scarborough, and
2. That Peter's career-long commitment to the development of public library service be recognized through sponsorship of an award to assist library staff in furthering their public library education.

These preferences have been discussed with Peter's widow, Ann Bassnett, who has indicated that the family approves of this approach and may wish to participate in any fundraising that is undertaken.

It is our view that the naming of a meeting room in one of the Scarborough branches would be an appropriate form of commemoration and would be in keeping with the Toronto Public Library's Naming Policy. The Bassnett family lived in the Goldhawk Park community for many years. The meeting room in that branch would be our first choice.

To raise funds for sponsorship of an award, we need a registered charity as a partner. We have met with the President of the Toronto Public Library Foundation, Heather Rumball, who has indicated the Foundation's willingness to work with us in this endeavour. The objective of fundraising will be to create an expendable fund, i.e., the money collected will be spent for the designated purpose until the fund has been exhausted.

The naming of a room and the raising of funds to sponsor an award can proceed independently of one another; however, we believe that the fundraising will be more successful if they are linked. The dedication of a meeting room would create an event to which potential contributors would be invited, and fundraising for the award could be promoted at that time.

We understand that this proposal may be forwarded to the Board's Naming Committee. We would be pleased to meet with the committee, discuss the proposal in greater detail and answer any questions they may have.

Yours truly,



Marjorie Daw
Chair, Scarborough Public Library Board, 1988

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Bas Balkissoon, MPP
Scarborough-Rouge River
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August 27, 2008

Dr. Kathy Gallagher Ross, Chair
Toronto Public Library Board
789 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON M4W 2G8

Dear Dr. Ross and Members of the Board:

I am pleased to write this letter expressing my support for the proposal to commemorate the contribution of the late Peter Bassnett to the former Scarborough Public Library.

Peter was involved with the Scarborough Public Library for twenty years. I sat on the board as a member during Peter's tenure as Chief Executive Officer and knew him well since 1988.

Peter was an excellent Chief Executive Officer, with a great commitment to public service and a tremendous instinct for knowing how to use the public library system to build a sense of community in our rapidly growing and evolving Scarborough neighbourhoods. He is credited with providing the leadership that led to the successful development of a network of libraries in Scarborough that continues to benefit residents today.

I hope you will consider honouring Peter's memory by dedicating a library meeting room to him, and by sponsoring a staff award in his name. I believe these memorials would be particularly fitting for an individual who made such a significant contribution to the public library system in Scarborough.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bas Balkissoon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Bas" on the first line and "Balkissoon" on the second line.

Bas Balkissoon, MPP
Scarborough-Rouge River

Memorandum to: Gillian Mason
From: Wil Vanderelst
Date: August 19, 2008

I am very pleased to support an undertaking by the Toronto Public Library Board to acknowledge the contribution of Peter Bassnett in the development of public library service in Toronto, and the Province.

I first met Peter in 1983 when I became the Director of the Libraries and Community Information Branch. As the new Director of "the Branch" I was immediately confronted with the Ontario Public Library Review - aka the "Bassnett Review". Peter had been seconded from the Scarborough Public Library by the Province to define how Ontario's public library system could be rejuvenated and, equally important, how best to prepare for the technological and other challenges which were then rapidly becoming apparent.

The Bassnett Review involved Peter consulting with over 200 communities over a two and a half year period. There were 14 Task groups each with six or seven members feeding into the process. There were few aspects of public library service, the Public Library Act, and Branch programs which were not dissected and analyzed. The result was the "Bassnett Report", a coherent set of recommendations which formed the basis of a new Public Library Act as well as a myriad of new initiatives by the Government. Although many changes have occurred to the administration of public library service in Ontario, the Public Library Act with its regulations has remained essentially unchanged since 1984.

Other than the vision that Peter identified in his report for Ontario's public libraries, the review under his careful guidance motivated Ontario public libraries to act as a "community" in a way not seen before. The result was the development of various province-wide strategic planning initiatives such as "One Place to Look" and the various coordinated strategies regarding digitization of information we see today. From my perspective these initiatives can be traced back directly to Peter and his review.

Throughout the period of the review and its immediate aftermath Peter was always a kind and patient force. Whether confronted by frustrated library board members in the North claiming that Toronto did not understand their situation or the madcap antics of opposition members in the legislative committee debating the draft Public Library Bill, Peter never lost his "cool". He was always the gentleman exuding quiet confidence that eventually other would see it his way. And they usually did.

In stating all this I want to emphasize the personal relationship I had with Peter. We met regularly over lunch during my tenure. Frequently our lunch would be followed by Peter touring me through one of the Branches in the Scarborough system. Usually the visit was to show case an initiative that his Board and staff had undertaken. The pleasure and pride he took in showing me these initiatives was wonderful to see. Many of these initiatives were either groundbreaking or far in advance of what most other libraries had undertaken.

Over the years, as usually happens, I lost touch with Peter and I was saddened to hear of his death. I owe him much for his kind advice freely given. I truly believe the Toronto Public Library Board owes him much for what he achieved in Scarborough. I know that the Province has benefitted from his dedication and experience. For these reasons I heartedly support the Toronto Public Library Board in acknowledging Peter Bassnett's contribution.

Wil Vanderelst

Director, Libraries and Community Information Branch (1983-89)

President, OLA (1989-90)

Toronto Public Library Board (1990-95)

**Supporters of the Proposal
to Commemorate
Peter J. Bassnett**

Bas Balkissoon, M.P.P.	SPLB Council appointee, 1991-1994
Ahmed Bhalloo	SPLB Chair, 1992-1993
Sheila Churchmuch	SPLB Chair, 1980-1981
Justice Paul Cosgrove	SPLB Council appointee, 1973-1975
Marjorie Daw	SPLB Chair, 1988
Lois DeGroot	SPLB Chair, 1974-1975
Sandy Douglas	SPLB Chair, 1996-1997; TPLB 1998-2001
Richard Goldsmith	SPLB Chair, 1988-1991; TPLB Chair/Vice Chair, 1998-2002; TPL Foundation Chair/Vice Chair 2001-2006
Susan Hunt	SPLB Chair, 1985-1987
Fred Johnson	SPLB Council appointee, 1995-1996
Flora McKinlay	SPLB Chair, 1983-1984
Ron Moeser	SPLB Vice Chair, 1996
Karen Moloney	SPLB Vice Chair, 1985
Edith Montgomery	SPLB Council appointee, 1983
Maureen Prinsloo	SPLB Council appointee, 1986-1988
Drucilla Travnicek	SPLB Vice Chair, 1997
Ron Watson	SPLB Chair, 1995

Heather Carmody	SPL Manager, 1976-1997
Daphne Cheng	SPL Librarian, 1973 -1997
Ann Eddie	SPL CEO, 1995-1997
Nancy Hall	SPL DCEO, 1976 -1979; Etobicoke Public Library CEO, 1979-1990
David Reddin	SPL DCEO, 1995-1997

And other friends and colleagues of Peter J. Bassnett