



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

9.

Toronto Public Library Celebrates Reading Award – 2009 Award

Date:	May 12, 2008
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

In 2001, the Toronto Public Library Board approved the creation of an annual award, the *Toronto Public Library Celebrates Reading Award*. Award winners have been:

2001	Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark
2002	Kenneth Oppel
2003	TV Ontario
2004	Dennis Lee
2005/2006	Margaret Atwood
2007	Robert Sawyer
2008	Peter Robinson

The goals of the Award are to raise the profile of the Toronto Public Library, promote reading and raise the profile of Canadian literature. The Award was developed to be the highlight of “A Novel Afternoon,” the original annual fundraising event in support of the Toronto Public Library Foundation held between 2001 and 2003. In 2006, 2007 and 2008 the recipients were announced and the award presented at The Book Lover’s Ball.

The format and focus of The Book Lover’s Ball differs significantly from “A Novel Afternoon”. In addition, Toronto Public Library is undertaking a number of new initiatives in 2008 which have similar goals to the Toronto Public Library Celebrates Reading Award. The support of these new initiatives also requires significant staff time and resources. As a result, the relevance and need for the Toronto Public Library Celebrates Reading Award in its current form need to be re-evaluated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. defers the Award in 2009 and re-evaluates; and
2. reports back to the Board after the 2008/2009 programming review.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this report.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

DECISION HISTORY

At the May 15, 2006 Toronto Public Library Board meeting, the Board directed staff to review the Toronto Public Library Celebrates Reading selection process at a later date. On October 13, 2007, the Toronto Public Library Celebrates Reading Award Committee met to begin the process of reviewing the selection process and selecting the 2009 award recipient. Tina Edan represents the Board on this committee.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

During the review, the issue of the recipient's availability for Library events was discussed. For the past three years, the recipient has been expected to attend The Book Lover's Ball where the winner is announced and given the award. The Committee felt that there might be other opportunities/events that the Library could ask the recipient to attend instead of The Book Lover's Ball if the recipient is unavailable on that date. Another option might be to create a video presentation to be shown at The Book Lover's Ball about the recipient, however, the award would be one of many event components competing for attention. There was also some interest expressed in developing a selection process that includes more public involvement in selecting the award winner. However, the Committee felt that revising the process in this way could not be accommodated within the context of other activities that the Library is currently undertaking.

During the process review, the Committee noted that the current environment in which the award is being presented has changed significantly from when it was introduced. Toronto Public Library is now engaged in a number of new initiatives that have similar goals to the award. These initiatives include Keep Toronto Reading, the One Book program and the Toronto Book Awards which the Library will be presenting in partnership with the City in 2008.

As a result of discussions about the selection process and the current environment, the Committee reviewed a number of scenarios which include continuing the Award in its present state, discontinuing the Award or enhancing it by increasing marketing and communication tactics with events and activities related to the Award. Since the undertaking of the One Book program and partnering on the Toronto Book Awards are being implemented for the first time in 2008, the Committee felt it would be best to defer presenting the award for one year (2009) in order to evaluate the impact of these other initiatives on the organization's resources and on the achievement of the goals of raising the profile of the library, promoting reading and raising the profile of Canadian literature. It was also acknowledged that the need for the Award in relation to the requirements of the Toronto Public Library Foundation's special events had changed.

COMMENTS

In September 2008, the Marketing & Communications Department will be providing the Board with an overview of a number of programs and initiatives that the Library has undertaken in 2008 and will discuss 2009 plans for such initiatives as Keep Toronto Reading, the One Book program, a planned children's literature festival and the Library's involvement and support of significant city-wide programs such as the Toronto Book Awards, Nuit Blanche, Lit City and Luminato.

The possibility of deferring the award for one year has been discussed with the Toronto Public Library Foundation, and the Foundation is in agreement with this approach.

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SIGNATURE

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