

## Nancy Marshall - Re: Submission to the Library Board, Tuesday, September 13, 2011

**From:** Murray Lumley <murraylumley@ca.inter.net>  
**To:** <nmarshall@torontopubliclibrary.ca>  
**Date:** September 12, 2011 4:58 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Submission to the Library Board, Tuesday, September 13, 2011  
**CC:** <mayor\_ford@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_robinson@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_palacio@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_doucette@toronto.ca>, <councillor\_ainslie@toronto.ca>, Janet Davis <councillor\_davis@toronto.ca>, <action@ourpubliclibrary.to>  
**Attachments:** 2011\_09\_13 Submission to the Library Board.doc

### Submission to the Library Board, Tuesday, September 13, 2011

My wife and I are regular users of, and we love the Toronto Public Library. We moved to Toronto seven years ago and found out how convenient and close was our local branch – about a five minute walk from our apartment on Danforth Avenue. We also love the ability to go online at home and search the vast library collections and then order online books, magazines, DVD's and other materials. These are then put on hold for us and are sent to our local branch for our pickup. We also receive email notifications of when the materials have arrived at our local branch.

In the past couple of years we have been able to check out our own materials electronically without using the time of a librarian – which must be an ultimate labour cost saving to the Library. We also notice the large number of diverse people who make use of our branch, young and old, men and women and children and many nationalities of new Canadians. Our branch has copies of the latest newspapers and magazines and there are always people using these materials at any given time of day. Computers for internet and email access are also available and I see people waiting to use them. I also see a very high number of what I would describe as new Canadians using the library, probably for job searches, research and language training. Our branch also has a French language section which the staff promote. There is a fairly large Francophone community in our neighbourhood and I am personally interested in reading French magazines and books to keep up a bit with my own French. Our two bilingual Toronto granddaughters attend a French school and they and their parents also use this library branch. We have also attended public meetings in the meeting room at our local branch.

I attended the Core Service Review, Public Consultation this spring and from its summary, Toronto citizens placed Public Libraries in eighth place (ranked by more than 80% of participants) of importance of 35 services provided by the City as 'necessary for the city', just behind other essential services such as Public Transit, Fire, Water, Emergency medical, Public health, Waste collection, Roads, sidewalks, traffic – services. So Torontonians think their Library is very important to them.

Also from Wikipedia on the internet:

*"The Toronto Public Library is the largest public library system in Canada and in 2008, had averaged a higher circulation per capita than any other public library system internationally, making it the largest neighbourhood-based library system in the world.<sup>[1][5]</sup> Within North America, it also had the highest circulation and visitors when compared to other large urban systems."*

From the 2010 Library Annual Report:

*"In 2010, Toronto Public Library had another banner year, with customers visiting our physical and virtual branches, borrowing materials, using our in-branch internet and wireless services, and attending programs – all in record numbers once again. With more than 18 million visits to our branches and more than 32 million items borrowed, 2010 was again our busiest year ever.*

*And internationally, the Toronto Public Library continues to maintain its position as the busiest urban public library system in the world\*.*

*\* Toronto Public Library has higher circulation per capital (11.9) than any other international or North American library system serving a population base over 2 million."*

Some interesting statistics taken from the Appendix A, Part 2 - KPMG Standing Committee Summary, Executive Committee:

- 98 branches, 2 Research and Reference, 17 District, 79 Neighborhood.
- Total Sq. Ft. : 1,776,897 public space.
- 17,544,470 visits per year.
- Current Standard: 1 library branch per minimum 25,000 population, 0.1 hour per capita (= 6 minutes per person use).
- 3 year trend shows 2.6% increase in visits."

I want to comment on some of the Appendix A, Part 2 - KPMG Standing Committee Summary, Executive Committee: suggested Key Opportunities for Cuts and Privatizations:

1. "Consider shared services with City for finance and human resources.

Consider shared services with City for finance and human resources.

KPMG 'Risks' - Benefits administration could be reviewed to be shared with the City."

I have no expertise on whether this is a good idea or not.

2. "Consider consolidating Toronto Archives with Library Services

• There may be some economies of scale from integrating the Toronto Archives with the Library."

I believe this one is already underway. It probably is not a good idea from the point of view of availability of resources to citizens wishing to use the archives.

3. "Consider opportunities to reduce services (hours and days of operation)

• The hours of operation of libraries could be reduced, taking into account the level of activity at various times.

KPMG 'Risks' - Will impact customer access and use of facilities."

I do not agree with this reduction in days and hours of service. The libraries have already had their hours and days cut. Our branch closes at 8:30 pm Monday to Thursday and at 5 pm on Fridays and Saturdays and is closed on Sunday. I see that a few branches have very brief Sunday hours. I think that 8:30 pm and 5 pm closings are too early for working people and children and their parents who would benefit from evening and Sunday hours.

4. "Consider rationalizing the footprint of libraries to reduce service levels, closing some branches

• Some library branches could be closed."

KPMG 'Risks' - "Residents may strongly disagree with library closures and participation/visitation rates may drop."

Considering the data given by KPMG that:

"Current Standard: 1 library branch per minimum 25,000 population, 0.1 hour per capita (= 6 minutes per person use).

• 3 year trend shows 2.6% increase in visits."

It appears that library branches are already being used to capacity and closing branches will create hardships for our seniors and those without autos to get to their closest library branch. KPMG recognizes the risk in closing branches.

5. "Consider reducing or eliminating some programs and outreach activities

• Programs and outreach activities could be reduced or eliminated.

KPMG 'Risks' - Prioritize the elimination of services based on impact and risk."

I do not have expertise to comment but I think reducing programs and outreach activities runs the same risk as mentioned above – a decline in library use.

I submit to you that there is no reason for these cuts. The Toronto Public Library is a class leveller. It is available to everyone no matter how economically rich or poor. If implemented, these cuts will move us in the wrong direction - toward even more inequality in society which is harmful to everyone in society, not just the poor.

The KPMG so-called 'opportunities' represent cuts to people who do not have the ability to purchase their own books, newspapers, magazines, computers and internet access. Over the past thirty years or more, the most wealthy among us have received tax cuts and high income increases while working people's wages and benefits to the poor have stagnated. We have just gone through a period where our taxes have bailed out wealthy banks, bankers and auto companies. Now at the same time, the city administration and KPMG are telling us that we cannot afford the traditional services represented by our Public Library. This is grossly unfair!

The Ford administration never ran in the election on draconian cuts to the citizens of Toronto. They promised that there would be no need for cuts. I participated in the Core Service Review Public Consultations and have read the KPMG summaries of these citizen roundtables. The number one choice of participants to deal with a deficit was to

increase property taxes to keep the same level of city services. The most popular property tax increases chosen were five and ten percent, given that there was no property tax increase for 2011. The highest majority also wanted the city to deliver municipal services rather than contracting out.

The Ford administration is deliberately trying to 'create a crisis' of insolvency when it is clear that there is no real spending or debt crisis. This is in order to achieve their goal of smaller government which seems to mean cuts to services or turning every service over to the private sector and out of the surveillance of the people we elect to maintain accountability. I am all for fiscal responsibility, appealing to the upper levels of government to contribute their fair share and even to have as small a government as is possible, but not on the backs of the most vulnerable of our neighbours.

As an article in the most recent NOW magazine pointed out – there is plenty of revenue to be had. Beside a modest increase in property taxes, there is money from the following: a reintroduced vehicle registration tax; a small TTC fare increase (though I am not in favour of this – I would like to see TTC fares gradually reduced to encourage more ridership); a small increase in the land transfer tax; efficiencies that can be found; limiting the police budget (with more equality there can be savings here); one time revenues and assessment growth. I would add to that the beginning of a 'congestion tax' during peak periods on Toronto's main road arteries, which would encourage TTC use, alleviate the major problem of traffic congestion, and provide needed revenue.

The will of the people of Toronto is clear. They do not want these cuts to our Public Library and they are willing to pay for these vital services. As you make your report to City Council, please advise against these cuts and vote against them, and encourage your colleagues to do the same.

Thank you,  
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