

To: Toronto Public Library Board – March 29, 2004

From: City Librarian

Subject: **Toronto Public Library Volunteer Recognition Practice**

Purpose:

To inform the Toronto Public Library Board of the Library's current volunteer recognition practice.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

The Library's volunteer recognition practices cost \$11,000 and are currently accommodated within the annual operating budget.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board receive the *Toronto Public Library Volunteer Recognition Practice* report for information.

Background:

Toronto Public Library utilizes volunteers to offer programs to the public that would not otherwise be able to be offered. In most cases, volunteers work one-on-one or in small groups with children and adult learners to improve their literacy and learning skills. These volunteers are in the Leading to Reading, Homework Clubs, Adult Literacy, and Rap N' Read programs. Volunteers in the Youth Advisory Groups assist staff through advising on programs and services of interest to youth. Volunteers assist the Mobile Library Services department to deliver an institutional deposit collection service. Volunteers who are members of the Friends Groups and the Foundation help raise funds for the Library.

To date, Library volunteers have been recognized in a number of ways. These include:

- official recognition of volunteers' contributions from the Toronto Public Library Board at an annual volunteer reception;
- awards to volunteers with designated years of service;
- the annual purchase of a token gift for all volunteers;
- the nomination of volunteers to external awards programs such as the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards;
- featuring volunteers in articles in Library publications;

- privileges such as waiving of fines and the waiving of the non-resident fee for any non-resident volunteers after six months of service and access to photocopying at the staff rate; and
- wrap-up events for individual programs.

Programs expanded with amalgamation so that there are now over 1100 volunteers participating in TPL programs, contributing 56,600 hours annually. An increase in costs for the reception and pressures resulting from program expansion led to a review of Library volunteer recognition practice.

Comments:

The review consisted of discussions with staff and volunteers, a survey of other large organizations with volunteers, and of the professional literature. This indicated that the most effective volunteer recognition programs have a combination of formal and informal recognition practices. Recognition programs that typically work are those that are directed to the individual and his or her specific contribution or task, occur frequently but not excessively, and are based on consistent policies. The more that recognition can be tied to the actual work the individual does and the specific contribution made, the more likely it is that the recognition activity will be valued. Volunteers particularly appreciate on-going recognition and feedback tied to performance, and valued local activities that helped build connections between the service, staff, and volunteers.

Much of what is currently being done will be maintained, but the following changes will be introduced. The annual system-level volunteer reception will be discontinued in favour of volunteer recognition activities taking place at the local program-level. Also, the purchase of a token gift will be discontinued. An annual event featuring an author reading or speaker will be inaugurated; an annual letter of appreciation will be sent from the Toronto Public Library Board to all volunteers during National Volunteer Week in April; and a newsletter will be published biannually. Guidelines to ensure appropriate volunteer recognition at the local program level, including at program wrap-up events will be developed. The funds that supported the purchase of the token gift and the annual reception will be directed to these new activities.

Conclusion:

The changes to Toronto Public Library volunteer recognition practice will increase opportunities for appropriate recognition at the local program level, and maintain formal recognition at the system level while changing how that takes place.

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List of Attachments:

Not applicable.