

Use of Parkdale Branch Meeting Room as a Constituency Office

Date:	January 6, 2011
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

A request has been received to rent a meeting room at the Parkdale Branch for use as a constituency office. Accepting this booking would require making an exception to the Library's Auditorium, Meeting Room and Theatre Rental Policy. This report provides background information on the Library's room booking policy and on the use of Parkdale's Meeting Room B as a constituency office during the last term of Council.

The Library does not generally rent meeting rooms for office use. The meeting rooms are intended to provide space for community activities. The principle is governed by the attached policy that states "use will be denied to individuals, clubs, groups and organizations intending to establish the Library as a permanent location for their activities, including establishing offices in Library meeting rooms".

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. considers the request to rent a meeting room at the Parkdale Branch for use as a constituency office; and
2. directs staff to take appropriate action in accordance with its decision.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The annual room booking charges for this request would be \$2,340 plus HST, for a total of \$2,644.20. The hourly charge is \$15 which is the rate for non-profit groups.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its June 11, 2007 meeting, the Toronto Public Library Board approved an exception to the room booking policy, establishing conditions for the use of a small meeting room at Parkdale Branch for the local Councillor's term of office. This booking request was accepted with the provision that this arrangement would not extend beyond the term of office.

At its April 12, 2010 meeting, the Toronto Public Library Board approved the revised Auditorium, Meeting Room and Theatre Rental Policy (attached).

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Early in 2007, the Councillor's office submitted a room booking request to staff at the Parkdale Branch, requesting the use of Meeting Room B for three hours every Saturday morning for four years. The type of event was identified as "constituency office". The request was reviewed and because it didn't meet the terms of the policy, the request was referred to the Library Board.

After considering the situation, the Board approved an exception to the policy. Meeting Room B at Parkdale is the smallest of Parkdale's meeting rooms and is comparatively little used. It is rented for small meetings and in conjunction with use of the larger auditorium. The Board directed that the Councillor be charged the non-profit rate, because his use did not fall into the category of public meetings for which fees are waived for Councillors. This booking request was accepted with the provision that this arrangement would not extend beyond the term of office.

The Councillor used the room as a constituency office until October 2010, when the term of Council ended. A sign advertising the Councillor's constituency office and the hours was affixed to the exterior of the branch in late March of 2007. It was removed at the onset of the municipal election campaign in 2010.

COMMENTS

The Toronto Public Library's Auditorium, Meeting Room and Theatre Rental Policy states that meeting rooms are made available to individuals and groups whose primary purpose is the promotion of cultural, educational and community activities. Community and commercial use is permitted when the facilities are not required by the Library for its services.

The policy denies use to individuals, clubs, groups and organizations intending to establish the Library as a permanent location for their activities, including establishing offices in Library meeting rooms. Rooms can be booked one year in advance. Requests for regular four-year bookings and for permission to affix a sign to the library building are both considered to indicate intent to establish the library as a permanent location. The room booking contract states that the Library may terminate the contracting party's right

to use the premises if it becomes aware that the premises are intended to be a permanent or long-term location for the contracting party's activities, including establishing offices in library meeting rooms.

While the policy states that "room rental fees are waived for meetings involving members of the public convened and attended by City of Toronto Councillors, excluding election meetings" there is no provision for the rental of constituency office space to City Councillors. The Library is not in a position to be able to offer constituency office space to Councillors on a consistent basis across the city. As well, use of library meeting rooms as a constituency office might imply an endorsement of political activities. In 2009, there were 7,485 bookings for Library meeting rooms and theatres.

The situation at Parkdale is unusual because there are several meeting rooms in the branch, unlike most branches that have only one meeting room. The larger auditorium is in high demand and is regularly rented. The smallest room, which is being requested by the Councillor, is available at the time requested in 2011.

CONTACT

Anne Bailey; Director, Branch Libraries; Tel: 416-397-5944; Fax: 416-393-7083;
Email: abailey@torontopubliclibrary.ca

SIGNATURE

Jane Pyper
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Auditorium, Meeting Room and Theatre Rental Policy