

**Naming for Peter J. Bassnett at Toronto Public Library**

<b>Date:</b>	December 8, 2008
<b>To:</b>	Naming Committee
<b>From:</b>	City Librarian

**SUMMARY**

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At its October 20, 2008 meeting, the Library Board referred a communication regarding the naming of a room and an award for Peter J. Bassnett to the Naming Committee for consideration (Attachment 1). The group of supporters proposes naming a meeting room in Goldhawk Park branch and the naming of an award to assist Library staff in furthering their library education. This report presents background information to support the Naming Committee in developing a recommendation for the Library Board. The local councillor has been consulted on this proposal.

Naming a meeting room after Peter Bassnett meets the criteria in the Library's *Naming Policy*. The policy states that consideration will be given to naming a room in honour of a Toronto Public Library staff member provided that at least two years have passed since the individual's death or their separation from the Library. Mr. Bassnett retired from Scarborough Public Library in 1995. His contribution to Ontario public libraries and to Scarborough Public Library in particular is documented in supporting letters. (Attachment 2)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The City Librarian recommends that the Naming Committee:**

1. considers naming options below for Peter Bassnett and makes a recommendation to the Library Board :
  - a. naming a meeting room at Goldhawk Park Branch after Peter Bassnett;
  - b. naming an award, in principle, to assist Library staff in furthering their library education, provided the funds raised meets a minimum of \$10,000 net; or in the event that less than \$10,000 net is raised, using the funds to supplement the Library's tuition reimbursement program.

### **Implementation Points**

The Toronto Public Library has not approached the Bassnett family about the proposal and would have to do so formally before it is taken to a Library Board meeting for consideration. The naming of the meeting room and the raising of the funds to sponsor a Library staff award can proceed independently of one another. However, it is argued in the letter from supporters that fundraising for the award could be better promoted at an event announcing the official naming of the meeting room.

It is suggested that if a named award is recommended by the Naming Committee, that the award be approved in principle pending a minimum of \$10,000 net being raised, and that the Foundation act in an advisory capacity for fundraising initiatives and as a trustee for the funds. If an award is established, the terms and conditions of the award would need to be determined by the Foundation in consultation with the family. Subsequently, a list of selection criteria and a process would need to be developed to determine how the recipient would be chosen among Library staff.

In the event that \$10,000 net is not raised, the funds could be used to supplement the Library's tuition reimbursement program, provided the family and supporters agree to this approach.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The *Naming Policy* requires details on costs when naming is contemplated without a gift. Funds raised to commemorate Peter Bassnett have been identified for a named award, not for the naming of a room at the Goldhawk Park branch.

Costs of naming a room in a branch may include a launch event and signage. It is estimated the cost for these components is \$2,500 which would be covered by the funds raised.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this Financial Impact Statement and is in agreement with it.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

At its October 20, 2008 meeting, the Library Board received a communication regarding commemoration for Peter Bassnett. The communication was referred to the Naming Committee for consideration and consultation with supporters of the request.

### **COMMENTS**

Peter Bassnett was Chief Executive Officer for Scarborough Public Library 1975 to 1995. A Briefing Note highlighting his major achievements is included in Attachment 3. A number of letters have been received in support of the proposal and are also attached. In considering appropriate recognition for Peter Bassnett, the Naming Committee might

consider public resonance with Peter Bassnett's name, future requests the Board may receive to honour former employees and overall benefits for the Library.

### **Existing Library Practice Regarding Naming for Staff Members**

There have been different ways of recognizing staff within the former library systems and the Toronto Public Library. In July 2006, former Parkdale librarian, literacy program founder and renowned storyteller Rita Cox was honoured with the renaming of the Black and Caribbean Heritage Collection, although in this incidence recognition was based on her role as Library staff member and her contribution to the broader community. Library branches, meeting rooms and auditoriums have also been named after staff members (e.g. George S. Locke, Evelyn Gregory, Lillian H. Smith, and Maria A Shchuka Branches; Jean Orpwood, Janet MacDonald and Elizabeth Beeton Rooms). In other cases, plaques have been mounted to commemorate the efforts of former Chief Librarians (Nancy Hall and Betty D. Hardie).

### **Peter Bassnett's Contribution**

As outlined in the appended Briefing Note and letters of support, Peter Bassnett was a strong voice for effective public library service in Ontario. He was appointed to oversee the Ontario Public Libraries Review in 1980 and travelled across Ontario. His recommendations laid the ground work for the 1984 Ontario Public Libraries Act which is in place today. Supporters of the award describe him as "forward thinking" in that he believed that to be effective, Ontario public libraries must work together and connect their technologies in order to share information.

Peter Bassnett worked for both North York and Scarborough Public Libraries. In Scarborough, he was the Chief Executive Officer from 1975 to 1995, and managed during a period of growth. He oversaw the opening of seven new library branches. During his tenure, new technology and the provision of multilingual services in 28 languages were offered to Scarborough residents. He also saw the development of a Chinese-language catalogue that was used across Canada. In addition to supporting multilingual collections, Mr. Bassnett established a staff position to develop multicultural services and programs for immigrants.

### **Naming Options for Peter Bassnett**

The Library Board received a letter from individuals connected with the former Scarborough Public Library including both former Board members and staff requesting consideration for two proposals to commemorate Peter Bassnett.

- **Option 1:** Naming the meeting room at Goldhawk Park Branch for Peter Bassnett.

The letter includes a request to consider naming the meeting room at Goldhawk Park Branch for Peter Bassnett. The reasons for choosing the Goldhawk Park Branch are outlined in the proposal. Mr. Bassnett oversaw the opening of the Goldhawk Park Branch in July 1992. His family lived in the Goldhawk Park community for many years. The naming of a meeting room would recognize his contribution to the Scarborough

Public Library. The proposed room is used for programs, quiet study and other library services and events.

There is precedent in the former systems for naming meeting rooms after Library staff members, although this is the first such recognition after amalgamation and since the approval of the Naming Policy. Currently, the Library is considering possible changes to the configuration of the room which would have to be described to supporters of the proposal.

- **Option 2:** Naming an award, in principle, to assist Library staff in furthering their library education, provided the funds raised meets a minimum of \$10,000 net; or in the event that less than \$10,000 net is raised, using the funds to supplement the Library's tuition reimbursement program.

The proposal also includes the idea of naming an award after Peter Bassnett to assist Library staff in furthering their library education. As outlined in the proposal, education was important to Mr. Bassnett and therefore the award is appropriate.

From the Toronto Public Library perspective, a staff award to support further education is appropriate provided a minimum of \$10,000 net is raised. This minimum is based on administrative costs for overseeing such an award combined with having an amount that makes a named award viable. Approving the naming of the award could further the Library's strategic focus on fostering diversity and succession management. Many staff members are currently enrolled in both part-time and full-time library and information science courses, and such an award is a positive incentive.

The proposal suggests that fundraising for the cost of the award could be undertaken by supporters of the award with the advice of the Toronto Public Library Foundation. It is suggested in the proposal that fundraising could be better promoted when a room is named in cooperation with supporters of the award.

Toronto Public Library staff has consulted with the Foundation which has confirmed its willingness to assist in this capacity. It is suggested that if a named award is recommended by the Naming Committee, that the award be approved in principle, and that the Foundation act in an advisory capacity and as a trustee for the funds. Subsequently, the terms and conditions of the award could be determined by the Foundation in consultation with the family and supporters.

In the event that less than \$10,000 net is raised, the funds could be used to supplement the Library's tuition reimbursement program. The number of requests for tuition reimbursement is such that each applicant receives approximately \$500. As tuition costs are rising annually, supplementing tuition reimbursement so additional funds are available could be an important support to staff enrolled in library education programs. The Library would need to consult the family and supporters on this approach.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Jane Pyper  
City Librarian

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Proposal

Attachment 2: Letters of Support

Attachment 3: Briefing Note