

October 6, 2008

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Dr. Kathy Gallagher Ross, Chair
Toronto Public Library Board
789 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 2G8

Dear Dr. Ross and Members of the Board:

We are writing to you on behalf of individuals connected with the board and staff of the former Scarborough Public Library. Our purpose is to solicit the Toronto Public Library Board's co-operation in commemorating the late Peter J. Bassnett, who passed away in February of this year.

Peter Bassnett served as Chief Executive Officer of the Scarborough Public Library from 1975 until his retirement in 1995. His tenure spanned almost half the life of the Board, which was founded in 1955 and dissolved at the end of 1997. For people in Scarborough who had some connection with its library system during the 1970s, 80s and 90s, Peter's name was synonymous with public library service.

Peter's influence in the development of public library service extends beyond the municipality of Scarborough. In 1980, he was seconded by the Province of Ontario to lead a program review of public library service. In the course of his work, Peter travelled to every municipal library in the province and consulted widely within the public library community. His report formed the basis of substantial revisions to the Public Libraries Act of 1984, which continues to provide the legislative and regulatory framework for public library service in the province.

Scarborough was a rapidly expanding suburban municipality when Peter was recruited from North York to take charge of Scarborough Public Library. Peter brought order to the process of managing this growth with the publication in 1978 of *Framework for the Development of Library Service in the Borough of Scarborough*. This planning and policy document conveyed a clarity of purpose which was appreciated not only by the library board but also by municipal council. Indeed Peter's calm, reasonable, straightforward approach to his work was acknowledged and appreciated among municipal councillors and administrators. He was the first CEO of the library to participate regularly in municipal department heads' meetings and was able to use this opportunity to gain recognition for the important contribution of public libraries to the life of the municipality.

When Peter addressed staff meetings, he frequently introduced his remarks by saying, "Libraries are firstly about people." He made it a priority for the library to reach out to and engage the community. For example, a number of public libraries had established staff positions to develop multilingual collections to better serve growing immigrant populations. Peter took the idea one step further by establishing the first staff position to develop not only multilingual collections but also multicultural services.

It is the desire to recognize Peter's remarkable role in the development of public library service that has inspired us, his former friends and associates, to come to you with a proposal to honour his memory.

We are proposing that Peter's memory be honoured in two ways:

1. That Peter's contribution to Scarborough be commemorated in one of the library branches in the former municipality of Scarborough, and
2. That Peter's career-long commitment to the development of public library service be recognized through sponsorship of an award to assist library staff in furthering their public library education.

These preferences have been discussed with Peter's widow, Ann Bassnett, who has indicated that the family approves of this approach and may wish to participate in any fundraising that is undertaken.

It is our view that the naming of a meeting room in one of the Scarborough branches would be an appropriate form of commemoration and would be in keeping with the Toronto Public Library's Naming Policy. The Bassnett family lived in the Goldhawk Park community for many years. The meeting room in that branch would be our first choice.

To raise funds for sponsorship of an award, we need a registered charity as a partner. We have met with the President of the Toronto Public Library Foundation, Heather Rumball, who has indicated the Foundation's willingness to work with us in this endeavour. The objective of fundraising will be to create an expendable fund, i.e., the money collected will be spent for the designated purpose until the fund has been exhausted.

The naming of a room and the raising of funds to sponsor an award can proceed independently of one another; however, we believe that the fundraising will be more successful if they are linked. The dedication of a meeting room would create an event to which potential contributors would be invited, and fundraising for the award could be promoted at that time.

We understand that this proposal may be forwarded to the Board's Naming Committee. We would be pleased to meet with the committee, discuss the proposal in greater detail and answer any questions they may have.

Yours truly,



Marjorie Daw
Chair, Scarborough Public Library Board, 1988