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We, the undersigned Canadian writers, ask that the Toronto Public Library reconsider its recently instituted “Sell Books to the Library Program.”

We say this as friends and supporters of a robust library system wishing nothing more than for the TPL to thrive and remain the important and relevant part of Toronto life that it is. To that end, many of us have donated our time to help the library with its publicity and fundraising efforts. We are allies, not adversaries—and not only as writers but as readers; as patrons, we are aware how much we benefit from a healthy library.

We would like to help the TPL achieve the aims we share—to promote literary culture and Canadian writing and to make books democratically available to the residents of Toronto—but believe that the “Sell Books to the Library Program” is a misguided step in that direction. It penalizes writers and those who invest in their craft. The present reach of the TPL’s pilot program may appear to be small, but it sets a troubling precedent. Were the program expanded, we believe it would do harm to writers and publishers depending upon slim and diminishing revenues of their own, and that consequently it would be harmful to the library and its patrons.

We are all trying to find the means and ways to survive in this time of great technological and social change. It is easy to imagine a fascinating discussion taking place on the TPL’s own stage between writers, publishers, the library’s directors, and the reading public—and it’s just this kind of discussion that we would welcome.

We are therefore asking the TPL to pause the “Sell Books to the Library” Program in order to embark on consultations with The Writers’ Union of Canada and the relevant organizations of Canadian publishers (ACP, CPC) to find a solution that is fair and just for all stakeholders. We urge the TPL and its board to consider that the healthy literary culture we enjoy today has been the result of practices cultivated over many years, and that involve many stakeholders.

We should celebrate that there is such great demand for books, including Canadian books, and that so many citizens can and do avail themselves of the library. Yet we should never lose sight of how this success was achieved, so that we may continue to build on it in the same spirit.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Atwood, David Bezmozgis, **Dennis Bock**, Kenneth Bonert, **Joseph Boyden**,
Dionne Brand, **Catherine Bush**, Adrienne Clarkson, **Lynn Crosbie**, Craig Davidson,
Emma Donoghue, Marina Endicott, **Terry Fallis**, Charles Foran, **Greg Hollingshead**,
Steven Galloway, **Graeme Gibson**, Don Gillmor, **Barbara Gowdy**, Elizabeth Hay,
Frances Itani, Joe Kertes, **Vincent Lam**, Ann-Marie MacDonald, **Lisa Moore**,
Michael Ondaatje, **Nino Ricci**, Noah Richler, **Antanas Sileika**, Linda Spalding,
Padma Viswanathan