



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Advocacy Task Force

**Date:** June 19, 2023

**To:** Toronto Public Library Board

**From:** City Librarian

### **SUMMARY**

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The purpose of this report is to respond to the Toronto Public Library Board request for the City Librarian to report back on proactive and actionable advocacy approaches that the Board can consider for defending against service and budget cuts.

In advance of the 2024 budget process, it is recommended that a Task Force be established to develop advocacy approaches for Board consideration. Draft Terms of Reference for an Advocacy Task Force, comprised of a maximum of three Board members, a maximum of three Foundation Board/Staff members, and with staff serving in an information/advisory capacity, is appended as Attachment 1.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:**

1. approves the establishment of an Advocacy Task Force to report to the Board in the Fall of 2023 on approaches to advocacy in advance of the 2024 budget process; and
2. approves the draft Terms of Reference (Attachment 1).

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There is no financial impact beyond what is already approved in the current year operating budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN**

The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan prioritizes support for the city to address its many challenges and seize its many opportunities, making Toronto more successful, resilient and well. Advocating for continued investment in public libraries in Toronto supports the delivery of these outcomes.

## **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan identifies priorities through an equity lens, working to understand and break down barriers for all, with a focus on equity-deserving groups and vulnerable populations. The recommendation to establish an Advocacy Task Force supports the continuation and ongoing development of this work.

## DECISION HISTORY

At its May 23, 2023 meeting, the Library Board approved the following motion:  
*That the City Librarian report back in June on proactive and actionable advocacy approaches that the Board can consider for defending against service and budget cuts.*

At its April 26, 2021 meeting, the Library Board approved TPL's [Advocacy Policy](#). The Policy sets out how TPL's advocacy efforts will contribute to the delivery of excellent public library services. It clarifies the areas in which TPL will take a leading or supporting role in advocacy, and areas that are out of scope. The Policy ensures TPL has the capacity and support to advance legislation, policies and funding to provide free and equitable access to Library services, which meet the changing needs of Torontonians.

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

Over the past number of years, Toronto City Council has continued to provide TPL with reliable funding and increased resources to support the maintenance of core services, the introduction of new services, and the acceleration of digital services. At the same time, TPL has undertaken numerous re-engineering and modernization initiatives to optimize efficiencies and the use of resources in the delivery of a 21<sup>st</sup> century library service to Torontonians.

As the City, which funds over 90% of TPL's operating budget, continues to face significant fiscal challenges, it is important to ensure advocacy strategies and key messages are available for the Board's consideration.

## COMMENTS

The objective of the Task Force is to provide perspectives, advice, approaches and strategies to advocate for maintaining and developing public library services for Torontonians, including adequate budget funding. The strategies will support proactive and actionable approaches for Board consideration. If approved, the Task Force will be comprised of a maximum of three Board members (Board Chair, Vice-Chair and one other), a maximum of three Foundation Board/Staff members, and with staff serving in an

information/advisory capacity. The Board Chair can invite guests to join meetings. Meetings will be held over the summer with a report to the Board in the Fall 2023.

This advocacy is occurring in the context of the City's post-pandemic and inflationary fiscal challenges, and larger societal economic and social disruptions. The Task Force will consider these larger contexts in its discussions.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Advocacy Task Force Draft Terms of Reference

## Draft Terms of Reference: Advocacy Task Force

### **Authority:**

The *Advocacy Task Force* will respond to the May 23, 2023 Library Board motion: *The Library Board requests the City Librarian to report back in June on proactive and actionable advocacy approaches that the Board can consider for defending against service and budget cuts.*

### **Objective:**

The objective of the Task Force is to provide perspectives, advice, approaches and strategies to advocate for maintaining and developing public library services for Torontonians, including adequate budget funding. The strategies will support proactive and actionable approaches for Board consideration.

This advocacy is occurring in the context of the City's post-pandemic and inflationary fiscal challenges, and larger societal economic and social disruptions. The Task Force will consider these larger contexts in its discussions and recommendations.

### **Approach:**

Task Force members will come together to:

- Create a shared understanding among members of current issues and approaches to advocacy within the context and guidance provided by Library Board's [Advocacy Policy](#).
- Understand the service delivery and budgetary context and constraints in which TPL operates.
- Identify approaches, strategies and resources to address the need for continued investment in TPL for maintaining and developing its services, and considering opportunities to leverage messaging about the impact TPL has on Toronto and its residents.
- Recommend to the Library Board actions to take as part of the 2024 budget process.

## **Membership:**

Membership is by invitation of the Library Board Chair to ensure that membership is balanced offering expertise in advocacy and communications from different perspectives. A maximum of three Library Board members (Chair and Vice-Chair and one other) and three Foundation Board/Staff members are required with Library staff supporting the Task Force by serving in an information/advisory capacity. The Library Board Chair has the discretion to invite others to join the Task Force as invited presenters or guests.

## **Accountability and Meetings:**

*The Advocacy Task Force is an advisory group. Meetings are for members, invited presenters, or guests. The Task Force will meet up to three times over the summer and as required throughout the 2024 budget process. (The timeline may be adjusted to accommodate participants or other considerations.)*

To advance the Task Force, the minimum participation at the meetings is a combination of three members as outlined below:

- One to two Library Board members; and
- One to two Foundation members.

## **Decision Making:**

As a Task Force operating in an advisory capacity, members will openly share ideas, information and viewpoints and ask questions, seek to develop common ground and understanding of issues, concerns and problems discussed. Recommendations will be provided to the Library Board for consideration.