



## Local 4948

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## Toronto Public Library Workers' Union Local 4948 (CUPE)

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June 21, 2010

BY FACSIMILE ONLY

Mathew Church  
Chair, Toronto Public Library Board  
c/o Toronto Public Library  
789 Yonge Street  
Toronto, ON  
M4W 2G8

Dear Mr. Church:

### RE: ADJUSTMENT OF BRANCH OPEN HOURS – 2010/2011

Recently, Toronto Public Library Board management provided a report to the Union titled "Adjustment of Branch Open Hours 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarters 2010". The report describes how "efficiencies" gained from the installation of RFID self check-out machines in 2010 will be used to expand open hours in the Fall of 2010 at the Toronto Public Library (TPL). The report lists the number of Full-Time Equivalencies (FTE's) that will be reduced at six (6) branches to be transferred to seven (7) other branches in order to expand hours.

To be clear, the Union is not opposed to the expansion of hours that will take place in the Fall of 2010. The Union supports an expansion of hours and library service to serve Toronto communities better. We do, however, have some concerns that must be brought to your attention. Our chief concern has to do with management's claim that the installation of RFID self check-out machines has resulted in so-called "efficiencies", i.e.



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a savings of staff time making it possible to reduce staff where RFIDs have been installed.

The Union is concerned about the process by which management has determined that the installation of RFID machines results necessarily in a reduction of workload such that it becomes possible and/or wise to reduce staff. The Union has asked management to provide data to support the claim that RFID results in a reduction of workload. Management has not been able to provide such substantiating proof. From this, we can only assume that the determination by management is made based on a general assumption that RFIDs produce so-called "efficiencies" and consultation with local area managers, who have been asked by management to identify the "efficiencies" in their respective branches. There has been no consultation with the Union as to whether staff actually report a reduction in workload as a result of the RFIDs. The staff do not report the same relief as a result of the RFIDs that management has chosen to believe exists. On the ground, for front-line workers, the picture is not entirely as it has been portrayed.

Many members report increased workloads due to equipment malfunctions and errors. Members report complaints from patrons, in particular from seniors, who would prefer not to see their library experience and interaction with knowledgeable front-line staff replaced by an interaction with a machine. Many patrons understand, as well, that the RFIDs have a profound impact on jobs and on the relationship between patrons and front-line workers over the long-term.

Fundamentally, the Union disagrees with management on the extent to which RFIDs have in fact produced so-called "efficiencies". Furthermore, we would argue that reductions of library staff over the years since amalgamation has meant that the Toronto Public Library system was already understaffed



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before the introduction of RFIDs. To the extent that RFID technology provides any reduction in workload for staff at all, we would argue that the “savings” should go towards supporting the current staffing arrangements rather than reducing staffing at branches, thereby stretching existing staff further in order to expand hours.

The conscious-thought and care that we put into our public service delivery work cannot be replaced by RFIDs. The claim to “efficiencies” therefore, is a bit of a misnomer, as it implies a legitimate comparison between a human being and a machine. Furthermore, we suggest to you that the introduction of RFIDs has not produced the kind of reduction in workload that has been assumed to have taken place. Finally, there is a deeper impact on the relationship between patrons and front-line library service providers that warrants consideration, a relationship that is key, we believe, to the delivery of high quality library service.

We would ask that you please seek out and consider the whole picture as part of your discussions on the expansion of hours and RFID technology. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss the above concerns in greater detail.

Yours truly,

*MoR for B. Haley*

Brendan Haley  
Acting President  
TPLWU Local 4948

cc. V. Gretton, Recording Secretary  
TPLWU Local 4948 Executive Board