



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2024 Results

**Date:** January 27, 2025

**To:** Toronto Public Library Board

**From:** City Librarian

#### SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to present the results of the Toronto Public Library Board Self-Evaluation 2024 to the Board for approval. This is the ninth year that the Board has conducted the survey as a best practice in Board governance. Eight of ten Board members completed the survey in 2024. The survey asks Board members to evaluate the Board's Governance Role, Integrity and Ethics, Strategy Development and Performance Monitoring, Teamwork and Collaboration, Advocacy and Communication and to rate the Board's overall value and efficacy.

Overall, all respondents agreed that the Board adds value and is operating efficiently; significant improvement to 100% is shown compared to previous years (i.e. 88% in 2023). No major issues were identified requiring action; however, a minority of respondents noted areas for improvement under the Governance role section. In particular, there was strong agreement that: approved plans demonstrate prudent use of public funds, the best interests of

the Library and public, and appropriate focus from the Board; the Board is diverse in its representation; the Board has a good working relationship with the Toronto Public Library Foundation; there is a high level of trust and respect between Board members; and accomplishments and challenges are communicated to external stakeholders. Board members provided comments towards improvement in several areas, including relationship building, meeting attendance, and topics for future Board education.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. receives the results of the Board self-evaluation survey in Attachment 1; and
2. directs staff to conduct a survey in 2025.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The recommendations have no additional financial impact beyond what is included in the City staff recommended 2025 operating budget for Toronto Public Library (TPL).

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

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting on February 26, 2024, the Board approved the report [Toronto Public Library Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2023 Results](#) and directed staff to conduct a survey in 2024.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

In keeping with Toronto Public Library Board's Procedural By-Law and requirements of the [Public Libraries Act](#), the Library Board held nine open hybrid meetings in 2024, fulfilling its governance role.

Members of the Board, library staff, guests and members of the public can attend and/or participate in the hybrid meeting either in person (at the Toronto Reference Library, Executive Boardroom) or by tele/video conference.

Recordings of board meeting proceedings are also made available on the TPL website, following each board meeting.

Goals of the Board self-evaluation are to:

- determine the degree of alignment and agreement by Board members on TPL's mandate, mission, vision and strategic directions;
- identify gaps in knowledge and expertise to be addressed through Board education and orientation;
- identify improvements that promote effective board preparation, meeting and communications; and
- ensure effective governance and informed decision-making by supporting strong Board dynamics.

## COMMENTS

Eight out of ten Board members completed the Board self-evaluation survey in 2024. Results indicate that current Board members agreed on most of the statements in the survey. The strongest and most unanimous statements were:

- The Board adds value to public library service in Toronto Public Library
- The Board is effective and performs well
- Plans and initiatives approved by the Board demonstrate value for money and a prudent use of public funds
- Board membership provides for diverse representation, expertise and experience
- The Board has a good working relationship with the Toronto Public Library Foundation
- Board discussions are guided by the best interests of the Library and the public it serves
- Board members participate in discussions in a manner that is reflective of their duty of loyalty and due diligence
- Conflict of interests are declared and effectively addressed
- Board members are aware and comply with the Board's Code of Conduct
- Board members are aware and comply with the Board's Lobbying Disclosure Policy

- Controls are in place to maintain a high level of integrity of the Library and its staff
- The Board has an approved strategic plan that sets out goals and priorities and receives semi-annual updates on progress through an enterprise balanced scorecard
- The Board is appropriately focused on providing guidance on strategic items relevant to the Board in fulfilling their governance function
- There is a high level of trust and respect between Board members
- The board ensures that the Library's accomplishments and challenges are communicated to stakeholders and the community

There was least agreement on the following statements:

- The legal and regulatory framework governing the Board is well understood by Board members
- The Board is effective at solving problems and leveraging opportunities
- Board members demonstrate clear understanding of the respective roles of the Board and the City Librarian
- There is an ongoing education program for Board members
- Board members regularly attend meetings and arrive on time to help ensure quorum and avoid delays
- The Board pursues relevant advocacy initiatives at all levels of government and with other stakeholders

Compared with past year's reports, the overall satisfaction has improved significantly (100% overall rating in 2024, in comparison to 88% in 2023, 72% in 2022 and 78% in 2021). There was most notable improvement in the Board's evaluation of integrity and ethics, advocacy, strategy development and performance monitoring.

Board members highlight their advocacy efforts, which ensured continued investment in Library open hours. The Board noted strong alignment with the City's vision around equity, inclusion, intellectual freedom and democratic principles, and recognized leadership in accessibility, innovation and sustainability, truth and reconciliation.

Some Board members would like to further improve their understanding of Library operations, and would like more relationship building opportunities between Board members and with library staff. The Board also expressed a

desire to continue to learn about advocacy, trends and challenges for libraries, and the Library's AI policy and equity initiatives.

### **Next steps**

It is recommended that the Board direct staff to conduct a Board self-evaluation in 2025.

### **CONTACT**

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### **SIGNATURE**

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Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: 2024 TPL Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results

## 2024 TPL Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results

### Governance role

Questions	# of responses	% of responses			
1. The legal and regulatory framework governing the Board is well understood by Board members	8	12.5%	37.5%	25.0%	25.0%
2. The Board understands and contributes to the mandate, vision and mission of the Library	8	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	
3. The Board is effective at solving problems and leveraging opportunities	8	12.5%	62.5%	25.0%	
4. Plans and initiatives approved by the Board demonstrate value for money and a prudent use of public funds	8		50.0%	50.0%	
5. The Board reviews and approves operating and capital budget submissions ensuring that they are aligned with Library and City priorities	8	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%	
6. The Board ensures that its Financial Control Policy is adhered to	8	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	
7. The Board reviews the annual audited financial statements and takes action where necessary	8	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	
8. Board members demonstrate clear understanding of the respective roles of the Board and the City Librarian	8	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	
9. Board membership provides for diverse representation, expertise and experience	8	25.0%		75.0%	
10. There is an ongoing education program for Board members	8	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	50.0%
11. Board members are given the opportunity to attend Library events	8	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	
12. The Board has a good working relationship with the Toronto Public Library Foundation	8	25.0%		75.0%	

█ Strongly Disagree

█ Disagree

█ Acceptable

█ Agree

█ Strongly Agree

### Comments on the Board's governance role:

No data found

## Integrity, ethics and values

Questions	# of responses	% of responses	
<b>13.</b> Board discussions are guided by the best interests of the Library and the public it serves	8	12.5%	87.5%
<b>14.</b> Board members participate in discussions in a manner that is reflective of their duty of loyalty and due diligence	7	14.3%	85.7%
<b>15.</b> Conflict of interests are declared and effectively addressed	8	12.5%	87.5%
<b>16.</b> Board members are aware and comply with the Board's Code of Conduct	8	12.5%	87.5%
<b>17.</b> Board members are aware and comply with the Board's Lobbying Disclosure Policy	8	12.5%	87.5%
<b>18.</b> Controls are in place to maintain a high level of integrity of the Library and its staff	8	12.5%	87.5%

Strongly Disagree Disagree Acceptable Agree Strongly Agree

## Comments on the Board's integrity, ethics and values:

No data found

## Strategy development and performance monitoring

Questions	# of responses	% of responses	
<b>19.</b> The Board has an approved strategic plan that sets out goals and priorities and receives semi-annual updates on progress through an enterprise balanced scorecard	7	28.6%	71.4%
<b>20.</b> The Board is appropriately focused on providing guidance on strategic items relevant to the Board in fulfilling their governance function	7	28.6%	71.4%
<b>21.</b> The Board keeps a steady focus on monitoring and adjusting plans to meet goals and strategic vision	7	14.3% 14.3%	71.4%
<b>22.</b> The Library's performance measures are realistic and challenging	7	14.3% 14.3%	71.4%
<b>23.</b> Annual performance targets are met	7	14.3% 14.3%	71.4%

Strongly Disagree Disagree Acceptable Agree Strongly Agree

## Comments on the Board's strategy development and performance monitoring:

No data found

## Teamwork and collaboration

Questions	# of responses	% of responses			
<b>24.</b> Board members regularly attend meetings and arrive on time to help ensure quorum and avoid delays	7	28.6%	42.9%	28.6%	
<b>25.</b> All members fulfill their role and responsibility and at meetings have an opportunity to contribute equally to Board discussion	7	28.6%	28.6%	42.9%	
<b>26.</b> Members act collegially, debate independently and decide collectively	7	14.3%	14.3%	71.4%	
<b>27.</b> Members work together to find the best solution	7	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%	
<b>28.</b> All members support the final decisions of the Board	7	14.3%	14.3%	71.4%	
<b>29.</b> There is a high level of trust and respect between Board members	6	16.7%		83.3%	
<b>30.</b> The Board avails itself of external advice or opinion when needed	7	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%	

█ Strongly Disagree    █ Disagree    █ Acceptable    █ Agree    █ Strongly Agree

## Comments on the Board's teamwork and collaboration:

Board members need to make more of an effort to attend meetings regularly and on time. There are some board members I have never met in person because they only attend online.

## Advocacy and communication

Questions	# of responses	% of responses			
<b>31.</b> Board members have a current and adequate understanding of the issues facing stakeholders, partners and communities as well as culture the Library works in	7	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%	
<b>32.</b> The Board ensures that the Library's accomplishments and challenges are communicated to stakeholders and the community	7		57.1%	42.9%	
<b>33.</b> The Board pursues relevant advocacy initiatives at all levels of government and with other stakeholders	7	14.3%	14.3%	42.9%	28.6%

█ Strongly Disagree    █ Disagree    █ Acceptable    █ Agree    █ Strongly Agree

## Comments on the Board's advocacy and communication:

Great work on advocacy with the TPL team leading to continued investment in open hours

### Overall rating



### Comments on the Board's overall rating:

No data found

### Areas of Board excellence:

- Alignment with City of Toronto goals and vision, specifically around equity, inclusion, intellectual freedom and democratic principles. Leading the field in many ways including accessibility, innovation, sustainability, truth and reconciliation.

### Areas where the Board could better:

- Greater opportunities to collaborate and discuss in person. Make it a priority to visit and build relationships with branches across the city.
- Member to member relations / relationship building

### Suggestions for improvement:

- Opportunities to connect outside of formal board meetings (active/underway with holiday socials and sub-committee work)
- The meetings could be much more efficient if library staff assumed that board members have read the materials in advance. Discussing the materials instead of reviewing them would be a better use of everyone's time.

### Please identify potential topics for future Board education sessions:

- TPL's AI policy, new equity initiatives
- What can each board member do when it comes to advocacy? Library challenges and trends around the country and the world. How operations and branches work, eg. what do different staff roles actually do, so we can better understand all the work that goes into running the library.