



**STAFF REPORT
INFORMATION ONLY**

Communications Report

Date: June 19, 2023

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives Communication (a) from Rebecca Yixin Ma to TPL Board Members, dated June 01, 2023, expressing concern about a third-party room booking by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality to discuss *The War in Ukraine and How to Stop It: The Historical and Political Origins of the US-NATO War Against Russia*, for information; and
2. receives Communication (b) from Dr. Marc James Léger to TPL Board Members, dated June 02, 2023, expressing support for a third-party room booking by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality to discuss *The War in Ukraine and How to Stop It: The Historical and Political Origins of the US-NATO War Against Russia*, for information.

SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

From: Yixin Ma
Sent: Thursday, June 1, 2023 8:35 PM
To: Philippa Williamson
Subject: Concerns Over Event at Lillian H. Smith Branch

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Hello,

I wish to bring my concerns to the library board. I came across a poster about a meeting that will take place at the Lillian H. Smith branch this Sunday, June 4, 2023. The meeting is titled "The War in Ukraine and How to Stop It", and the subtitle is "The historical and political origins of the US-NATO war against Russia". I must express my shock and disappointment in seeing that the library I love and support would allow itself to be used to legitimize and amplify Russian propaganda.

I have seen an email response to another reader from the Manager of Service Development - Venue & Community, Ms. Beth Kawecki. In her response, Ms. Kawecki states that the event is not presented by the Toronto Public Library (TPL), but a third-party room rental booking. Ms. Kawecki further states that TPL will only allow room rental bookings that do not violate your Community and Event Space Rental policy.

In this instance, I do not think that TPL has done sufficient due diligence to prevent and indeed stop its venues and facilities from being abused by propagandists. Surely your Community and Event Space Rental policy would not permit propaganda to be peddled within your walls. I doubt that if someone were to book the same room to host an event to praise the Third Reich, you would have considered that as not in violation of your policy. To allow this event to take place on your property is to condone all the atrocities that Russia has committed in Ukraine, from rape to kidnapping to genocide, to name a few.

Ms. Kawecki continues to state that as a publically funded government institution, TPL must offer services equitably to everyone within the limits of the law, which extends to third-party room bookings, including those that may involve controversial or unpopular content and speakers.

The Canadian government officially considers Russia as the invading country and has imposed multiple economic sanctions since February 2022. To quote a previous new release from our federal government, "Canada reiterates its strong condemnation of the Russian Federation's war crimes in Ukraine, which include rape, torture and the indiscriminate murder of civilians". To offer equitable services to those who spread Russian propaganda while Russia is actively violating international law is not true equity. It is blindness. It is insensitivity. It is a complete disregard for what's right and what's wrong. It is certainly not what the public would expect or accept from a government institution.

I urge you to listen to the public, reconsider your policy, do the right thing, and cancel this disgraceful event.

Respectfully,
Rebecca

Philippa Williamson

From: Marc James Léger
Sent: Friday, June 2, 2023 10:57 AM
To: Philippa Williamson; councillor_ainslie@toronto.ca; Councillor_Morley@toronto.ca; swong@liberal.ca; City Librarian; Will Scott; Pam Ryan; Aly Velji; Craig Todd-Langille; Amanda French; Alex Carruthers; Ab Velasco; Nan Davies; Shawn Mitchell; Natalie Comeau; Laural Raine; Brian Daly; Linda Hazzan; Ana-Maria Critchley; Brian Francis; Gregory McCormick; Liza Cooperman; Branch Operations; Eda Conte-Pitcher; Sarah Bradley; Michelle Alleyne; Jan Dawson; Pam Saliba; Leesa Tossios; Kim Huntley; Gillian Byrne; Monte.McNaughtonco@pc.ola.org; city@thestar.ca; publiceditor@globeandmail.com; cbrousseau@globeandmail.com; contact@wsws.org
Subject: support IYSSE at the Toronto Public Library

CAUTION: This email has originated from outside of TPL. Do not click on any links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know that the content is safe.

Dear Toronto Public Library staff, Library Board Members and Ontario public servants,

This Sunday, June 4, the International Youth and Students section of the Socialist Equality Party is scheduled to hold an antiwar meeting at the Toronto Public Library (Lillian H. Smith Branch). The meeting has come under attack by Conservative Party Labour Minister Monte McNaughton, who has spread the lie that the IYSSE defends the Russian invasion of Ukraine. According to the SEP's newspaper, the *World Socialist Web Site*, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has threatened violence against one of the scheduled speakers, Keith Jones.

Along with Canadian magazines like *Canadian Dimension* and activist journalists like Dimitri Lascaris, the WSWS is one of the few news sources to have consistently and accurately reported on the economic and foreign policy strategies that have led to the conflict in Ukraine, which has now killed 400,000 soldiers and displaced 8 million Ukrainians. This conflict threatens a direct NATO war with Russia and US generals have said that war with China is expected by 2025.

Thank you for your defence of the right of the IYSSE to present its antiwar arguments to the public, a necessary corrective to the reckless decisions of every major political party in Canada to support the Great Power Conflict foreign policy strategy of the USA, a process that is taking global neoliberal capitalism in the direction of global fascism. Every fascism is a failed revolution.

sincerely,
Dr. Marc James Léger
Montreal

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<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/06/02/rfpl-j02.html>