



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Communications Report

Date: October 27, 2025

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives Communication (a) and its attachment from Margaret Smith, Chair, Advisory Council of the Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre, submitted on October 10, 2025, requesting to name the children's room at the Dufferin/St. Clair branch in honour of the late Nancy Byers, former TPL staff member, for information.
2. receives Communication (b), a letter from Kevin Putnam, member of a local resident-led Junction Triangle Library Expansion Committee, dated October 23, 2025, for information.

SIGNATURE

Moe Hosseini-Ara
City Librarian

Submission to the Toronto Public Library Board requesting the naming of the Children's Room of the Dufferin/St. Clair Library Branch, 1625 Dufferin Street, Toronto

REQUEST

The Advisory Council of the Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre formally requests the naming of the Children's Room of the Dufferin/St. Clair Library Branch in honour of Nancy Byers.

Background

The Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre Advisory Council is a group of community volunteers who work in partnership with staff to help ensure that services and activities at the Centre contribute to the betterment of the community at large. We also want to increase awareness of the benefits of Parks and Recreation to encourage participation. Our Advisory Council benefitted from Nancy Byers leadership and participation and we desire a suitable way to honour her legacy. We bring forward this request.

Recipient

Nancy Leonard Byers, (October 13, 1924 – January 15, 2024), was the Head Librarian at the Dufferin St. Clair Library Branch from 1971 to 1987. In that capacity, she forged a special relationship with St. Clare School, and developed lasting relationships with many parents. She was terrific in reaching out to the young people of the community, especially acting as Children's Librarian, and organizing programmes like puppet shows. She helped to bring Italian language materials into the library. Nancy was also actively engaged in the St. Clair Avenue West community. For example, she was the Chair of the Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre Advisory Council during the 1980's. This involvement continued after her retirement. One example of her continued community engagement is that she worked as a Constituency Assistant for the Davenport Federal MP. Perhaps, most significantly, Nancy was the author, with Barbara Myrvold contributing, of 'St. Clair West in Pictures', first published by the TPL in 1997. This local history has been so popular that three editions have been printed, the Second Edition in 1999, and the Third Edition in 2008.

Toronto Public Library Naming Policy

Reference: <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/terms-of-use/library-policies/naming-policy.jsp>

Below are the relevant sections of the policy:

- 2.2 The TPL Board is responsible for approving the names of rooms, programs and collections where there is a commemorative name or a name in recognition of a donor or sponsor.

- 5.1 Potential commemorative names will be considered based on alignment with the City of Toronto's Guiding Principles for Commemoration.
- 5.3 Potential commemorative names for rooms will be considered in honour of a Toronto Public Library Board member, TPL staff member or any individual who has made an exceptional contribution to TPL or to the City of Toronto.
- 5.4 When a room is named after an individual, it should contain both the name of the individual and the function of the room.
- 5.11 Proposals for commemorative names will be considered provided that at least two years have passed since the individual's death, or after the individual has been separated from the Library for two years.
- 5.12 Naming or renaming a branch, program, room or collection on behalf of an individual, event or organization requires the written consent of the named party or the named party's representative, where the individual is deceased.
- 5.13 In circumstances where consent has not been received, the TPL Board, in the absence of any refusal to provide consent or legal concerns, may approve the name if it is satisfied that reasonable efforts have been made to obtain consent.

Request in Conformance with Naming Policy

Members of the Advisory Council of the Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre believe that we have met the relevant requirements of the TPL Naming Policy.

We believe that Nancy's achievements have made an exceptional contribution to the TPL and to the City of Toronto.

We propose the Children's Room at the Dufferin/St. Clair Branch be named "The Nancy Byers Children's Room"

In January 2026 it will be two years since Ms. Byers' death.

Ms. Barbara Byers, Nancy's sister, has given her consent for this naming recognition.

Prepared by Margaret Smith

Chair, Advisory Council of the Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre





October 10, 2025


The Secretary
Toronto Public Library Board
789 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario M4W 2G8

Dear Secretary,

I understand that the Advisory Council of the Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre is requesting that the Children's Room at the Dufferin/St. Clair Library Branch be named in honour of Nancy Byers, my late sister. I am writing to you to give my consent to this request. If you have any questions, you may contact me.

Yours,


Ms. Barbara Byers




October 23, 2025

Dear Chairperson Remtulla:

Writing to you and other members of the Library Board regarding the new Junction Triangle Library. It is a fabulous addition to our neighbourhood and a big step up from the former Perth/Dupont branch that served the area for 42 years. The old branch came to be called the “tiny, perfect library” and along with the staff was a much-loved institution with a strong, community focus.

Capitalizing on that sentiment, in the Spring of 2011 a group of residents met with Deputy City Librarian Anne Bailey to explore expansion possibilities at the Perth/Dupont branch. A friendly discussion of the various building preferences concluded with “come back when you have the money.” In a world of limited funding, money (it was explained) goes to areas where it can have the most impact. Perth/Dupont branch numbers were too low to warrant an investment over bigger, busier libraries.

Just a few months later, in the summer, the Perth/Dupont branch was one of ten libraries the City Mayor was rumoured to be considering closing. Junction Triangle residents used the threat as an opportunity to launch a campaign for a new branch, formed an Expansion Committee, mounted an extensive public consultation process and worked with our local Councillor Ana Bailao to secure new, additional funding for a bigger neighbourhood library. A four year process to secure support and financing (i.e. all new \$4.5-million TPL funding) for the new library was concluded at the December 5, 2015 City Council meeting with an unanimous vote. Project funding was secured through a combination of resident-directed Section 37 funds, zoning change compensation and a rule change that will see the former Perth/Dupont branch sold with the proceeds directed to the TPL rather than the normal practice of declaring the property surplus for other City departments to utilize.

I say all this not to blow my (our) own horn. There are some lessons for the Toronto Public Library to learn from this project. They are worth repeating. The ten branches were saved and the expansion of the Perth/Dupont branch all happened because of the patrons. Everyday library users rallied to stop any closures. In my neighbourhood, we directed that energy towards expansion - took ownership of the branch and rallied all the required support. That same energy could be used today to expand or upgrade aging library facilities or add new services that existing budgets cannot support. It could be used the next time a cost-cutting brute comes to office - resident-led branch groups that promote and advocate for their local library in their community and with their City Councillor.

The success of the resident-led initiative in the Junction Triangle is largely unknown. Hard to know exactly what prevents Toronto Public Library management from championing local efforts? It's a different process than chasing wealthy corporate and individual donors, but every bit as fruitful as events show.

There were some glitches during the build out of the new library. Residents and members of the Library Expansion Committee all anticipated that we would secure support/funding for the new branch and then sit back and wait for the builder and the Library to complete construction. The builder was ready to hand-over the the library shell to the TPL in December, 2022. It sat empty for almost a year and a half while the TPL and the builder continued negotiations. Frustrating and baffling for residents who expected this handover to be a seamless process with so much time to complete arrangements in advance.

After the TPL took possession of the library shell, a building inspector subsequently discovered construction issues that did not conform to code. A three month delay ensued while all parties worked out a solution. Committee members were left wondering who conducted the building inspection before the TPL took possession? How was the code failure missed?

During construction workers spent several weeks installing paneling along the entire length of the library back wall only to take it all down and install new panelling that met the spec requirements. While the mistake cost the Library nothing, it raises questions about the management of the construction project. How was this mistake not caught sooner and the wasted time and resources avoided?

The new branch opened in mid-August after a two month closure with 36 hours notice. Formal communication from the TPL during the ten year construction phase was sparse. An informal process developed where I would seek updates from Library management by email and relay the info in social media posts on our community Facebook page for the past ten years. Branch staff were not updated on the construction process, included in the new library consultation process as stakeholders or able to provide residents with updated project news until this Spring.

The resident-led public engagement process and funding arrangements created a heightened awareness of the Perth/Dupont branch in the Junction Triangle. That process instilled a sense of ownership and interest in the new library among hundreds of area residents. As this project concludes, I am left with the impression that Library management doesn't embrace patrons so much as they attempt to manage them.

The project ended on a sour note as Library management refused to coordinate opening celebrations with the Expansion Committee. Given the community role in securing the funding and the patience it took to wait 14 years to see any improvement in neighbourhood library services, we wanted the official opening to include community members and people who helped us along the way. Our suggestions were ignored. There were no neighbourhood children playing the National anthem, no students from any of the three local elementary schools invited or a celebrity author to do a ceremonial reading. The event date was left vague, kept shifting from August to September to October while Library management attempted to secure the participation of the Mayor for a photo op. A date was eventually announced without consulting the Expansion Committee - weekday at 1 p.m. when most residents are at work or school. It was later disclosed that the Mayor could not come and Library management refused to move the

date to a weekend afternoon to allow more residents to participate. From pictures of the ribbon cutting event, you can see it's largely a staff event.

There was no public book chain event despite repeated suggestions about promoting the three block branch move. There was no event to mark the closing of the old branch or an invitation to tour the new branch in advance extended to residents or the Expansion Committee. There was no press coverage of the official opening. One story about the new Junction Triangle Library appeared online in Toronto Today the day the library opened in August after the reporter saw a post shared on the local Facebook page.

We recognize that our new library is just one of a hundred that the TPL operates. It's unfortunate that it's the lasting impression created by Library management who have failed to publicly acknowledge or thank residents who invested heavily in the expansion of library services in the Junction Triangle. The process despite any missteps is something residents and library lovers across the city could do to promote and advocate for their local branch.

Sincerely,

Sent Electronically

Kevin Putnam
Junction Triangle Library Expansion Committee