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**STAFF REPORT
INFORMATION ONLY**

Communications Report

Date: December 5, 2022

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives Communication (a) from Sarah Climenhaga dated November 16, 2022 regarding voluntarily re-hiring staff that were terminated in accordance with the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy that was in effect until December 1, 2022, for information.

SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

a.

From: **Sarah Climenhaga** <sc@ymoz.com>

Date: Wed, Nov 16, 2022 at 2:47 PM

Subject: To: <vbowles@tpl.ca>, <mpolicelli@tpl.ca>, <bdaly@tpl.ca>

Cc: <mayor_tory@toronto.ca>, <councillor_matlow@toronto.ca>, <president@local4948.org>, <vicepresident@local4948.org>, <lbraun@postmedia.com>, <jwashington@postmedia.com>, <torsun.citydesk@sunmedia.ca>, <drider@thestar.ca>

Dear City Librarian Bowles, Director Daly, and the board members of the Toronto Public Library,

I'm a frequent library patron and a past donor to the TPL foundation who dearly loves Toronto's library system. I believe it is one of the best in the world and am grateful to you all for your work to achieve and maintain its high quality.

Front line staff are essential in keeping our library system strong, so I am writing to ask you to bring staff back to work who were terminated due to the vaccine mandate.

On November 8, 2022, the City of Toronto announced - voluntarily - that it will be ending its vaccine mandate for staff, and will be reinstating its fired, unvaccinated workers on **December 1, 2022**.

I had assumed that would apply to all city staff, and am disturbed to hear that the Toronto Public Library is continuing to exclude the staff that were terminated by its mandate last January. This exclusion is despite the city's [statement in its announcement](#), that "the science and public health guidance and medical expert advice no longer supports the need for a policy that requires mandatory vaccination".

In the past year, we have seen the reinstatement of unvaccinated public employees across the province and the country. The province of Ontario lifted the vaccination mandate for its teachers, hospital workers, and long-term care workers eight months ago, on March 14, 2022.

Unvaccinated Toronto Police officers were welcomed back to work on June 1, 2022. The federal government lifted its employee vaccine mandate on June 20, 2022.

Why are you continuing to exclude highly trained library staff terminated by your mandatory vaccination policy, when their services are needed by both patrons and overworked staff at the libraries? With no scientific or public health guidance to support this exclusion, what is your rationalization?

Your position is particularly puzzling when libraries are facing across the board staff shortages - I am concerned that your refusal to allow staff back to work will worsen staff shortages [like the one that affected Toronto libraries this past January](#). Should such closures happen again when workers terminated for their vaccination status are still being shut out, and when there is no longer broad support for this mandate, it will reflect poorly on TPL. I believe continued

maintenance of this policy will negatively affect the reputation of the entire system and even worse, potentially reduce public support for it.

I understand that arbitration between TPL and CUPE Local 4948 continues on this issue, yet continuation of the arbitration is delayed until 2024. Such a delay should not prevent the library from allowing librarians to return to work now. I note that the City of Toronto did not wait for the arbitrations of CUPE Local 416 and CUPE Local 79 to complete before voluntarily reinstating their workers.

TPL is an important institution in our city, one which has enjoyed a respected reputation. TPL states that it values equity, diversity, intellectual freedom, accountability and integrity. I urge TPL to honour these values and voluntarily reinstate its unvaccinated workers - it is unfair to both patrons and staff to wait until 2024 to resolve this issue.

Personally, I also believe these employees deserve to have their for-cause termination removed from their employment records, and feel they deserve both an apology and monetary damages. This is a time to reflect and repair the division of the past two years and if the TPL takes such actions it would indicate a renewed commitment to all of your staff.

I recently ran for mayor of Toronto and part of my platform included support for our libraries. Another part of my platform, which I raised at public debates with Mayor Tory, and something I feel strongly about, is an end to vaccine mandates as a condition of employment. I am pleased that the Mayor has recognized the importance of bringing employees back to work, and look forward to the TPL following suit now, not in 2024.

I look forward to your response.

Thanks, Sarah Climenhaga

cc:

Brandon Haynes, President, CUPE Local 4948
Emma Lee, Vice-President, CUPE Local 4948
Mayor John Tory
Councillor Josh Matlow
Toronto Sun
Toronto Star