



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2025 Results

Date: February 23, 2026

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the Toronto Public Library Board's 2025 Self-Evaluation Survey to the Board for approval. This is the tenth year that the Board has conducted the survey as a best practice in Board governance. Eight of ten Board members completed the survey in 2025. 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, respondents generally agreed that the Board adds value and is operating efficiently. No major issues were identified requiring action. In particular, there was strong agreement that the Board approved plans demonstrate prudent use of public funds, the best interests of the Library and the public, and appropriate focus from the Board; the Board has financial control; the Board membership provides diverse representation; the Board has a good working relationship with the

Toronto Public Library Foundation; that controls are in place to maintain integrity at the Library and among staff; that members support the final decisions of the Board; and the Board avails itself of external advice when needed. A very low percentage of survey responses noted three areas for improvement: Board member meeting attendance, the Board's ability to monitor plans and align with strategic vision, and monthly Board education program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 2026.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendations have no financial impact beyond what is included in the Board approved Toronto Public Library 2026 operating budget.

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

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Toronto Public Library Board Self-Evaluation evaluates the Board's Governance Role, Integrity and Ethics, Strategy Development and Performance Monitoring, Teamwork and Collaboration, Advocacy and Communication and rates the Board's overall value and efficacy. Strong and effective Board governance helps to advance TPL's strategic priorities, and the equity goals identified in TPL's Equity Statement.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on January 27, 2025, the Board approved the report [Toronto Public Library Board – Self-Evaluation: 2024 Results](#) and directed staff to conduct a survey in 2025.

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 2025, fulfilling its governance role.

Members of the Board, library staff, guests and members of the public can attend and/or participate in hybrid meetings 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 2025. Results indicate that current Board members agreed on most of the statements in the survey. The strongest and most unanimous statements were:

- The Board is effective and performs well
- The Board understands and contributes to the mandate, vision and mission of the Library

- Plans and initiatives approved by the Board demonstrate value for money and a prudent use of public funds
- The Board reviews and approves operating and capital budget submissions ensuring that they are aligned with Library and City priorities
- The Board ensures that its Financial Control Policy is adhered to
- The Board reviews the annual audited financial statements and takes action where necessary
- Board members demonstrate clear understanding of the respective roles of the Board and the City Librarian
- 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
- 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
- All members support the final decisions of the Board
- The Board avails itself of external advice or opinion when needed

There was least agreement on the following statements:

- There is an ongoing education program for Board members
- The Board keeps a steady focus on monitoring and adjusting plans to meet goals and strategic vision
- Board members regularly attend meetings and arrive on time to help ensure quorum and avoid delays

Compared with past year's reports, the overall satisfaction decreased slightly from last year but continues to show high satisfaction overall (92.5% overall rating in

2025, in comparison to 100% in 2024, 88% in 2023, 72% in 2022 and 78% in 2021). There was most notable improvement in the Board's evaluation of governance, and advocacy and communication.

Board members highlight their dedication and commitment to positive outcomes for the Library and the public, including a focus on good governance, financial oversight and risk management. The Board noted strongly its positive relationship with the City Librarian and staff and recognized their contribution in bringing forward and seeking out diverse perspectives.

Some Board members would like to see continued and consistent participation from all Board members, and highlighted opportunities for Board members to be involved in meaningful discussions during Board meetings to enhance impact and oversight.

The Board also expressed a desire to continue to learn from experts and community members about neighbourhood/community issues, and to enhance knowledge and skills on how Board members can amplify the work of the Library through advocacy, storytelling for public impact, and partner and donor communications.

Next steps

It is recommended that the Board direct staff to conduct a Board self-evaluation in 2026.

CONTACT

Shawn Mitchell; Director, Policy, Planning and Performance Management;
Tel: 416-395- 5602; Email: smitchell@tpl.ca

SIGNATURE

Moe Hosseini-Ara
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: 2025 TPL Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results

2025 TPL Board Self-Evaluation Survey Results

Governance role

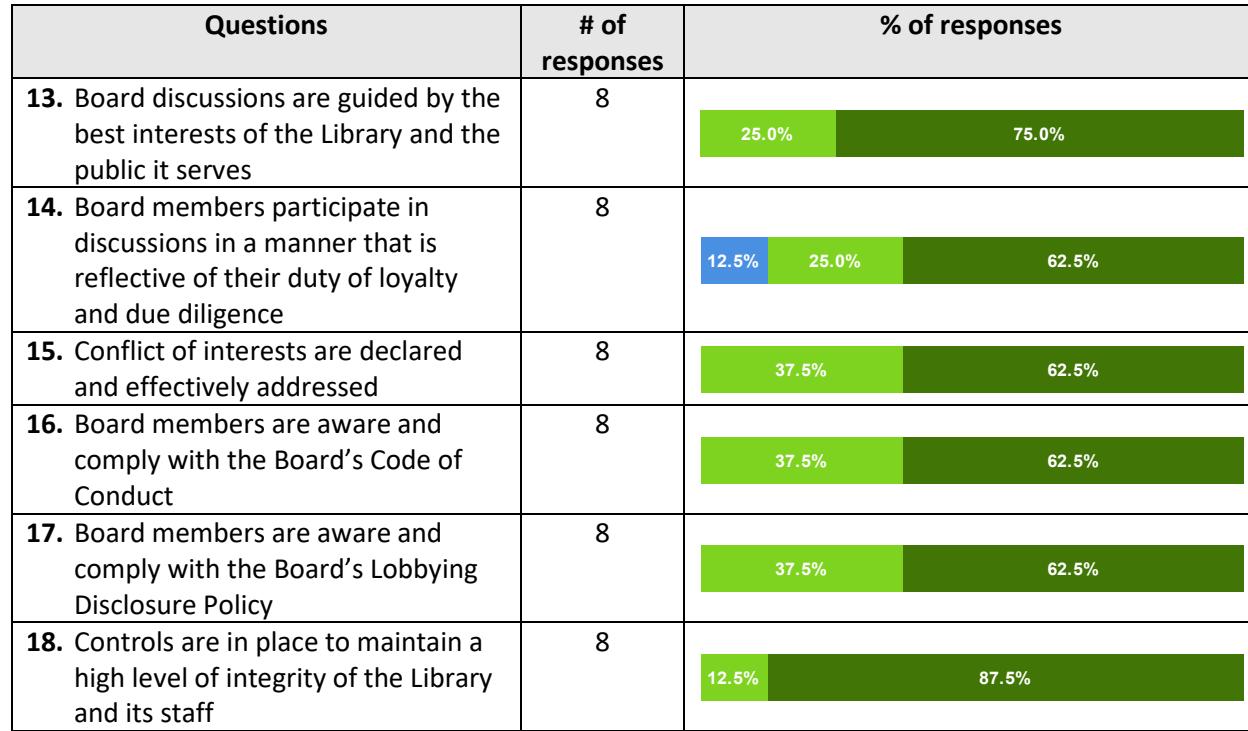
| Questions | # of responses | % of responses | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| 1. The legal and regulatory framework governing the Board is well understood by Board members | 8 | 25.0% | 50.0% | 25.0% |
| 2. The Board understands and contributes to the mandate, vision and mission of the Library | 8 | 37.5% | 62.5% | |
| 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 | 37.5% | 62.5% | |
| 5. The Board reviews and approves operating and capital budget submissions ensuring that they are aligned with Library and City priorities | 8 | 25.0% | 75.0% | |
| 6. The Board ensures that its Financial Control Policy is adhered to | 8 | 50.0% | 50.0% | |
| 7. The Board reviews the annual audited financial statements and takes action where necessary | 8 | 37.5% | 62.5% | |
| 8. Board members demonstrate clear understanding of the respective roles of the Board and the City Librarian | 8 | 37.5% | 62.5% | |
| 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% |
| 11. Board members are given the opportunity to attend Library events | 8 | 12.5% | 25.0% | 62.5% |
| 12. The Board has a good working relationship with the Toronto Public Library Foundation | 8 | 37.5% | 62.5% | |

 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Acceptable  Agree  Strongly Agree

Comments on the Board's governance role:

- TPL has well codified policies, that are reviewed and approved by the Board, with regular and comprehensive updates from staff to ensure compliance.

Integrity, ethics and values

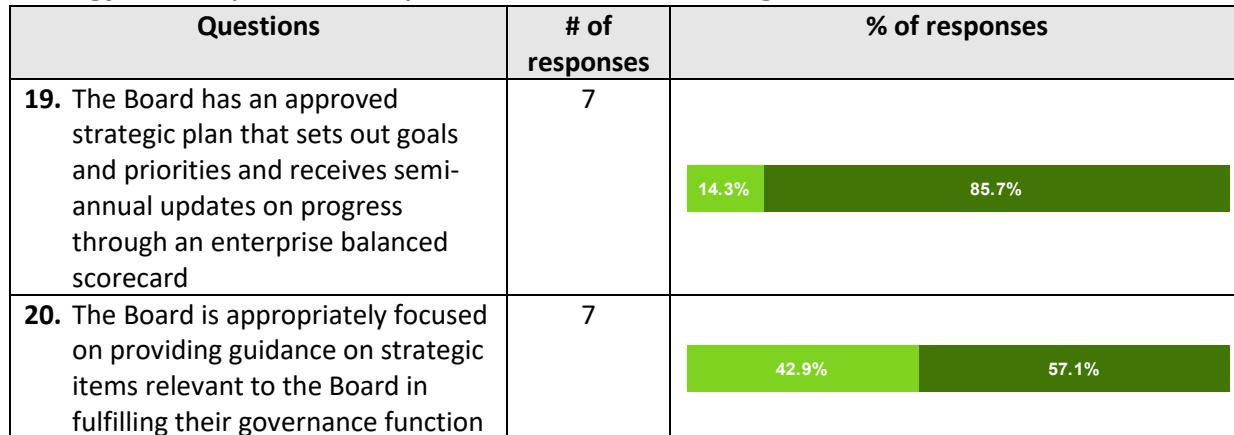


 Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Acceptable  Agree  Strongly Agree

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

- No concerns

Strategy development and performance monitoring



| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 21. The Board keeps a steady focus on monitoring and adjusting plans to meet goals and strategic vision* | 7 |  |
| 22. The Library's performance measures are realistic and challenging* | 7 |  |

* Note: Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this document may not add up to the totals provided. For example, in some cases, the sum of all question values may add up to 101% instead of 100%.



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

- The TPL engages in a robust process to develop its strategic plan. It sets goals that continue to evolve and increase its impact, especially on some of the city's more vulnerable and marginalized residents. Investments and resources are aligned to ensure strategic goals are achieved. The Board receives appropriate updates on the plan's implementation, and areas at risk of not being achieved are appropriately flagged.

Teamwork and collaboration

| Questions | # of responses | % of responses |
|--|----------------|--|
| 23. Board members regularly attend meetings and arrive on time to help ensure quorum and avoid delays | 7 |  |
| 24. All members fulfill their role and responsibility and at meetings have an opportunity to contribute equally to Board discussion | 7 |  |
| 25. Members act collegially, debate independently and decide collectively* | 7 |  |
| 26. Members work together to find the best solution* | 7 |  |
| 27. All members support the final decisions of the Board | 7 |  |
| 28. There is a high level of trust and respect between Board members* | 7 |  |
| 29. The Board avails itself of external advice or opinion when needed | 7 |  |

* Note: Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this document may not add up to the totals provided. For example, in some cases, the sum of all question values may add up to 101% instead of 100%.



Comments on the Board's teamwork and collaboration:

- Alim has done an excellent job cultivating board engagement in meetings – giving appropriate time for input and discussion
- More opportunities for board members to learn about one another outside of scheduled meetings
- Every board member should try to attend in person sometimes. Good leadership thanks Alim and Jonathon

Advocacy and communication

| Questions | # of responses | % of responses | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| 30. 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% | 71.4% | 14.3% |
| 31. The Board ensures that the Library's accomplishments and challenges are communicated to stakeholders and the community* | 7 | 14.3% | 42.9% | 42.9% |
| 32. The Board pursues relevant advocacy initiatives at all levels of government and with other stakeholders. | 7 | 42.9% | 57.1% | |

* Note: Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this document may not add up to the totals provided. For example, in some cases, the sum of all question values may add up to 101% instead of 100%.



Comments on the Board's advocacy and communication:

- We should all spend time with stakeholders. How can we individually support advocacy?

Overall rating

| Questions | # of responses | % of responses | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| 33. The Board adds value to public library service in Toronto | 7 | 14.3% | 14.3% | 71.4% |
| 34. The Board is effective and performs well | 7 | 71.4% | 28.6% | |



Comments on the Board's overall rating:

- Members of the Board are deeply devoted to the best outcomes for the Library and are incredibly well supported by excellent, expert staff and leadership within the TPL senior

leadership team. The efforts and engagement from both sides supports alignment, success and continued positive outcomes.

Areas of Board excellence:

- Board is operating at a high level, with members all receiving opportunities to provide their opinion and contribute. Board has an excellent relationship with the Library Staff and then Foundation
- The board has a good understanding of its role relative to staff – focusing on good governance, fiduciary oversight and effective risk management. It builds and maintains a productive relationship with the City Librarian and staff, and brings forward diverse and important insights from professional and personal experiences.
- Driving consistent alignment with, and support for TPL stated mission, vision and values

Areas where the Board could better:

- Some Board members are very quiet during meetings and don't often ask questions of staff
- Board could have more spirited and meaningful discussion and debates on library direction/staff safety, etc. – Meetings can often feel perfunctory or simply a formality – which is to be expected at a board of this level to some extend. However, more meaningful opportunities to form opinions and drive Library direction would be helpful
- The staff does an excellent job bringing forward well thought out recommendations for Board approval. One area of opportunity may be that the Board could do a better job at advocating for the unique and critical role the TPL plays in the city, and Province – and to be ambassadors for this, if/when appropriate.
- Consistency in participation from all members
- More board education brings in experts/community members to speak to the board for us to learn about neighborhoods/communities, and state of the art more board member interaction outside of meetings
- Everyone attending meetings consistently – Sometimes feels like some members are more prepared than others.

Suggestions for improvement:

- If appropriate – the board could be better ambassadors for TPL to amplify the great work TPL staff and the Foundation do. The Board could share the impact and contribute TPL has on the city. To do this, it would be helpful for the board to understand how best to do this.

Please identify potential topics for future Board education sessions:

- 1. Advocacy vs. political lobbying: legal boundaries for public sector boards. 2. Storytelling for Public Impact- Telling compelling stories that fit within board responsibilities, linking stories to strategic priorities and outcomes. 3. Partner, Donor Communications – how to speak to donors, partners at events
- How materials are chosen e-books vs paper books