

Toronto Public Library Workers Union  
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### **Cuts would devastate our public library**

Toronto –Proposed cuts to Toronto Public Library funding will have negative consequences for a wide swath of Torontonians, three-quarters of whom are regular library patrons, limiting their access to library facilities, services and knowledge, according to the Toronto Public Library Workers Union.

Proposals for cuts released earlier today suggest the City close library branches, cut hours of operation, and slash programs for children and immigrants. Taken together, the consultants hired by Mayor Ford to review library services have proposed cuts totaling approximately \$35 million or 20% of the TPL's budget.

"If the KPMG consultant who came up with these ideas was CEO of Tim Horton's, he would be fired for closing outlets and reducing hours, measures that would cut into sales and profits. If accepted, the measures proposed today will have a similarly negative impact on the Toronto Public Library," said Maureen O'Reilly.

The Toronto Public Library is among the best library systems in the world. It routinely is ranked as the most well used library in the world in terms of circulation of items. Excellence and success characterize the TPL.

"When you consider that Torontonians and Canadians are among the most avid readers in the world, these cuts make no sense whatsoever," says O'Reilly.

In addition to measures that will choke physical access to the Toronto Public Library, the consultants have proposed measures that specifically target cuts to services for children and immigrants.

"Teaching our children a love of books is one of the most important roles played by the Toronto Public Library. Yet, these kinds of programs would be cut if the City accepts these proposals," said Maureen O'Reilly, President of the TPLWU.

According to the TPL, Toronto has one library for every 28,120 citizens, fewer than Hamilton (one branch per 21,629); Ottawa (27,527); and Vancouver (27,976). In the U.S., the entire state of Vermont, which has only one-quarter of the population of Toronto, has 30 libraries per 100,000 people, which is 7-1/2 times the library density of Toronto.

"We are concerned that these recommendations are only a starting point. When Mayor Ford and his colleagues get involved, the cuts could be much worse, including privatization of the Toronto Public

Library. I think it is significant that the KPMG consultants routinely compare the Toronto Public Library to cities in the United States where outsourcing of entire library systems is a trend,” said O’Reilly.

According to a Forum Research opinion survey of Toronto residents taken earlier this month, three-quarters of Toronto residents disagree with the idea of closing local library branches as a way of solving the city’s deficit (74%), and more than one half disagree “strongly” (54%). When it is their own local branch which is threatened, the proportion of those who “strongly disagree” increases to two-thirds (64%).

Not only are library branch closures off the table as far as Toronto residents are concerned, more than half disagree with privatizing the delivery of any city services (55%), and more than one third disagree “strongly” (38%). When the Toronto Public Library is mentioned as a privatization target, seven-in-ten Torontonians disagree (71%), more than one half “strongly” (55%).

“On behalf of Torontonians who love their public library, we are calling on City Council to reject the KPMG recommendations concerning the Toronto Public Library and to keep our library public,” O’Reilly said.

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