



2012 City of Toronto Budget: Analysis Cuts to library services

Issue:

- The *Operating Budget Analyst Notes*¹ recommend that the Toronto Public Library (TPL) cut its budget by 10%, which would mean a \$17.044 million reduction in its 2012 budget. In December, the TPL board rejected Mayor Ford's suggested cuts of 10%, and instead voted for a cut of 5.9%².
- In January 2012 the City's Executive Council directed TPL not to implement reductions in library hours, which means that cuts will likely be seen to budgets for literacy programs and new materials purchases.³
- Mike Del Grande, the city's budget chief, caused controversy and a complaint to the integrity commissioner, by suggesting that the library save money by limiting spending on non-English materials⁴.

Facts:

- Libraries fulfill many vital community functions, including as social gathering places, providing internet access for email and job searches, places for children to do homework, and most importantly as cornerstones, along with strong schools, to ensuring literacy.
- Evidence shows that individuals with low literacy levels were 1.5 to 3 times more likely to have poor health outcomes than individuals with high literacy levels⁵.
- A July 2011 systematic review found that low health literacy is associated with greater use of acute care services alongside decreased access to preventative health care such as vaccines and mammography.⁶ Among elderly individuals, low health literacy was associated with 27%-50% higher mortality rates.

Analysis:

- There has been strong opposition to the proposed library cuts, coming from all sectors and a range of community members, from author Margaret Atwood to 14 year old Anika Tabovaran⁷, who spoke at a July 2011 city hall deputation. Anika outlined the vital role of her local library in allowing children without computers at home to do their homework, and spoke movingly about how her library allows her to get an education and to get a good job in the future.
- About 48% of adult Canadians have low literacy, particularly seniors, immigrants, and people living in poverty. The Canadian Public Health Association states: "the combination of low literacy and a lack of health literacy can be dangerous – and even deadly".⁸

**HPAP calls on Toronto City Council to make the Healthy Choice and
stop the cuts to vital community programs!**

¹ <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-42560.pdf>

² <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-43658.pdf>

³ Toronto Stop the Cuts (n.d.) What cuts are still being planned? Retrieved from www.torontostopthecuts.com/budgetupdate

⁴ <http://www.torontosun.com/2011/12/05/complaint-filed-against-del-grande>

⁵ Dewalt, D. Et al (2004). Literacy and health outcomes: a systematic review of the literature. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 19, 1228-1239

⁶ Berkman, N. Et al (2011) Low health literacy and outcomes: a systematic review. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 155, 97-107.

⁷ <http://www.thestar.com/news/torontocouncil/article/1032536>

⁸ <http://www.cpha.ca/en/pls.aspx>