



Back to Library board conflicted over newly proposed service cuts to branches

## Library board conflicted over newly proposed service cuts to branches

December 08, 2011

Jennifer Pagliaro

The city's chief librarian is proposing axing literacy and school outreach programs and reducing collections to meet further demands for budget cuts.

Head librarian Jane Pyper's newest proposal aims to make up an additional 4.3 per cent — some \$7.3 million — in cuts, after the library board voted unanimously last month to not reduce hours.

Pyper was asked by the board at a November meeting to propose further cost-saving measures to meet the 10 per cent budget cut imposed by Mayor Rob Ford.

The proposal is made up of a \$3 million cut in the collections budget, \$2.8 million in program cuts, almost \$500,000 in savings by introducing additional automated sorters, as well as a \$1 fine for users who don't pick up items they've put on hold.

A total of 37 jobs would be cut based on the new proposal.

But board members are conflicted, ahead of a Monday meeting, over what compromise, if any, can be made to meet the cuts.

Councillor Sarah Doucette said she was "appalled" by the thought of losing school outreach or literacy programs.

"What's going to be in our branches?" she said. "We'll have our doors open, but you're losing a lot of the programs which are such a net to people."

Some of the proposed service cuts include:

- High school and kindergarten outreach activities.
- Ready For Reading pre-school literacy program.
- Leading to Reading program for school children.

Adult literacy programs.

- Keep Toronto Reading Festival.
- One Book Community Reads.
- Bookmobile service.

Doucette said the library board had already approved a 5.7 per cent cut from the 2011 budget and doesn't understand the push to hit a cent target.



Jane Pyper, chief librarian, has come up with a new series of proposals to Toronto Public Library's budget, after the library board turned down cuts.

Tara Walton/Ti

"Let's leave it at that," she said. "Why is that 10 per cent such a magic number?"

But board chair Councillor Paul Ainslie said there has to be a compromise between some of the new proposals and cutting branch hours.

"We'll end up putting forward a number of the recommendations . . . that our chief librarian Jane Pyper has in that report," he said. "But we're going to have a serious look also at reducing hours."

He said board members agree with introducing sorters and imposing the \$1 fine, but cutting reading programs, especially those for children, doesn't sit well with anyone.

"The heart and soul of the library, I think for a lot of people, is children's programming," Ainslie said.

Citizen board member Mike Foderick said that if the board is forced by council to meet the full 10 per cent in cuts, they'll be having "a really hard place kind of conversation" with library users about valued services versus branch hours.

"Hopefully it doesn't come to that," he said.