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"No interest in public opinion" by Toronto Public Library board members, including Chair Paul Ainslie; protests over hours cuts to take place this week.

TORONTO, Nov. 16, 2011 /CNW/ - Despite voting at their October meeting to conduct public consultations during November on the 2012 library budget, virtually none of the eight newly-appointed "citizen members" of the Toronto Public Library Board has attended any of the nine meetings held so far around the city. The purpose of the meetings is to hear directly from Torontonians how they feel about the Board's planned service and staff cuts. All of the meetings have been held in the early evening except for two that were held last Sunday afternoon.

As well, Board Chair Councillor Paul Ainslie and Board members Councillor Jaye Robinson and Councillor Cesar Palacio have failed to show any interest in what residents have to say about the future of Toronto's library system of them are on Mayor Ford's hand-picked Executive Committee. Not only did they not show up for any of the scheduled public consultations, Ainslie, Robinson and Palacio did not even request public consultations in their own wards, unlike fellow councillor Board members Janet Davis and Sarah Doucette.

"Clearly these Ford appointees are not at all interested in public opinion on the library system they have been appointed to oversee," said Maureen O'Reilly, President of the Toronto Public Library Workers Union. "And Councilor Ainslie's disinterest and lack of leadership is a bad sign that one of the world's great library systems is going to be allowed to deteriorate."

"It is a shocking show of disrespect for taxpayers," added O'Reilly. "Either that or these Board members are simply afraid to face the public after they voted to cut over 100 positions from an already overwhelmed library staff and a cut 27 per cent from the materials acquisitions budget, ensuring that the library collection will go downhill."

In a related development, the library union's "Flying Squad" of information picketers will be dashing around the city Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to hold brief demonstrations in front of library branches where City Librarian Jai Pyper has recommended cutting hours.

"Library patrons have to be told that the person charged with administering their system wants to cut access to libraries by nearly 20,000 hours annually," said O'Reilly.

It is scandalous that the doors to our libraries will be locked at times when most people can visit them, all in order to save taxpayers less than two cents per day. Mayor Ford and his gang are going way, way too far. This madness has to stop."

For further information:

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