

Toronto Public Library Workers Union  
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**Poll shows three quarters of Toronto residents oppose closing local library branches as a way of cutting costs and equally oppose library privatization**

TORONTO/ As debate about Toronto's finances heats up, voters in the city have a clear message for Council when it comes to the Toronto Public Library: "Don't close our libraries and don't privatize them."

This message emerges from a Forum Research poll conducted on July 4, 2011 which found that 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%).

"We were concerned about the Ford administration's slapdash public consultation on the future of public services and the threat of further branch closures and the prospect of privatization, so we wanted to learn what the public really thought about these issues," says Maureen O'Reilly, President of the Toronto Public Library Workers Union (TPLWU), which commissioned the poll.

The poll also shows that Torontonians feel branch closures are a political issue. More than half say if they knew their local councilor supported closing library branches, it would affect their vote in the next municipal election "a great deal" (55%). In total, seven-in-ten Torontonians say knowing their councilor supported library branch closures would affect their vote (71%).

The Toronto Public Library Workers Union also plans to give Mayor Ford an oversized ceremonial library card, to remind him that 1.25 million Torontonians own a library card and use it regularly. They also invited Mayor Ford to visit any branch of the library.

"Just walk right in, Mr. Mayor and bring along your million-dollar consultants if you like. Talk to the people you meet there and ask them where the gravy is. We think you'll get an earful," said O'Reilly.

The union says the poll is the first step in an extended campaign to prevent further branch closures and the privatization of library management and services. An online anti-privatization petition has been set up at [www.ourpubliclibrary.to](http://www.ourpubliclibrary.to). More initiatives, including community outreach and organizational alliances, will be launched in the weeks to come.

The poll was conducted on Monday, July 4 by Forum Research Inc., using a random selection telephone Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, and is based on a sample size of 1061 completed interviews with residents of the City of Toronto. Results are accurate to within plus or minus 3%, 19 out of 20 times asking the identical questions.

The Toronto Public Library Workers Union, Local 4948, represents 2400 Toronto Public Library workers. It is affiliated with the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

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