

February 19, 2001

Mr. Rick Goldsmith  
Chair and Members  
Toronto Public Library Board  
789 Yonge Street  
Toronto, ON

**RE: Proposal to close Mt. Pleasant Library - St. Paul's Riding**

Dear Mr. Goldsmith,

It has come to my attention, yet again, that there is a proposal to close the Mt. Pleasant branch of the Toronto Public Library. This information has reached my office via an article in the Toronto Star published February 18, 2000. Not only was I shocked to see this proposal, but infuriated at the fact that, as the people's representative, I was once again left out of the loop.

As councillor for the St. Paul's ward, I have a responsibility to the constituents of the area and to drop a piece of information as large as the closing of public libraries without any prior notice to the politicians' office is unacceptable. The City's budget problems are not going to be solved by "nickel and dimeing" the facilities that are crucial to children, adults and seniors alike. This particular branch of the Toronto Public Library is well utilized for the hours that it operates and the programs offered to the community are appreciated and taken advantage of to the fullest extent.

The Mt. Pleasant Library is situated in an ideal location with four public schools and many senior's apartment buildings in its catchment area. One of the main reasons this library was built (only nine years ago) was to provide for the needs of the residents, especially children and seniors, whose closest public library was Deer Park at Yonge St. and St. Clair Ave. or the Northern District Library at Duplex and Orchard View Blvd., north west of Yonge St. and Eglinton Ave. W. The Mt. Pleasant library was appropriately designed to focus on the needs of these two specific groups. From feedback I have received from area residents and my own personal observations, it has been very successful in fulfilling this purpose.

Should the closure proceed as planned, it would be a real loss for senior citizens in the area for a number of reasons. Much of the library material is geared towards senior citizens and staff at the library have a reputation for being extremely helpful, especially with senior citizens who often require a little extra time and assistance. It is also wheelchair accessible and convenient. Mobility is a serious issue for many seniors who simply cannot travel the long distance to the Deer Park or Northern District Libraries. The long and short of it is, they have nowhere else to go and will have no choice but to stop using the public library system period which is a loss far too serious to legitimize.

As stated earlier, Mt. Pleasant library is a very popular and widely used library. With over 50,000 visitors a year, it has a far greater utilization than most other libraries with the same amount of operating hours. The closure of the library will strike fierce controversy in the community the likes of which we have never seen; the opposition from the political level and the neighbourhoods across this city are a guarantee.

I urge you to come up with a better proposal than the closure of 17 different library branches. It is absolutely necessary to meet with the residents of the affected areas and discuss any possible closing of public institutions so that we may act accordingly and with due process.

Thus, as I said over 18 months ago you must defer this proposal and go back to the community to carry out a proper consultation with affected residents as these are the people that use the library and its services and pay the taxes that support this library system. The residents will most likely have some valuable insights and suggestions to offer. It is important that we take their comments and suggestions into consideration before, not after recommending closure.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Walker".

Michael Walker  
Councillor - Ward 22

cc. Michael Bryant  
MPP - St. Paul's Riding