

## **Toronto Public Library Workers Union leads charge to save libraries and public services**

When Mayor Rob Ford announced in February that he planned to close the Urban Affairs Library branch of the Toronto Public Library as a “cost-cutting” measure, CUPE 4948, Toronto Public Library Workers, sprung to the defense of Toronto’s much-loved and used public libraries.

The Local started an online campaign <http://ourpubliclibrary.to/> to collect signatures on a petition against the agenda targeting library branches and threatening privatization of library services. They have gathered over 44,000 signatures in support of Toronto’s public libraries.

"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).

A poll shows that Toronto voters have a clear message for Council when it comes to the Toronto Public Library: “Don't close our libraries and don't privatize them.” The public library has more than twice the circulation of Chicago, New York, or Los Angeles – with over 11 million items in 40 languages available.

After showing that the people of Toronto do not want service cuts or privatization of services, CUPE 4948 helped people show support for City services. They encouraged people to talk to friends, family, and co-workers about what is at stake in Toronto and encouraged them to get involved and speak up. People were encouraged to come to council meetings and bring a friend.

The final Standing Committee meeting ran from 9:30 a.m. July 28 and ended at 6 a.m. on July 29. There were over 300 people waiting to speak and about half of those made their depositions. Before anyone spoke the Mayor made it clear that they were going to “shrink City government, cut jobs and outsource.”

TPLWU President Maureen O'Reilly presented the 44,000 petitions delivered to the committee by members of CUPE 4948 and CUPE

Ontario executive board members. The crowd was clapping and chanting “Save our libraries” in a standing ovation. “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,” said O’Reilly. “We think you’ll get an earful.”

CUPE 4948 continues their fight with initiatives including community outreach and reaching out to organizations over the coming weeks as they work with community allies to protect public services for Toronto residents.

Take action by supporting CUPE 4948 at the following information pickets listed below.

**Wednesday, August 17, 12noon – 2 pm**  
**Toronto Reference Library (TRL)**  
**789 Yonge Street (Yonge and Bloor – one block north at Asquith on the east side of Yonge)**

**Wednesday, August 24, 12noon-2pm**  
**North York Central Library**  
**5120 Yonge Street (at Mel Lastman Square)**