



# **Don't cut open hours; tap into city surplus to fund library budget shortfall say Toronto residents in new Forum Research poll.**

TORONTO, Jan. 16, 2012 /CNW/ - A new poll of Toronto residents shows continuing strong support for public library services, great disapproval of the idea of reducing open hours and strong opposition to budget cuts in excess of the 5.9 per cent already ordered by the Library Board in October.

According to the January 12 poll conducted by Forum Research, 56 per cent of the more than 1,000 adults surveyed felt a library budget reduction of 5.9 per cent, representing \$10 million, was "sufficient," despite Mayor Ford's general target of a 10 per cent cut in city agency budgets. Only about one in three (35%) supported a full 10 per cent library budget cut. Nine per cent were undecided.

Interestingly, survey respondents who said they had voted for Rob Ford as Mayor showed essentially the same percentage agreement that the 5.9 per cent library budget cut was sufficient.

On the issue of open library hours, 64 per cent oppose the idea of cutting hours as a budget reduction measure. This was yet another rebuke to the Library Board Chair, Councillor Paul Ainslie, who could not get his fellow Board members to agree to any hours reductions at their December meeting.

A third strike against Ainslie's door-closing idea came at last Thursday's City Executive Committee meeting. The committee asked the Library Board to come up with another \$3.9 million in "efficiencies" but specified that there be no cuts to library hours in reaching that goal.

"While we appreciate that the Executive Committee doesn't want library hours cut, it will be impossible to find an additional \$3.9 million in the budget without cutting deeply into many popular and important library services," said Maureen O'Reilly, president of the Toronto Public Library Workers Union, which commissioned the Forum Research poll.

"We would have to cut children's and adult literacy programs, high school and kindergarten outreach activities, the Bookmobile program and many other services to reach even half of that \$3.9 million request. The rest would come from cutting the already reduced Collections budget, which would make it impossible for the library to stay current in key knowledge areas."

O'Reilly says the solution is for Councillors to listen to residents and dip into the surplus to make up any shortfall in the library budget rather than cutting more programs and new acquisitions.

"The \$3.9 million from the library budget requested by the Executive is only 2.6 per cent of the budget surplus. We can afford it. The library has already taken a \$10 million hit. We're down to the bone here. It makes no sense to cut anymore."

A poll last summer by Forum Research found that 71 per cent of Toronto residents were opposed to any library branch closures. Shortly after the poll was published, Mayor Ford and Councillor Doug Ford announced that no library would be closed.

The full Forum Research poll can be obtained upon request from the Library Workers' Union. Send request to [president@local4948.org](mailto:president@local4948.org).

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