Dear Ms. Hubbard Krimmer,

I am writing to you about about cuts to the London Public Library budget and particularly about a claim by Councillor Denise Brown, reported in Saturday's Free Press, that the library's stocking of "first run" movies had helped put retail chains such as Blockbuster out of business.

I visit one of two branch libraries (Beacock and Masonville) almost every week and I frequently pick up DVDS. I don't recall seeing any first run movies, unless Councillor Brown is referring to some of the foreign-language films that are being provided in greater numbers.

My question to you is: Are Councillor Brown's statements accurate? If not, then they should be disputed -- if not refuted -- immediately.

I am appalled, as I know you must be, by these attacks on the library budget and on the system itself. They cannot go unchallenged.

If I can help in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Doug English

London, Ont.
Hello Denise,

I am a resident of Ward 11 and am concerned about remarks that have been attributed to you in today's London Free Press regarding Library service (http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/2012/08/10/20091231.html). Quoting:

"The library has cost jobs in this city. They have first-run movies and Rogers and Blockbuster have gone out of business"*

I'm not terribly knowledgable in this sector but knew immediately that this statement was not representative of the actual state of the industry. I spent 15 minutes doing a bit of digging and have summarized my findings below.

I started by looking for the latest "blockbuster" release and came up with Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows. I'm sure you've been to a large rental chain in the past and know that a typical store would carry 15-25 copies of such a DVD (estimating 6-12 stores across London that could be upwards of 300 copies per chain). Doing a simple search on the London Public Library's website I see that they have 22 copies of the film in the entire city with 444 people on the wait list (source: http://encore.londonpubliclibrary.ca/ill/encore/record/C_Rhb1684674_SGame-of+shadows_P0%2C1_Orightresult_X4;sessionid=05C914D16CCE2D73C8163D60A72FF7EE?lang=eng&suite=cohalt).

I worked in an independent video store 25 years ago that was eventually put out of business by Blockbuster. Back then VHS was the medium of choice but what most people don't know is that those tapes were prohibitively expensive to own (video ownership wasn't really in our vocabulary). This was the golden era of Blockbuster, expensive media that the public could only access through rental. The advent of inexpensive VHS and DVDs have declimated that market. It's not unusual to find homes with 100+ purchased DVDs. This is a radically different economic environment.

The final nail in the coffin of these services was the advent of Netflix home DVD delivery and more recently their Internet streaming offering. See this article and infographic:
http://articles.businessinsider.com/2011-03-01/tech/300-l5214_1_netflix-blockbuster-rentals-by-mail

Convenience rules in this market. Being last in a queue of 444 is decidedly inconvenient and people with enough money will shell out the money to use another delivery mechanism like Netflix.

However, services like Netflix are in no way affordable to low income Londoners they require a monthly fee ($8 or more) and a premium Internet service (add $10-20/month on top of basic Internet fees).

All of the facts that I'm seeing regarding the demise of the video rental industry point to commoditization and the advance of the internet.

I'm all for a goal of 0% but only after thoughtful deliberation and that is not what was demonstrated today. I would beg that you consider your words more carefully in the future when representing our ward and our city.

Shawn Adamsson
Ward 11 Resident

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http://spanfilter.londonpubliclibrary.ca/cgi-bin/learn-msg.cgi?id=F4C222B453.AC57D
From: "Bill Corfield"
To: <josh.morgan@ipl.london.on.ca>
Date: 8/13/2012 3:59 PM
Subject: library finances

Mr. Morgan - I see you are chairman of the London Library Board and offer these suggestions in the hope they will be useful and perhaps acted upon. Several decades ago, when Bill Davis was Premier of Ontario, Bob Welsh, Minister of Culture and Recreation, appointed me to the Ontario Provincial Library Board to study the granting system and finances of libraries. This was in preparation for the new networking system that computers offered. I also served five years on the Regional Board and five years on the London Board. One of the finding was that libraries were giving away too many peripheral services and users should pay more. Little changed. The service to hold books is an example. If you request branches to report the number of 'holds' that are not picked up, you may realize that this cosmetic service is expensive and may be misused. A modest fee for 'holding' and a fine for not retrieving would reduce misuse and provide added income. One of the local librarians, remembering my efforts on the London board, told me this week that the Toronto Board is reaping large revenue from these charges. You may wish to explore. I think a small hourly charge for computers would be reasonable increasing revenue is more desirable than reducing services. I would be interested in any action that the board decides. Bill Corfield.

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Hi Sussana,

I noticed on Facebook that we could share comments about the budget issue with you. I contacted Denise Brown (who I read the Ward map correctly, is my city councillor) about some comments she made about the library in regard to budget cuts. This is a copy of the letter I wrote.

Regards,

Jennifer Watt

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Jennifer Watt
Date: 11 August 2012 18:08
Subject: Our Library
To: dbrrown@london.ca

Dear Denise Brown,

I would like you to know that I am deeply unsettled about your remarks about the public library.

Yesterday I read some comments made by you made about my library:

"I've gone to the library and had to wait for a book. Maybe that will have to happen a little bit more," she said. Library services have gotten too expansive over time and it's time to go back to basics, Brown said.

"The library has cost jobs in this city. They have first-run movies and Rogers and Blockbuster have gone out of business," Brown said.*

I hope you don't believe this. It shocks me that you choose to support a corporation over a wonderful sustainable public system that encourages people to share and reuse rather than consume. The library has been offering movies alongside Blockbuster and Rogers for a long time and the two have been able to coexist. The availability of torrent downloads from the internet and services like Netflix have brought about a change in the industry, and people no longer have need for movie rental companies when they can get them from the convenience of their own homes at little to no cost. And for the people that can't afford these services? Yes, they can put items on hold at the public library and wait. Sometimes even a couple months!

To accuse the library of costing jobs is just ludicrous. Business like
Rogers and Blockbuster put independent business owners out of work.

All of the libraries in our city have wonderful employment centers that allow people to access job postings, and many offer resume and interview help. If it weren't for the London Central Public Library, I would not have the job I have today. My husband has also taken advantage of the job interview sessions to help him in his job search.

I love the London Public Library. Every time I visit it is buzzing with people doing research, attending seminars/classes, special events, reading magazines, books, audiobooks, working on resumes and searching for jobs, and meeting fellow Londoners and engaging in their community. Making cuts to the library is not just about waiting a little longer for a book, and your comment suggesting this makes me think you don't really understand what the library means to all of us.

I hope you do your research next time you make such outlandish comments about the wonderful library services in this city, and I hope that as a Representative of Ward 11 you reconsider your position on this matter. Please urge the other councillors to stop making cuts to our public services (low income housing, transit, libraries), I want to live in a city that I can be proud of. This 0% is costing all us too much.

Jennifer Watt

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Jennifer Watt

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Jennifer Watt

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Hello Councillor Brown: I must take exception to your comments quoted in the London Free Press with respect to the London Public Library costing jobs in this city and linking this to Rogers and Blockbusters "going out of business". Libraries and video stores have co-existed successfully for years. I dare say the reason these stores went out of business is that they relied very heavily on a single product that is gradually being replaced by other models to access movies. Rogers and Blockbuster have chosen to adapt to a changing environment and this is why they have closed stores. Their reasons have nothing to do with the library.

In fact, London Public Library makes an important contribution to the economic renewal of this city. The library is a place where the unemployed access print and digital resources to assist them in their job search. New entrants into the labour market and workers in transition develop the basic computer and literacy skills required in the new economy. Entrepreneurs and small business access government data and business periodicals to assist them in the full range of business planning and execution. A vibrant public library is also a key component of a high quality of life; and, quality of life is now acknowledged as a key means to attract and retain the creative classes deemed to be critical to a thriving post-industrial economy. Moreover, London Public Library plays a role in the economic renewal of the downtown core. High use contributes to keeping downtowns safe and library buildings stabilize property values within their proximity. London Public Library's branch libraries, most of which are in local shopping malls also benefit from having the public library as a tenant. By providing high-value knowledge jobs, making local purchases and the "halo effect" created when public library users combine a visit with shopping, the London Public Library is a key asset in our local economy.

As a resident and taxpayer, I hope, in future, that you will check your facts before making this type of negative statement about one of our city's more respected and valued organizations.

Thank you.

Gina La Force

London, ON

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Click here to report this message as spam.
From: Sarah Pesce <spsce.sarah@gmail.com>
To: <dbrown@london.ca>
CC: <susanna.krimmer@pl.london.on.ca>
Date: 8/22/2012 11:24 PM
Subject: comments in LFP

Dear Ms. Brown,

As an Old South resident, I would like to voice my concern regarding your recent comments about the London library system as stated in the London Free Press on August 10. Your assertion that libraries were responsible for putting Blockbuster and other video stores out of business is frankly astounding in its sweeping generalizations of the economic conditions in which the video store system collapsed, the changing landscape of movie distribution, and the power that libraries have. While I do certainly believe that libraries have power, it's certainly not enough to bring down a global company whose business model was untenable in a world where digital distribution is becoming the norm.

You also note that you've had to wait for a book at the library -- the holds for a recent film at the library can number in the hundreds have an extremely long wait time, while the same film could be easily rented at Blockbuster with virtually no wait. The libraries are certainly not the cause of Blockbuster's demise; if they were, Blockbuster would have been out of business long before now. Your comments are damaging to the library's cause and in not supporting the library, I believe you are undercutting the importance of the work the library does in the lives of London's citizens.

Libraries offer children education, entertainment, and ways to use their imaginations. They're also important to adults for the same reasons, plus the libraries also provide valuable resources to help adults build their futures and become better citizens (e.g. job search resources, etc.). Lastly, libraries are important meeting places for the community -- given that you represent Old South, a tight-knit neighbourhood that thrives on community organization, the vital need for the library in this community and others cannot be underestimated. (I note, for example, that the Old South Community Organization holds its monthly meetings at Landon Library.) Libraries make better communities, better citizens, and happier/smarter/more imaginative kids. As a former volunteer and frequent patron, I love London libraries. Please consider supporting the library rather than advocating to take money from it.

Yours truly,
Sarah Pesce

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Dear Councillors and Mayor Fontana,

I write to you to express my serious concerns about the proposed budgetary cuts and, thus, service cuts for the London Public Library.

I live in Ward 1. Over the 27 years since I moved to London, I have been a regular patron at the Crouch Library, Beacock Library and the Central Library. My children, now in their late teens and early twenties, started library programs when they were newborns. We have attended classes, art shows, workshops, concerts, speeches and films at the library. I have rented library space for meetings. We use the library to borrow books and films, study, research for homework and presentations, meet with colleagues and schoolmates and, sometimes, simply to read in a peaceful, welcoming, calm place.

Having been quite involved in my children's schooling, I've also learned that our library (and librarians) are invaluable to families and children who are not as fortunate as we are. As a volunteer with LiFe*Spin this summer, and being responsible for pulling together donations for school supplies for backpacks to go to children from low-income families, I made sure we had USB drives and LPL photocopy cards for each child so that they can use the library homework computers to get work done that might otherwise not happen in homes without computers.

In my working life, I have traveled the province extensively. As part of that work, I needed to develop an understanding of each community - take its pulse, if you will. I always visited the local libraries. I quickly learned that London has a strong and vibrant library system in comparison to cities of a similar population. I have been particularly proud of the Central Library and the integration of the Reading Garden, the coffee shop and work areas that allow for either quiet reflection or group work and collaboration. The variety and quality of the programming is exceptional. Our library is a place where all Londoners can feel welcome, equal and safe. There aren't many places with these qualities. Our library is a place of exploration, discovery and creation. I would hazard a guess that most of us are in more positive frames of mind when we leave than when we enter.

As a French as a Second Language student at College Boreal, I often study at the Central Library and read French newspapers and periodicals. I enjoy meeting students from other places who are working on English as a Second Language. Libraries are natural places for new immigrants to go in order to learn the new language and immerse themselves in their new community.

It was with great concern, therefore, that I read of the possible reduction in library hours, staffing, collection acquisition and Sunday service. Our library has heeded the call for fiscal restraint for many years. There comes a time when continuing to do so will result in changes that are unacceptable. I suggest that this is that time.

Strong, vibrant urban centres - such as I hope London continues to be - need strong community services - libraries are a very important part of this. I have attached just a few of the many documents available that point the the importance of a healthy library system in a modern city.

I urge you to do what is necessary in order to ensure that these cuts do not happen. Reaching a 0% tax increase at the expense of core services such as libraries, is not the way to build a more successful London.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your response.

Michele Girash
London, ON

http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/Mending_Canadas_Frayed_Social_Safety_Net_The_role_of_municipal_governments_EN.pdf
http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/1001075_stronger_cities.pdf

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Submitted on Tuesday, September 4, 2012 - 10:35am
Submitted by anonymous user: [207.35.68.74]
Name: Matthew Sendzik
Email Address: [redacted]
Library Card #: [redacted]
City (mandatory): London
Phone #: [redacted]
Question:
This is a comment regarding potential service cuts. I use pond mills, if service is cut, I would prefer it to be in the morning.
I work full time and I can only access during the evening and weekends.
I'd also like to add that I, like most, already only have 5 day library service, while Central users are fighting to keep 7 day access.

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Facebook Responses

Re: mentions of the LPL budget by people “sharing” the LPL budget information posted by LPL on Facebook on Mon. Aug. 13, 2012. Our original post told people about the FAQs on our website (and provided a link to those) and directed people how comments may be submitted to become part of the public record.

Jessica Kinsman via London Public Library
Londoners, our libraries need our support as they support us and our communities. Read up and let your councillor know what you want from/for your library.

Scott Kinoshita via London Public Library
Libraries are important. Reducing services will impact people who need them, and these are the same people who are important for economic recovery.

Marvin Royce via Becky Ellis
Speak up for London Public Libraries!

Wortley Village shared our budget post. Comments on that post.

Carol Riesberry I think they think its ok to cut Sunday service. Wouldn't this be a day children make good use of Library services?

Janice Bowby Moore Any cuts to the library budget should be viewed as a grave mistake. Libraries should be receiving more funds, not trying to cut services and hours.

Wortley Village Contact Ward Councillor Denise Brown with your concerns. NB - She is in favour of the cuts.

The Beat magazine shared our budget post. Comments on that post.

Patricia Green The only reason for the 0% budget is a promise made by the Mayor in his campaign. Neither the City of London workers, nor those on the budget committee of City Council recommended a 0% budget. London does not need service cuts.

Brian Gibson shared our post then Stuart Clark shared it from Brian’s page. Comments on that post

Todd Dailey I'm disappointed that this only suggests ways to cut expenses. Why is there no thought given on how the Library can create new revenue? This is just an attempt to make people think that the only way a library can function is through taxation. Organizations need to be more entrepreneurial.

Christina McDonald why oh why do we need to live in a fantasy world where taxes shouldn't go up, when everything else we pay for does anyway?

Stuart Clark What would you suggest Todd? Increase Fines, I don't think your going to make up 400K that way, if you have any ideas the board would love to hear them.

Paul Crivea Danielle says one hell of a bake sale... granted, that's 400,000 brownies... but it could work... just add sprinkles.

Paul Crivea Though to be honest Stu.. why does one branch need 5 copies of the same magazine, when one or two will do.. and does anyone really read some of the magazines they do get in? I've yet to see anyone take the copy of Recording Technicians Monthly off the shelf... Right there, by cutting the number of subscriptions to a magazine, or
by eliminating some of the lesser read ones.. money saved. Turn off the lights at night at the Central Library at night, money saved...
Charge a small nominal fee to use the computers.. anywhere from 50 cents to a $1 would suffice... Free in the childrens library for anyone under 16.. 16 or older.. charge a dollar.
And as much as some will hate the idea.. cut hours to some of the branches, and do the same for staffing.. some full timers go to part-time.. that's life.. it sucks.. but until things get better with the economy... there it is.

Todd Dailey Inflation is not a force of nature that "just happens." It is driven by actions in the economy that cause costs to rise. Action can also be taken to reduce costs and reduce inflation, possibly even deflating the index. Taxation DOES NOT have to constantly rise; THAT is a fantasy.

This is a prime example of what happens when an organization is sustained solely on money taxed from other people. It produces no wealth-generating ideas of its own and even loses the ability to think with an entrepreneurial mind. I'm sad that "late fines" and "bake sale" are the only ideas people can think of. This is a reason why the city of London is failing; there are not enough entrepreneurial people who look at what they have and create ways to produce more from it. We believe that the only way to fund our organizations is to use force to take from people who already have.

Here's my list of ideas that I came up with in one hour; and I don't get paid $125 K per year as the CEO of the LPL. (Or even $100 K per year as deputy CEO.)

- increase marketing of the library
- implement monthly / annual fees for library cards
- implement tiered levels of library membership with increasing costs and privileges (example: higher tiers get "hold item" privileges)
- implement per-item loan fees
- implement facility-use fees for presentation rooms and meetings
- implement pay-for-use computer & Internet access
- sell new books / media
- recover money by selling old books / media
- seek private and corporate sponsorships, offer to endorse sections of the library for significant contributions, consider branding the library itself
- offer for-fee research services
- provide long-term leases of material to corporate clients
- provide long-term leases of material to libraries in other towns, cities.
- expand selection of for-fee loan items that compliment the interests of high users of the library
- partner with independent book stores / media stores, offer retail space for lease
- increase geography for library's for-fee services to other towns, cities.
- discontinue free parking

Paul Crivea Let's go down your list Todd.. and take a look, and see..
- Increase Marketing of the Library.. and where do we get the money to do this? It costs money to make money..

Implement Monthly Annual Fees... so what, only the Rich get to use the Library now? What's next, a doorman to ensure only those with Cards get allowed in?

Tiered levels.. who decides on the price per tier? I can see how this could again be detrimental to the less fortunate. I thought literacy was important.. I guess under a tiered system it wouldn't be. "Sorry, you don't have platinum access.. you aren't allowed those books.. you only have copper level.."
Per item loan fees... so what, pay for use books? DVD's? What's next... a cover charge at the door? Once again, that would drive away the very people the library is intended to help. If it's a choice between a loaf of bread and a book, bread wins.

Implement Facility use fees... Already Do, you don't get to use the Meeting rooms for free...at least at the central library

Pay for use Computer access... I believe I also suggested it, but probably not at the same fees you would probably suggest.

Sell New Books and Media- And what about the licensing fees.. who covers those? In case you didn't realize, library costs compared to public are different due to the fact the library has to pay extra because of multiple persons accessing the same piece of media.

Selling old Books... they already do that.. every year, they have the Library Book sale.. in case you hadn't heard about it. All money goes back to the library. The staffing for the sale are all volunteers.

Seek private/Corporate Sponsorships.. they again, do, already.

Offer for -fee research.. you'd need to hire more people to fill that role, which would cost money, which would increase the need for more funding.

Long Term leases for Corporate clients of material.. so.. okay.. How does this benefit the public.. We lose access to certain materials, because the material is being rented out to a lawyer's office?

Leasing to other towns... most small towns have a library, or a book mobile that stops by once a week.. so.. already done.

Increase selection of per fee loan items... again, you need money to buy these items.. so where does it come from, and who decides on what gets bought?

Offering Rental space for Independent Book stores and Media Outlets... where do you make the space, and how do you set the rental rates on such an outlet?

Increase Geography for rentals.. let's call it what it is.. a rental.. nothing to stop people from driving in to London from out of town already to borrow books...

As for free parking.. the Old Central Library charged for Parking, as does the new one... but that's set by the mall, and the city, not the library.

Todd Dailey: Paul: If you'll kindly see my point. I can come up with more revenue-generating ideas in one hour than a 125 K per year CEO who can only whine about not getting more tax money.

Indrani Mahadeo Goddard: Todd: I can see the point you're making... I can also see Paul's point. Many of the ideas you came up with run contrary to one of the core philosophies of the public library system: that access to books and information should be available to any resident, regardless of ability to pay.

It's easy to say "implement user fees" - but that hits the poorest part of the population the hardest. People who often
are hard-working, and already do without a whole lot of luxuries. For example: almost all of my work-kids now go to the library on a weekly basis to borrow DVD's, CD's and books. These are kids who get less than $10 a week for allowance, and don't have the opportunity to get outside paying jobs. Many of them are kids who have historically done poorly in school... and we actually have some of them reading! Thanks to the library, we were able to take one kid from being functionally illiterate (truly - he could read his name... and not much else), to being able to read at probably a grade 2 level within a year. Without the library, we wouldn't have had much access to books at his level.

Personally, thanks to the library, I've greatly expanded my own reading boundaries this year - I've taken chances on books (and genres) that I usually wouldn't have bothered with - certainly not if I had to pay for them!

I'm happy to pay slightly higher taxes, if it means we can preserve certain things. Does that mean the libraries shouldn't "get inventive"? Heck no! But we do need to look at what we want them to do, and what the value of this is.

**Paul Crivea** I understand your point Todd, and I do agree that the Library should be somewhat self sufficient. But just because you come up with an idea... doesn't necessarily make it a viable one. However, as has been pointed out.. feel free to keep coming up with ideas. Then find out when the next Library Board meeting is, write down your ideas, and submit them for their consideration.

**Todd Dailey** Indi: My point is that the first reaction from the library at the news that they were not going to get perpetually bigger and bigger scoops of money every year was "service cuts." This demonstrates a lack of creativity and entrepreneurial mind that plagues all organizations that exist solely on tax money. The library has known for years that not increasing property taxes is the city objective. They should have several, functional revenue-increasing ideas ready to go. I am one person, don't work at the library and came up with a list in one hour. They have very high paid staff and years of preparation time.

Paul: I don't get paid to come up with ideas for other organizations. The LPL has a $125 K CEO, a $100 K deputy CEO and a staff of very well paid people. Running the library is THEIR JOB. I have my own business to run.

**Paul Crivea** I do understand where you are coming from with this Todd.
It just seems to me, it would be simpler to just cut and paste your ideas into an E-mail, and send it off.. than to spend your time telling us that you've done this, so why can't they.