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To: Toronto Public Library Board – September 18, 2006
From: City Librarian
Subject: **2006 Semi-Annual Strategic Plan Update**

Purpose:

To provide the Toronto Public Library Board with a semi-annual update for the strategic plan work plan.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

There is no financial impact arising from this report.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board receive the *2006 Semi-Annual Strategic Plan Update* report for information.

Background

At its April 16, 2006 meeting, the Board received the 2006 work plan for *Urban Stories: The Next Chapter - Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004 - 2007*. The strategic plan contains four key priority areas: Books and Culture; Low-Income Neighborhoods; Newcomers and Youth. These priorities complement City Council's priorities focusing on at-risk neighborhoods and youth. A detailed report summarizing the year's progress towards achieving strategic plan goals will be provided early in 2007. This semi-annual update focuses on initiatives targeted for completion in the first half of the year. These are summarized below under each of the plan's key priorities.

Comments:

Toronto Public Library's strategic priorities resulted in increased performance in several areas in the first six months of 2006. A 12 percent increase was achieved in circulation of multilingual materials and a 5.7 percent increase in circulation of French materials. An increase in Library programs supporting strategic priorities was well received in neighbourhoods across Toronto. *Keep Toronto Reading* month was highly successful contributing to a 38 percent increase in attendance at adult programs. The number of programs offered for youth increased by 15 percent, and programs for school-aged children emphasized outreach to the City's priority neighbourhoods.

Books and Culture

Focus on building collections and promoting reading to contribute to the literary culture of Toronto

- The 2006 Library materials budget had an inflationary increase of \$516,500 over 2005 with \$870,000 being directed to collection projects linked to the strategic plan.
- To improve access to Library collections, negotiations for the integrated library system were completed.
- The inaugural year of *Keep Toronto Reading* month was a huge success; the *Keep Toronto Reading* website had over 435,000 visits; the *Book Lovers Ball* was a signature event attended by civic and literary leaders garnering 25 positive media clips; over 100 authors read in Library branches to over 2500 program attendees; Margaret Atwood was the recipient of the *Toronto Public Library Celebrates Reading Award*.
- Adaptive software was installed on computers in 99 branches to assist persons with visual impairments.
- *Book Buzz*, the Library's virtual book club, was launched in March with 24-hour-a-day discussions and online chats with authors including award-winning Joseph Boyden.
- *KidsSpace*, the completely redesigned children's website went live February 22 with an official launch during March Break. The engaging interactive site focuses on promoting literacy, and provides children with the opportunity to hear and create their own stories online.
- *Shakespeare for Kids* was offered at 17 locations providing free coaching and instruction by professional actors.

Low Income Neighbourhoods

Providing library service in City and Library identified areas with the aim of improving local communities

- Office software applications including word-processing and enhanced email functionality was expanded to all Library branches in the city with priority areas receiving additional service; these service enhancements are an important support for students and job seekers.
- The Library supported the City's 13 priority neighbourhoods through active participation in the Neighbourhood Action Teams including providing the director liaison for Malvern; TPL partnered on many community-based initiatives including:
 - Firgrove Inner City Model School;
 - Jamestown Youth Engagement Group;
 - Duke of Edinburgh Awards;
 - Eglinton East Centennial College Employment and Community Fair;
 - Scarborough Village Youth Link Job Fair;
 - North Etobicoke Revitalization Youth Manga Project;
 - *Live with Culture* website (Arts in the Hood portal logo designed by Albion teens).
- Study space was expanded through the addition of study rooms at TRL and additional study space at the newly built Morningside Branch.
- Palmerston branch was a meeting point in the City's Street Needs Assessment Project providing space for 175 people surveying the homeless.

Newcomers

Contributing to newcomer integration to Toronto and assisting in obtaining employment

- Year-round settlement services continued at the Toronto Reference Library in an expanded partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the first of five pilot locations; in addition, partnerships with local community agencies were established to offer year-round settlement services.
- Accreditation and employment collections were expanded with a \$200,000 grant received from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Job Search classes targeting newcomers were expanded – 49 classes were offered at Toronto Reference and North York Central libraries, with 544 participants receiving an orientation to collections providing information on accreditation, skills upgrading and industry directories of employers; local branches also offered helpful programs including Deer Park branch offering basic banking for newcomers in partnership with the Toronto Dominion Bank.
- The Guide to Library Services was distributed in four languages: Italian, Polish, Russian and Spanish, with a further nine languages to be completed.
- Dial-A-Story was refreshed with over 60 new French and English stories, and original recordings in Somali and Tamil will be added to provide a valuable and accessible service for newcomer children.

Youth

Encouraging youth to read and supporting them in school, career development and employment

- The position of Youth Collections Librarian and a youth selection committee was established to build staff expertise and collections resulting in a 15 percent increase in circulation.
- Direct employment was offered to 246 youth in branches in City priority neighbourhoods and volunteer youth participated system-wide in reading assistance programs.
- Marketing and Communications established a Youth Advisory Group to advise on marketing strategies for youth while pilot YAGS were also established at Goldhawk Park and Don Mills.
- Teen book discussion groups were initiated at Richview and Albion.
- A pilot amnesty campaign for teens was completed in early 2006 with the aim of re-introducing teens to library service as active users on branch and virtual services.
- To support success in school, math clubs were established at Malvern and Albion.
- Cedarbrae, Malvern and York Woods continued the Teen Speakers series with special guest Lionel Basil Davis speaking about his imprisonment on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela.

Conclusion:

Substantial progress towards strategic plan goals was achieved in the first half of 2006 resulting in an increase in the use of Library materials and services. Through strategically focusing on low income neighbourhoods and youth, Toronto Public Library has been a strong contributor to the City's efforts to improve the quality of life in thirteen priority neighbourhoods.

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List of Attachments:

Not applicable.