TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

To: Toronto Public Library Board – September 23, 2002

From: City Librarian

Subject: **Update on the Allocation of Ontario Works Targets Incentive Funds received by Toronto Public Library –** *Kids @ Computers* **and** *Teen Zone*

Purpose:

To provide the Toronto Public Library Board with an update on the allocation of Ontario Works Targets Incentive Funds received by Toronto Public Library.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no net financial impacts for Toronto Public Library's 2002 or 2003 operating budget arising from this report.

The City of Toronto received an allocation of one-time 100 percent provincial funding of $10.2 million paid to the City in recognition of Toronto Social Services' achievement of the Ontario Works 2000 - 2001 targets set by the province. Toronto Public Library will receive an allocation of $503,914 for two projects – a continuation of *Kids @ Computers* and the development of *Teen Zone* on the Virtual Reference Library.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board receive the report *Update on the Allocation of Ontario Works Targets Incentive Funds* for information.

Comments:

Kids @ Computers **Project**:

In the spring of 2001, Toronto Public Library entered into a partnership with Toronto Social Services to deliver the *Kids @ Computers* program in the summer of 2001. Based on a scholarship model, the project rewards the achievement of children in low-income families and provides them with an opportunity to gain access to computers and educational software.

The long-term goals of the project are:
- to ensure that children from low-income families have the opportunity to use computers in their home to further their education and interests and effectively compete on a level footing with their classmates;
- to assist children in acquiring knowledge and skills that are increasingly crucial to excelling in the school and workplace.

Toronto Public Library's specific role in the project is to:

- provide computer instruction to these children and their families;
- provide a safe and enriching setting for children to participate in computer-related activities; and
- provide the children with additional access to electronic services.

Participation in the *Kids @ Computers* project addresses the findings of public opinion research completed by the Library in 2001 by encouraging families on social assistance to use the Library. This research showed that people who have lower incomes and education levels than the population of Toronto as a whole, tend not to use the Library and that non-users are interested in using the free Internet service available at the Library.

To support the pilot phase of the project in the summer of 2001, the Toronto Public Library received $265,124.70 through the *Kids @ Computers* project to offset construction costs of the Richview and Cedarbrae *Le@rning* centres, and to hire a program co-ordinator and eight staff members to deliver the training at *Le@rning* centres in ten Library branches. Children attended three training sessions. The second session requires the participation of both parents and children. In this session, the principles of Internet safety and web awareness are taught, and electronic services to support homework and school projects are introduced. Parents were very interested in this training and many were referred to free computer courses taught at the Library.

The summer program was a resounding success. Feedback from both children and parents was extremely positive. Over 90 percent of children who attended the program rated the training as being excellent. Through e-mail, trainers provided follow-up with some of the children and families and provided additional materials.   Children established a stronger connection with their local library providing a basis for continuous learning. Over three-quarters of those children who had not previously used a library indicated that they would continue to do so.

Building on the success of the summer program, Toronto Social Services asked that the program be continued in the fall at two locations in the east and west. In 2001, a total of 492 children and 306 parents received computer instruction and an orientation to Library services, and the program moved out of a pilot phase.

The 2002 program has been expanded to include spring, summer and fall sessions and is being offered at more locations. The Toronto Public Library received $251,637.80 in funding to support the 2002 program. In the Spring session, 298 children received computer instruction and the target for the year is to reach 1,435.

This year, the City asked for Toronto Public Library's support in starting up parallel programs, to be run by the City Parks and Recreation Department and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, and advise on technical infrastructure and training staff. The partnership also affords the opportunity to market the Library's electronic services.

Toronto Public Library will submit a proposal to continue *Kids @ Computers* in 2003.

***Teen Zone* on the Virtual Reference Library:**

Toronto Public Library also received $252,276 of the Ontario Works incentive funds allocated to projects serving at-risk youth populations to develop a *Teen Zone* on the Virtual Reference Library. *Teen Zone* will be developed in consultation with youth and will include information on the Toronto Public Library, resources to support success in school, events and programs in Toronto, and youth-focused volunteer, career and employment information including opportunities available at the Library, as well as links to health information and to agencies serving teens.

Implementation will begin in the Fall of 2002 with completion targeted for December 2003.

Conclusion:

Through a partnership with Toronto Social Services, Toronto Public Library has received funding for two projects - the *Kids @ Computers* program and a *Teen Zone* on the Virtual Reference Library. These projects assist the Library in fulfilling its strategic objective of providing access to more computers and electronic services for children and teens to support success in school.

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City Librarian

List of Attachments:

Not applicable.