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2003 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Toronto Public Library

Reduction of Library Hours – Friday Evenings year round & Sundays

Issue/Background:

To provide further information on the impact of reducing Library hours on Friday evenings year round and Sundays and the feasibility of amending Library hours i.e., start later in the day and open later at night, as requested by the Budget Advisory Committee at its meeting of Friday December 6, 2002.

Financial Implications:

The reduction in Friday evening hours would generate an annual cost savings of \$450,000.

The reduction in Sunday schedule from 37 to 27 Sundays would generate an annual cost savings of \$305,000.

Key Point(s):

Toronto Public Library has a schedule of open hours that meets the needs of all citizens of Toronto for library service. To this end, the Library Board offers service during all periods of the day and on all days of the week.

Impact of the reduction of Friday hours (Year Round)

The Library was requested to provide information on the number of people on average, impacted by the reduction in Friday hours by 89.5 hours per week.

Currently, there is variation in the open hours across the city, with most libraries closing between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Friday evenings. However, there are a number of libraries which currently remain open until 8:30 p.m. In this scenario, no Friday hours are offered beyond 6:00 p.m. at any library branches except at one district library in each of the four regions. The total number of open hours is reduced by approximately 85 to 90 hours per week. This reduction would generate an annual cost savings of \$450,000.

The impact of implementing this scenario would be that approximately 190,000 citizens annually would not have access to the service based on current use patterns.

Impact of the reduction of Sunday hours

The Library was also requested to provide information on the impact of reducing the Sunday schedule from 37 to 27 Sundays annually.

Sunday is a very popular day of service with citizens of Toronto. A priority of the Toronto Public Library Board was to extend Sunday service to all areas of the City. The extension of Sunday Service was phased in during 1999-2000 at the 2 research and reference, 17 district and 8 neighbourhood libraries for a total of 27 libraries offering Sunday service. The length of the Sunday season is 37 weeks from September to June, which mirrors the school year.

If the current schedule of 37 was reduced to 27 Sundays at 25 district and neighborhood libraries 113,000 citizens annually would not have access to the service. The number of visits to the library on Sunday would be reduced by 27%. In this scenario, a 37-week schedule would be maintained only at the two research and reference libraries and would result in an annual cost savings of \$305,000.

Feasibility of amending hours

The Library was also asked to provide information on the feasibility of amending library hours, to start later in the day and open later at night.

Different time periods of the day meet the needs of different groups of users. Reducing morning hours would have the greatest impact on older people and preschool children. Public opinion research conducted by Toronto Public Library in 2001 showed that 37% of retirees prefer to visit the library during the morning compared to only 5% who preferred to visit the library during the evening. Preschool children and their caregivers and students visiting the library with their schools would also be impacted.

Toronto Public Library's current collective agreement identifies band of hours for staff schedules. The hours of work provisions would not accommodate full closure in the morning in favour of extended evening hours.

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