

St. Lawrence Branch - Relocation

Date:	March 28, 2022
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek the Toronto Public Library Board's approval to relocate the St. Lawrence Branch to City-owned land at 125 The Esplanade. The plan is to build a new district branch of approximately 30,000 square feet (sq. ft.).

The relocation of the St. Lawrence Branch was initially slated for the site of the First Parliament of Canada at 271 Front Street East. Due to the Province of Ontario's expropriation of the First Parliament site for transit purposes, there is uncertainty around the viability of the branch at the site. Furthermore, due to the timelines for the redevelopment of the site, a new branch could not be built on this site for at least another 15 years.

Toronto Public Library (TPL) has worked with the City to identify a new site to build a library and 125 The Esplanade, which is City-owned, is the proposed new site. This new location for the St. Lawrence Branch will deliver a new, and much needed, larger library in a much shorter timeframe of approximately six years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the relocation of the St. Lawrence Branch to City-owned land at 125 The Esplanade, replacing previous plans for the branch on the First Parliament site at 271 Front Street East.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The new 30,000 sq. ft. St. Lawrence Branch, which is currently 4,833 sq. ft., is expected to be completed in approximately 6 years and funding for the project will be incorporated into the 2023-2032 capital budget and plan submission. This new project at 125 The Esplanade will replace the current St. Lawrence – First Parliament Location project, which is to construct a new 30,000 sq. ft. branch at the site of the First Parliament at 271 Front Street East with construction starting well beyond the 10-year plan and a budget of \$37.4 million.

Furthermore, a second related project, St. Lawrence – Interim Location, will no longer be required and therefore eliminated in the 2023-2032 capital budget and plan submission. This capital project was expected to start in 2024 and would have relocated the St. Lawrence Branch into a larger 10,000 sq. ft. facility as an interim measure while waiting for the First Parliament site to become available.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The relocation and significant expansion of the St. Lawrence Branch helps to achieve various strategic plan priorities and goals including:

- Increasing access to in-branch services and spaces through responsive service hours and new options to expand public and community space;
- Advancing State of Good Repair projects to provide welcoming, well-maintained and efficient public space;
- Creating in-branch environments that connect neighbourhoods and communities, offering opportunities for partnerships, civic engagement and resident participation;
- Building capacity to deliver eLearning, and interactive distance learning services.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The relocation and significant expansion of the St. Lawrence Branch will improve the ability of the Library to provide existing and new services to equity-deserving groups within the catchment of this branch.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on July 11, 12 and 13, 2012, Council considered the *Acquisition of the First Parliament Site, 271 Front Street East and 25 Berkeley Street* report and adopted a

number of recommendations that allowed the City to gain ownership of the First Parliament Site through an exchange of lands at 48A Parliament Street and 281 Front Street East. 281 Front Street East was owned by the Library Board and it contained the Library's processing centre, certain facilities operations and delivery vehicles. The Council approval included funding for the relocation of the Library Processing Centre to City-owned land at 1076 Ellesmere Road. TPL also had future plans to relocate the St. Lawrence Branch to 281 Front Street and this needed to be revised.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.MM25.54>

On November 19, 2012, TPL presented a report to the City of Toronto Budget Committee requesting City Council to approve the relocation of the St. Lawrence Branch to the site of the First Parliament at 271 Front Street East.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-54681.pdf>

At the City Council meeting on February 20 and 21, 2013, Council approved the relocation of the St. Lawrence Branch to the site of the First Parliament at 271 Front Street East with construction slated to begin in 2016. The development of the First Parliament site has been delayed by the City for a number of years due to work required to develop a master plan for the historically significant site.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.EX28.7>

At the City Council meeting on November 9, 10 and 12, 2021 and as a part of the *First Parliament Site and Expropriation of City-owned Lands by Metrolinx for Transit Purposes*, Council adopted the approach for negotiating compensation and settlement for the expropriation of the First Parliament Site. This included requesting compensation for any costs related to TPL setting up and operating a temporary location as well as the request for the site to house a 25,000-30,000 sq. ft. library.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EX27.8>

At the March 22, 2021 Library Board meeting, the Board approved communications from the Board Chair to the Minister of Transportation with regards to the expropriation of the First Parliament Site and requesting a meeting to discuss the province's plans.

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2021/mar22/08-communications-combined.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In late 2012, the Library Board made the decision to relocate the St. Lawrence Branch to the site of the First Parliament, at 271 Front Street East. This was done as a part of the City's acquisition of the First Parliament site which included an exchange of land involving the relocation of TPL's Library Processing Centre to 1076 Ellesmere Road. In

February 2013, City Council approved the relocation of the St. Lawrence Branch to the First Parliament site and at the time, the expectation was for construction of the relocated St. Lawrence to begin in 2016 and for a new library to be completed and delivered to the community by 2020.

Due to the historical significance of the site, the City of Toronto initiated a Heritage Interpretation Plan and Master Plan, which was launched in 2017. TPL was asked to postpone its plans to begin construction of the new library until the work on the Heritage Interpretation and Master Plan were completed. The [First Parliament Master Plan](#) was completed and presented to Council in November 2021.

In the summer of 2021, the Province of Ontario, through Infrastructure Ontario, commenced the process to expropriate the site of the First Parliament for Metrolinx's Ontario Line project. As a result of this project, the site will be taken over by the Province/Metrolinx in order to build the transit line, along with its associated stations, one of which will be located directly to the north of the First Parliament site. Over the life of the project, the First Parliament site will be used for staging and storing construction material. The Ontario Line project is expected to be completed by approximately 2029. Once the Ontario Line is complete, the site will be turned over to a developer who will develop the site in accordance to the Province's "Transit Oriented Communities" development objectives. The City of Toronto is currently in the process of negotiating with the Province the terms of settlement for the expropriation. This will include compensation for expropriating the site as well as the inclusion of various city amenities on the site once the site is handed over to a developer for development. Amongst other items, the city is requesting affordable housing, public realm improvements, parkland, an interpretation centre and a library to be situated on the site. Although the timing has not been fully determined, it is expected that with potential delays, general planning and construction timelines, a new library would not be built on this site for at least another 15 or more years. Waiting 15 or more years to deliver a much needed district library to this community is not acceptable.

COMMENTS

Due to the uncertainties caused by the Provincial expropriation, in mid-2021, TPL began searching for a temporary site to relocate the St. Lawrence Branch and a new project, St. Lawrence – Interim Location was included in the recently approved 2022-2031 capital budget and plan. Working with CreateTO, TPL identified a suitable location at 125 The Esplanade as the permanent site for the relocated St. Lawrence Branch. This City-owned site is currently the temporary site of the St. Lawrence North Market. The permanent building housing the St. Lawrence North Market will be completed in about two years at which point the temporary site will be handed over to TPL for construction of the new library.

This property was reviewed and approved at the December 3, 2021 City's Strategic Program Management Committee (SPMC) for use by the Toronto Public Library to build the new St. Lawrence Branch. The SPMC is responsible for senior level program coordination, collaboration and input respecting real estate needs of Divisions, Agencies and Corporations ("DACs"), including the use of City property between DAC's and disposals from the City-Wide Real Estate Portfolio. The use of the property at 125 The Esplanade was also subsequently referred to the January 27, 2022 Operational Program Management Committee (OPMC) where there was unanimous support by all DACs to implement these plans.

Both local councillors, Councillor Wong-Tam and Councillor Cressy have also been involved in conversations regarding the use of 125 The Esplanade and the relocation of the library. There have been no concerns raised in discussion with any internal stakeholders.

The new location for the St. Lawrence Branch is approximately 400 metres west of the current branch, which ensure that the existing community maintains good access to the new library. Furthermore, the transformation of the library from a neighbourhood branch to a much larger district branch means that the catchment area for the branch expands serving a larger population within this neighbourhood. The current branch at 4,833 sq. ft. is limited with respect to the space, services, programs and collections that it offers. As a 30,000 square foot district branch, the community will have access to more services and programs, expanded collections and additional multi-functional community and public spaces to work, study, create and learn.

Once the Library Board has approved the new location for the St. Lawrence Branch, TPL will work with the City to launch and promote the project. The plan will include hiring the architect in the second half of 2022, immediately followed by a comprehensive public consultation process. The consultation will include Parks, Forestry and Recreation and City Planning to explore opportunities to maximize public access and programming through the design of the new St. Lawrence Branch. Assuming the site will be in TPL's possession in approximately 2 years, construction would begin in 2025 with an anticipated opening in 2027.

CONCLUSION

The relocation of the St. Lawrence Branch to the site of the First Parliament has been on the books for almost 10 years. Although the plan has changed with the branch now being recommended to be located at 125 The Esplanade, this is a very positive outcome for the community, with a much shorter timeframe and greater certainty around the project.

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SIGNATURE

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