



To: Toronto Public Library Board – October 29, 2001

From: City Librarian

Subject: **Future Directions: Reinvesting in Our Future: Toronto Public Library Branch Planning Study: September 1999**

Purpose:

To describe the current status of the report *Reinvesting in Our Future: Toronto Public Library Branch Planning Study* as context for establishing priorities to achieve potential service reductions for the 2002 operating budget submission.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

There are potential impacts on the 2002 and subsequent operating and capital budgets if the branch closures proceed.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

1. The Toronto Public Library Board not proceed with community consultation for branches recommended for closure in the report *Reinvesting in Our Future: Toronto Public Library Branch Planning Study* Phase Two (St. Clair Silverthorn, Davenport, Queen Saulter, Mount Pleasant and Northern Elms) and Phase Three (Mimico, Humber Bay, Maryvale, Victoria Village); and
2. If the Toronto Public Library Board is required to develop service reduction options for the 2002 operating budget as requested by City Council, that branch closures would be the least preferred option, including those identified in *Reinvesting in Our Future: Toronto Public Library Branch Planning Study*.

Background:

Summary of the Report

Reinvesting in Our Future: Toronto Public Library Branch Planning Study was written in response to a request by the Budget Committee that Toronto Public Library submit a report reviewing “branch locations, considering the potential to reduce sites based on usage and boundary overlapping, considering amalgamation after consideration by the Library Board” (Budget Committee Minutes, February 19, 1999).

Background research for the *Branch Planning Study* included both a review of the literature on library planning, and an analysis of current and future demographic trends in the City. Toronto Public Library was benchmarked against other major public library systems in North America on a number of variables including: total number of branches, square feet of branch space per capita, hours of service and collection size per branch. The results of this benchmarking indicated that in comparison to other major North American library systems Toronto has more branches which have, on average, smaller collections and fewer hours of service.

Using the *Service Delivery Model* as a planning guideline the *Branch Planning Study* examined how the Library could offer equitable access to neighbourhood and district branches throughout the City. The Study identified the potential closing and/or consolidating of twelve libraries over a period of ten years.

Phase 1 (2000)

Niagara
Todmorden
Swansea

Phase 2 (2000 – 2004)

St. Clair Silverthorn
Davenport
Queen Saultier
Mount Pleasant
Northern Elms

Phase 3 (2004 Beyond)

Mimico & Humber Bay
Consolidated
Maryvale & Victoria Village
Consolidated

These closures/consolidations would achieve a net annual operating savings of \$1,042,000 which would require an offsetting capital investment of \$40 million. These savings would be reduced by the opening of the St. James Town Branch and proposed branches in the Scarborough Civic Centre and Railway Lands. The \$40 million capital investment was proposed over 10 years to provide new or enlarged branches in growth areas and expanding the district library network throughout the City. Through adherence to planning guidelines in the Service Delivery Model, future growth of the library branch network would be managed. Since *The Branch Planning Study* was received by the Board in September 1999, two additional reports have been brought forward.

Results of Public Consultation re the Proposed Branch Closures

The results of public consultation for branches proposed for closure in Phase One (2000) were presented to the Library Board on April 7th, 2000 in the report *Reinvesting in Our Future; Report on Community Consultation for Phase 1 (Niagara, Swansea and Todmorden)* and the following recommendations were adopted:

- Swansea and Todmorden remain open and be reviewed in subsequent years after capital improvements in adjacent libraries.
- Niagara not reopen but that a community service partnership be pursued at 1029 King Street West.
- Public input gained through the strategic planning resource be incorporated into future consultations of the branch network.

Subsequently, meetings were held for specific branches recommended for closure in Phase 2 (2000-2004) Mount Pleasant and Queen Saunter and in Phase 3 (2004 and beyond) Victoria Village.

On February 19, 2001 a third report, *Current Status-Reinvesting in Our Future: Toronto Public Library Branch Planning Study*, was presented to the Library Board as a context for discussing service reduction options for the 2001 Operating Budget Submission. In this report, results of public consultation were summarized with the comment “the operating savings that can be achieved through these twelve branch closures or consolidations are not supported or justified by the results of public consultation.” Given the minimal savings that can be achieved and strong public opposition to Library closures, it is recommended that Toronto Public Library not proceed with further communication consultation for branches recommended for closure in the report *Reinvesting in our Future: the Toronto Public Branch Planning Study* Phase Two (St. Clair Silverthorn, Davenport, Queen Saunter, Mount Pleasant and Northern Elms) and Phase Three (Mimico, Humber Bay, Maryvale, Victoria Village).

The *Branch Planning Study*, public consultation for the Strategic Plan, recently completed public opinion research and current use statistics highlight other issues in library service which Toronto Public Library must also address as part of the budget process. These can be summarized as follows:

- **Increased activity levels**
From January-September 2001, the Library experienced an 8% increase in circulation and a 28.8% increase in holds filled when compared to the same period in 2000. These activity levels indicate a continued strong demand for library service across the city.
- **Building Strong Collections**
In recently completed public opinion research “maintaining an up-to-date collection of materials” was identified by respondents as a first priority for the Library system. Of those responding however, only 59% were satisfied with the number of recently published books available at the Library system.
- **Hours of Service**
Research indicates that overall hours of service per branch are lower in Toronto Public Library than the average for Canadian public libraries. Results of public opinion research indicate that maintaining hours of service during weekdays, weekday evenings and Saturday and Sunday ensures access to diverse group of citizens as each time period is important to different user groups.
- **Access to Technology**
Although Toronto Public Library has added over 600 public access computers during the past year, only 48% of respondents to the public opinion research were satisfied with the number of computers available for public use in the Library. The Library needs to continue to expand access to computers.

Next Steps

Toronto Public Library is faced with the challenge of maintaining a relatively large number of branches in local neighbourhoods, building Library collections, maintaining hours of service and improving access to technology, in a climate of budget restraint or reduction.

If required by the City as part of the 2002 Operating Budget Submission, it is recommended that Library staff members prepare service reduction options and impacts for consideration by the Library Board. Given the strong opposition to Library closures voiced in public consultation, it is recommended that Library closures be considered only as a least preferred option. Library closures would be proposed only if the targeted budget reduction cannot be achieved through a combination of strategies which have a less detrimental effect on Library service in individual communities.

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City Librarian

List of Attachments:

Not applicable.