



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

14.

Career Bridge Mentorship Program

Date:	May 14, 2007
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

This report outlines the Toronto Public Library Board's history of participation in Career Bridge, a career-launching program open to newcomer professionals in which the City of Toronto has participated for some years.

The report references as well, the wider range of Library initiatives in supporting newcomers and other priority clients in their efforts to gain entry into the Canadian job market.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The 2007 employer cost for a 12-month internship in Ontario totals \$33,496 for the intern's stipend, payroll taxes, GST, statutory deductions, workers compensation and the Career Bridge program fee. This sum may put pressure on the staffing budget.

Participating organizations have the option of supplementing the base monthly stipend at their discretion. Participation in the program in 2005 resulted in costs in the range of \$50,000.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At the April 16, 2007 Board meeting, staff were directed to report on the history of the Toronto Public Library's participation in the Career Bridge program.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Career Bridge program breaks the cycle of “no Canadian experience, no job; no job, no Canadian experience” which keeps newcomer professionals from contributing to the economy of their adopted country. The program taps the talents and experience of skilled individuals with international qualifications by incorporating them into an organization’s workforce as paid interns. Employers benefit from the international experience of interns in their field; candidates gain entry into the Canadian job market. Supporting the integration of newcomers is a priority of both the City of Toronto and the Toronto Public Library.

COMMENTS

Details of the Career Bridge Program

Career Bridge is one of the programs administered by Career Edge, a not-for-profit agency which links internationally qualified professionals with employers prepared to administer a four- to twelve-month internship.

To be eligible for a professional internship under Career Bridge, each applicant must meet all of the following requirements:

- legal entitlement to work in Canada
- arrival in Canada no longer than three (3) years ago
- a minimum of three (3) years’ international work experience
- a degree accredited as equivalent at least to a Canadian Bachelor’s degree
- recent Canadian assessment of qualifications
- seeking work experience in an unregulated profession
- no Canadian experience in his/her field
- fluency in English

Host organizations contract with Career Edge to provide successful candidates a career-launching opportunity in a professional workplace and to supervise and evaluate their work.

Toronto Public Library participated in the Career Edge program in 2005. The Information Technology Department employed an intern from Singapore with a background in Information Technology to provide support for the development and implementation of disaster recovery policies and procedures and business continuity planning. The intern was employed for a period of one year in an exempt staff capacity. The monthly stipend paid to the intern was supplemented by the Library. The IT Department was satisfied with the outcome of the program.

Work of the Bargaining Unit

To date, the Library's and the City of Toronto's participation in the Career Bridge program has been limited to non-union positions.

The challenge for both the Library and the City is to develop opportunities for participation in the Career Bridge program that are compatible with the provisions of their respective collective agreements dealing with the work of the bargaining unit. At the City of Toronto there have been discussions about the Career Bridge program with the Toronto Civic Employees Union, Local 416 CUPE, but these discussions have not resulted in bargaining unit positions in the program.

The collective agreement at the Library has a provision for the participation in programs in which persons are hired under government grants, work/study placements and any other such programs, to the extent that such participation does not result in any adverse effect upon any bargaining unit members. The Library has not explored opportunities for expansion of the Career Bridge program into bargaining unit positions.

The Toronto Public Library as Workplace

In addition to providing workplace experience to newcomers through Career Bridge, the Library has been receptive to those requests from agencies supporting the integration of people with disabilities – to the degree that appropriate exempt work can be defined. For example, in 2006, in response to a submission from the Hawkins Institute, the Library's Human Resources Department supervised an individual with Asperger's Syndrome in a six-month placement as File Clerk.

Further, under collective agreement language permitting work/study placements, the Library actively supports on-going work-term opportunities for students from the Seneca College Library Technicians Diploma program, various Masters of Information Studies programs and students studying outside of Canada, such as a recent request for a librarian placement for a student from the University of the West Indies.

To optimize service to the community, Toronto Public Library endeavours to reflect the demographics of the City in its workforce. Employment opportunities are regularly posted on the Library's website. The Library participates in local community career fairs as well as career fairs targeted to high priority populations to promote employment opportunities at the Library. To that end, the Library participated in April 2007 in an event directed to First Nations communities. As partnership opportunities arise, the Library participates in job-readiness opportunities for priority clientele. For example, under the Working Together project funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, the Library participated in the delivery of pre-employment support programs, including computer training, life-skills training and networking in the Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park communities.

Job-search and Career Initiatives

The Library's *Strategic Plan* contains a number of initiatives to develop employment/career collections, online content and services for its users, including newcomers, youth and the disabled.

The Library has traditionally provided an extensive circulating and reference collection for workers and job seekers. In 2006, the Library received a grant of \$200,000 from Citizenship and Immigration Canada to:

- extend a collection of skills improvement and employment resources to eight (8) libraries (Albion, Agincourt, Cedarbrae, Flemingdon Park, Parkdale, St. James Town, Thorncliffe, York Woods);
- provide current career resources in selected locations to assist newcomers in obtaining Canadian accreditation (Brentwood, Bloor/Gladstone, Fairview, Albert Campbell, Maria A Shchuka, Lillian H. Smith, Don Mills, Bridlewood, Richview, Pape/Danforth, Downsview, Malvern, Sanderson, Centennial, Woodside Square);
- enhance and update existing collections of accreditation and employment resources at the two research and reference libraries to support internationally trained professionals and tradespersons' integration in the Canadian labour market.

A further grant application to enhance locations in additional locations will be made as part of the 2007 workplan.

The Library's website, the Virtual Reference Library, provides access to a wealth of online resources related to employment. Content of the Library's *Careerbookmarks* has been updated. The website's Multicultural Resources—Job Searching and Training for Newcomers portal (http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/mul_set_jobs.jsp) provides content on credential assessment as well as links to agencies, such as HRDC and the Maytree Foundation which assist internationally-trained professionals and trades people in securing work and assessment of their qualifications. Online library research guides developed by staff provide employment and job-finding resources for newcomers, including information on certification and apprenticeship. Brochures have been made available in Library branches, online and through community agencies. Promotion of the use of these employment resources will be pursued under the Library's 2007 workplan. The Toronto Star in its May 25 2006 article entitled *New Home, New Job: A Guide to Opportunities for Immigrants*, mentioned this TPL website among its recommended useful resources.

Other initiatives targeted under the Strategic Plan include enhancement of job search classes in reference departments and district branches. Librarians based in the research & reference libraries offer training for district branch staff in introducing newcomers to job-search and career resources. In 2006, the Library expanded job search user education for newcomers to 19 additional user centres in 2006 with more than one-thousand individuals attending sessions at the two research & reference libraries alone. Branches continue to partner with local employment centres in their communities. In 2006, there were 16 outreach initiatives to employment agencies system-wide

The 2007 workplan continues this focus on providing career placement support for all users, including newcomers, on-site and online.

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SIGNATURE

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