



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Kennedy / Eglinton Branch Partnership - ProTech Media Centre

Date:	May 12, 2008
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

Toronto Public Library will be participating in a partnership to develop a media centre for youth at the Kennedy / Eglinton Branch. The initiative will be part of the City of Toronto's ProTech Media Centre Project, which will see the development of such media centres in each of the 13 Priority Neighbourhoods.

This report provides background information about the project.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The costs associated with providing space for the Centre are included in the Library's 2008 operating and capital budget.

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

DECISION HISTORY

The Board approved a report at its June 11, 2007 meeting for a potential new capital project for the expansion of the Kennedy / Eglinton Branch, using funding from the City of Toronto Capital Investments Fund, subsequently named Partnership Opportunity Legacy Fund, or POL Fund. The Kennedy / Eglinton Branch expansion project was approved by Council at its meeting on January 29 and 30, 2008.

The proposed media centre partnership flows out of the goals of the POL funding, which are to strengthen neighbourhood capacity and infrastructure support, be youth-focused and facilitate new community partnerships.

COMMENTS

The Library has been asked by the City of Toronto to incorporate a ProTech Media Centre into the plans for the Kennedy / Eglinton Branch expansion. The Media Centre Project uses urban media arts programming as a vehicle to engage youth and facilitate the development of their skills and capacities so they can gain further access to employment, education and/or other training.

The goals of the ProTech Media Centre, summarized below, are closely aligned with the strategic priorities of the Toronto Public Library, particularly in the areas of services to youth and low-income neighbourhoods. Through a series of consultations local youth have identified the library branch as the preferred location for the media centre in this neighbourhood.

The timing of the request at this stage of the building program provides an ideal opportunity to create a versatile space that will benefit all users of the branch, including media centre users.

ProTech Media Centres

The ProTech Media Centre initiative is a large multi-neighbourhood initiative to expand and enhance meaningful opportunities, particularly for African-Canadian and other racialized youth, in the areas of:

- employment;
- education;
- training and mentorship;
- engagement.

The centre provides computers and software together with instruction for youth to develop skills in the area of media technology.

The first ProTech centre was opened in Rexdale in June 2007. The City will develop similar centres in each of the 13 Priority Neighbourhoods. There is interest in locating these centres with libraries in several other of the Priority Neighbourhoods. Each of the centres will be operated by a local agency; in Rexdale the operator is the YMCA. An operator is still to be confirmed for the Kennedy / Eglinton site. Programs at each of the sites are developed through a process of youth engagement, developed for youth by youth.

The name ProTech was selected by youth in Rexdale. Basically, it means “For Technology”. One youth also highlighted that the creators of the project wished to “protect” youth living in priority neighbourhoods.

The ProTech Media Centres initiative is one outcome of Toronto's Community Safety Plan, which balances enforcement with prevention, invests in youth, builds on strengths in neighbourhoods and builds partnerships to increase opportunities in priority communities.

Founding partners in the ProTech Media Centres project are the City of Toronto, Microsoft Canada, Humber College, and Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

Kennedy Park ProTech Media Centre at Kennedy / Eglinton Branch

The ProTech installation that is being proposed for the Kennedy / Eglinton Branch will be named the Kennedy Park ProTech Media Centre. It will consist of a computer lab with up to 17 computers. ProTech will also have access, on a basis to be negotiated with the Library, to the adjacent multi-purpose room. The Media Centre may be used by the Library during branch open hours. After hours access to the media centre, the program room and the washrooms will be provided.

The Centre will have its own sign with the Kennedy Park ProTech Media Centre name. The name is important in order to connect it to the 13 media centres that are being rolled out across the city. The vision for this project is to be able to provide joint programs and training across the city as opportunities arise. Partners' logos do not need to be included in this sign. As the Media Centre is not considered to be a named facility under the Board's Naming Policy, the name is not being brought forward for Library Board approval.

The City is currently in the process of finalizing a standard agreement for all the ProTech Media Centres. Toronto Public Library will be one of the signatories for the Kennedy Park site. The Kennedy Park centre will have its own "operator" (likely a local youth serving agency) and its own staff who will be responsible for program development, day to day operations and oversight.

Both the Library and ProTech envision wonderful synergies in this co-location. Access to library resources and facilities will greatly enhance the capacity of the ProTech centre to support the youth who take part in their programs. The presence of the media centre is expected to attract new young users to the library.

The Library is taking care to ensure that the needs of the full range of users are taken into account through the expansion and renovation of the branch. A public consultation included 4 focus groups (seniors, parents of preschoolers, local service providers, and youth) as well as an Open House on May 1, 2008. The new branch will include additional public computers, improved lounge spaces for children, adults and teens and an improved program room that doubles as study space. It will also include wireless throughout the branch.

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SIGNATURE

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