



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Teen Fines and Fees Forgiveness Program

Date:	January 19, 2009
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the 2008 Teen Fines and Fees Forgiveness Program.

TPL ran a second campaign of the Teen Fines and Fees Forgiveness Program from April 1 to June 30, 2008, to coincide with the latter part of the school year. A specially designed waiver coupon in the amount of \$20 was distributed to teens through various means including pick up at every branch, through the Library's High School Outreach Program, on RAMP, and through distribution in the community by Library staff.

Results of the spring 2008 campaign were similar to those of the first campaign run in the fall of 2005. Not only was the waiver coupon popular with many teens who were regular active customers, but also it was used by a portion of lapsed users, indicating its continued effectiveness in reaching youth and drawing them back to the Library.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The total fines and fees waived during the spring campaign of the Teen Fines and Fees Forgiveness Program was \$21,771. The lost revenue is offset, to some extent, by the return of overdue materials. However, it must be recognized that a significant portion of this lost revenue would never have been collected.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this Financial Impact Statement and is in agreement with it.

DECISION HISTORY

In September 2005, the Library introduced a reduced fine for teens, ages 13-17, to further the objective of reducing barriers that discourage teens from reading and using the Library. To help teens whose borrowing privileges were already suspended because of outstanding fines and fees, the Board passed a motion at the September 2005 meeting

approving the implementation of a teen forgiveness fines and fees waiver pilot project beginning October 2005.

In May 2006, the Board passed a motion that approved repetition of the Youth Incentive Program – Teen Forgiveness Fines and Fees Waiver Project at strategic intervals, using a \$20 coupon.

In 2007, the Library planned to run the Youth Incentive Program – Teen Forgiveness Fines and Fees Waiver Project again from October 2007 to January 2008. The project, however, was deferred as part of cost containment measures to spring 2008, and it was run from April 1 to June 30, 2008.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Library's Strategic Plan includes goals to engage and support youth in their educational achievements as a foundation for success.

Recent initiatives that support youth participation and achievement include the Library Registration Postcard, which was implemented in September 2007, the Volunteer Transit Assistance Pilot, which began April 2008, a card registration drive at the Local Music Concert, Young Voices Conference and related workshops. As well, there are several related initiatives that directly reach out to youth who might not otherwise use the Library, including writing workshops at youth shelters, youth clubs and at The Hospital for Sick Children, the very successful High School Outreach Program, and the newly implemented Transitional Intervention Program for Suspended Students (TIPSS) partnership with the Toronto Catholic District School Board. The Teen Fines and Fees Forgiveness Program complements these incentive programs.

COMMENTS

The Teen Fines and Fees Forgiveness Program was implemented in all locations from April 1 to June 30, 2008. Waiver coupons were distributed in the branches, delivered by branch staff to schools and through the local community, and were available online for downloading on such sites as RAMP, FaceBook and MySpace. The coupon was for one use only per teen to a maximum of \$20. A brief survey was conducted as part of the evaluation process. Survey respondents were asked to provide the first three digits of their postal code and indicate if they took part in TIPSS.

Results of the spring 2008 campaign were similar to those of the fall 2005 campaign. Survey results for teens reporting postal codes for at-risk/priority areas were similar to those of other teen participants.

Key Findings

- 2,594 coupons were redeemed or an average of 200 per week.
- Total fines and fees waived was \$21,771 or an average of \$8.39 per coupon.
- 807 coupons were redeemed by teens reporting postal codes for priority areas. This represents close to a third, or 31%, of all youth who used the coupon, suggesting that the program is effective in reaching high needs youth.
- 359 redeemed coupons resulted in card renewals. Of those renewals, 71 or 20% were redeemed by teens reporting postal codes for priority areas, which further supports the success of the program in reaching high needs youth.
- 77% of teens reported getting their coupon at branch libraries and 12% at schools. 2% downloaded their coupon from RAMP and 3% obtained it from other sources. Branch libraries and schools continue to serve as main points of contact with local teens while online and other sources reach a more targeted audience.
- 87% of survey respondents answered that they had been in a library within the last month, while 11% had not been in a library in the last year or longer, indicating that a number of teens returned to the Library because of the coupon.
- 71% of teens surveyed indicated that they used the Library to get books, music and movies, 13% used the Library to surf the Internet, 7% used the Library to “hang out”, 3% attended library programs, and 5% cited other reasons, such as doing homework or participating in volunteer activities. Evidently, the Library’s collection is important to teens and serves as a draw for them. The results also indicate that for many teens, the Library remains a welcoming place to go in their community.
- Some areas on the map showing low use of the coupon are the result of branch closures; for example the neighbourhoods served by Bloor/Gladstone, Dufferin/St. Clair, S. Walter Stewart and Thorncliffe branches, which were closed during the campaign.
- Other areas on the map showing low use of the coupon may be the result of demographics. Some branches such as City Hall and Taylor Memorial, do not serve many teens.

For 2009, the Library continues to explore and initiate programs to bring more teens back to the Library and attract new users. The Teen Fines and Fees Forgiveness Program will continue to be run at strategic intervals.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Teen Fines and Fees Forgiveness Program Map