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To: Toronto Public Library Board – January 17, 2005

From: City Librarian

Subject: **Improved Internet Accessibility**

Purpose:

To seek Toronto Public Library Board approval for the Improved Internet Accessibility Business Plan (Attachment 1), to be submitted to the Budget Advisory Committee, which addresses the opportunity to provide improved Internet accessibility for the citizens of Toronto.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

The financial implications of the Improved Internet Accessibility Business Plan for 2005 are reflected in the 2005 operating and capital budget requests. Funding implications for future years are identified in the business plan.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board approve the Improved Internet Accessibility Business Plan, which addresses the opportunity to provide improved Internet accessibility for the citizens of Toronto, for submission to the Budget Advisory Committee.

Background:

The request for a business plan, which addresses the opportunity to provide improved Internet accessibility, originated with the Toronto e-City Committee, at its October 13, 2004 meeting. The e-City Committee recommended to the Administration Committee that “the Toronto Public Library Board be requested to submit a Business Plan to the Budget Advisory Committee which addresses the opportunity to provide improved internet accessibility for the citizens of Toronto”. The Administration Committee, at its November 16, 2004 meeting, recommended that City Council “request the Toronto Public Library Board to consider submitting a Business Plan to the Budget Advisory Committee which addresses the opportunity to provide improved internet accessibility for the citizens of Toronto”. City Council, at its November 30, December 1 and 2, 2004 meeting, approved the Administration Committee recommendation.

At its December 13, 2004 meeting the Library Board agreed to City Council’s request and directed Library staff to prepare such a business plan, for review by the Board at its January 2005 meeting, prior to submitting the Business Plan to the Budget Advisory Committee.

Comments:

There are two main opportunities for the Library to pursue in providing improved Internet accessibility: increasing the number of public access PCs in Library branches and increasing branch open hours. Library staff have considered these opportunities, in light of current public Internet accessibility, the Library's Strategic Plan goals and work plan for 2005, the Library's capital building program and its Technology Asset Management Program. The implementation of the Library's strategic goals, capital building program and TAMP will further improve Internet accessibility. Approval of the Library Board's 2005 budget requests will support plans for improved Internet accessibility. The business plan for improved Internet accessibility presents the Board's various initiatives in a coordinated manner and focuses on the two areas identified above, i.e. increasing the number of public PCs and increasing branch open hours.

Current public Internet accessibility

The Library currently provides public Internet access at all of its 99 branches. In 2004 there are a total of 1,345 public PCs with Internet access. Based on the number of PCs and branch open hours, the Library provides more than 4.1 million hours of public Internet access. The actual number of hours varies each year, depending upon branch closures for renovations. In 2003 the citizens of Toronto logged on for more than 4.4 million Internet sessions.

The Business Plan

The business plan presents the two scenarios that will improve public Internet access:

1. Increasing the number of public Internet PCs through the capital budget program for branch renovations and expansion;
2. Increasing hours of public access in library branches across the city.

The costs associated with the first phase of these scenarios are incorporated into the 2005 operating and capital budget submissions. These scenarios do not introduce any new initiatives that would require a revised budget submission in 2005. A reduction in the 2005 operating or capital budget requests could delay implementation of the initiatives or reduce the extent of the implementation. As an example, the 2005 operating budget request for increased hours of public access was not part of the budget recommendation by EMT to the Budget Advisory Committee. Future years costs for subsequent phases are reflected in the business case.

Conclusion:

The Library, through its strategic planning and budget process, is continually improving its public Internet access. The business plan presents the various initiatives in a coordinated manner. The business plan supports the Library Board's 2005 budget requests during the budget approval process and identifies future potential initiatives and future year costs.

Library staff recommend that the Toronto Public Library Board approve the business plan for submission to the Budget Advisory Committee.

Contact:

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Josephine Bryant
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List of Attachments:

Attachment 1: Improved Internet Accessibility: Toronto Public Library's Business Plan