



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

2025 Revised Open Hours Plan and Implementation

Date: October 28, 2024

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Toronto Public Library Board approval of the revised vision for Toronto Public Library's (TPL's) Open Hours Plan. The revised plan will result in seven-day a week service, 12 months a year, at all 100 branches by July 2026. The report also seeks the endorsement of the expanded multi-phased implementation, building on the Board's phased three-year open hours implementation plan approved by Council in 2024. Costing for the expanded implementation is also included in this report.

TPL's Open Hours Vision was originally approved by the Library Board in 2006 and has been subsequently updated a number of times. It is a key Library and City initiative to provide service access in support of community resilience and safety, mental health and well-being, and combating loneliness and social isolation. To help achieve these outcomes, the Plan is embedded in the City of Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy as an action to invest in extended hours for priority City services. TPL's Open Hours Plan also drives many of the Library's strategic outcomes including greater digital inclusion opportunities through increased access to the internet, Wi-Fi and computers; increased early childhood literacy programming; and reduced barriers to access for vulnerable seniors and youth and other equity-deserving groups.

A review of the 2018 Plan determined that while its base approach and methodology (assessing busyness and location) remained sound, allocating

more hours to neighbourhood branches across the city would have a significant impact on people's ability to access the library and its resources. Both the results of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan public consultations and the results of TPL's new Social Impact Study support this conclusion. As a result, new schedules of open hours are proposed, which will result in seven-day a week service, 12 months a year at all 100 branches by 2026. The changes will include:

- Year round Sunday service, including Sunday programming where space permits, at all 100 branches; and
- Monday service at all 100 branches.

The previously-approved budget for hours expansions from 2024 to 2026 totals \$10.967 million annualized. The further expansion for new open hours proposed in this report totals an additional \$8.089 million annualized. This is a 7% increase to the Library budget, which results in a 14% increase in overall open hours, effectively doubling the return on investment. This is achieved by leveraging and maximizing the full capacity of TPL's resources and the existing infrastructure.

Implementation of late night service and eight-hour Sundays is not part of this funding request as there is currently no provision for these hours of work within the Collective Agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the revised Open Hours Plan, which adds new open hours for enhanced Sunday service as well as Monday to Saturday service, at a cost of \$8.089 million;
2. endorses the timing and phasing for implementing the new open hours as shown in Table 1, which results in a combined and revised Phase 2 for 2025 implementation and Phase 3 for 2026 implementation; and
3. directs staff to include the cost for the new open hours within the revised Open Hours Plan as part of the 2025 operating budget submission.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The revised Plan for new open hours presented in this report will expand Sunday service at every branch and introduce Monday service for full Monday-Saturday service at all 100 branches, at a cost \$8.089 million annualized. This will be shown as a new service enhancement in the 2025 budget submission.

Funding for Phases 2 and 3 of the previously approved Plan, totalling \$5.592 million annualized, has already been approved by Council, and will be shown as a previously approved enhancement.

The combined cost to implement the existing Open Hours Plan in 2025 and 2026, along with the cost of the updated Open Hours Plan to expand Sunday service and provide 7-day a week service across all 100 branches, is \$13.682M as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1

Open Hours Plan Costing (\$ millions)

Perviously Approved	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2027</u>	<u>Total</u>
Phase 2	1.675	2.436		4.112
Phase 3		0.864	0.617	1.481
	<u>1.675</u>	<u>3.300</u>	<u>0.617</u>	<u>5.592</u>
New Open Hours				
Enhanced Sunday Service	1.947	3.542		5.489
9 branches introducing Mondays		1.517	1.084	2.600
	<u>1.947</u>	<u>5.060</u>	<u>1.084</u>	<u>8.089</u>
	<u>3.622</u>	<u>8.360</u>	<u>1.701</u>	<u>13.681</u>
Combined				
Revised Phase 2	3.622	5.979	-	9.601
Revised Phase 3	-	2.381	1.701	4.081
	<u>3.622</u>	<u>8.360</u>	<u>1.701</u>	<u>13.682</u>

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

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

Opening up our Public Space is a key priority of TPL's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, *Vital to Toronto – Building Success, Resilience and Well-Being for our City*. TPL will aim to create and animate accessible, inclusive spaces that are flexible and sustainable to inspire Torontonians to be and grow together. Increasing branch open hours in neighbourhoods across the city is one example of how TPL will achieve success. Improving branch infrastructure and technology to efficiently offer extensive open hours is embedded in TPL's Service Delivery Model, Digital Strategy and Facilities Master Plan.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Open Hours Implementation Plan will have a positive impact on all equity deserving groups. The plan standardizes and increases open hours across the system in order to improve access to library services, while prioritizing access to areas of the city serving equity-deserving residents. Since 2006, TPL has increased annual hours of service by 13,812 at 21 branches that serve Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). 17 branches serving NIAs will receive additional hours as part of the next phases of implementation.

The investment in TPL's budget through the Open Hours Implementation Plan will help advance key City strategies, including its Toronto Newcomer Strategy, Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy, Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0, Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy 2020, Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, SafeTO, the Reconciliation Action Plan, Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, Gender Equity Strategy, Our Health Our City, as well as TPL's Strategic Plan.

DECISION HISTORY

At its June 6, 2005 meeting, the Board [requested](#) a report concerning branch open hours across the city.

The Library's vision for Open Hours was developed and detailed in a report "[The Best Thing a Library Can Be is Open](#)", which was adopted by the Board at its January 16, 2006 meeting.

The [implementation plan for the Open Hours vision](#) was approved by the Board at its June 19, 2006 meeting.

At the City's Budget Committee meeting on December 18, 2017, the Budget Committee requested a briefing note on: BU39.1 #21. Operating funds necessary to fully implement Toronto Public Library's "Open Hours Plan" phased in over a 4-year period from 2019 to 2022.

An interim briefing note was provided to the Budget Committee on January 9, 2018, which indicated that 32% of the Open Hours Implementation Plan had been accomplished by the end of 2017. The briefing note also indicated that the Open Hours Implementation Plan would be reviewed and updated, in order to consider additional factors influencing its implementation, such as new technologies, population growth, evolving library trends, customer priorities, and improved access to metrics.

At its meeting on June 18, 2018, the Board approved the [Open Hours Plan – 2018 Review](#) board report, which included updated costing for the plan and directed TPL staff to include the revised plan in TPL's 2019 operating budget submission.

At its meeting on August 16, 2018, the Board approved the [Open Hours Plan 2018 - Implementation](#) board report and presentation that detailed a phased implementation plan for the Open Hours Plan to be included in TPL's 2019 operating budget submission. Board members also requested additional information:

1. The total cost of the investment made in NIA branches versus non-NIA branches; and
2. The total number of staff that would be added to the staff complement as a result of the full implementation of the Open Hours Plan, including

total full time equivalents (FTE), as well as a breakdown of full-time and part-time positions.

At its meeting on February 24, 2020, the Board adopted TPL's [2020 Operating Budget](#) that included funding for additional open hours for TPL branches that support a youth hub. In 2022 and 2023, hours expanded at two locations following capital projects.

At its meeting on December 5, 2022, the Board considered a revised 2023 operating budget hours enhancement as requested by the Board at its October 25, 2022 meeting. The Board decided to defer the Open Hours enhancement request included in the 2023 operating budget submission to 2024 as recorded in the [Minutes](#).

At its meeting on September 18, 2023, the Library Board approved the updated [Open Hours Implementation Plan](#) and endorsed the phased approach to implementation.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Increased branch hours are a cost-efficient way to increase access to library services that achieve important economic, social and health outcomes for Toronto residents. Increasing open hours responds to the changing patterns of work, study, education and leisure in Toronto. It supports outcomes such as:

- Removing barriers for residents who experience the time pressures of a busy urban life; and supporting community safety and quality of life, especially for equity-deserving groups and people experiencing isolation, including seniors and youth. The prioritization of NIA communities in the Open Hours Plan also ensures that these neighbourhoods will see particular benefit from this implementation;
- Providing a safe and engaging out-of-school destination for children and youth, where they can socialize, study and learn. The Open Hours Plan increases the number of branches that are open on school days (including all NIA branches), positively impacting children and youth who are seeking a safe and engaging destination outside of school hours. Longer hours support Youth Hubs where almost 60% of participants report having discovered a new interest or learned about new opportunities to be involved in their communities.

- Enabling the Library to provide more programming to children and families, supporting early childhood literacy, including on Sundays.
- Contributing to economic and workforce development by meeting the information needs of remote workers, job seekers, small business owners and entrepreneurs, and addressing the growing demand for space and access to technology, the internet/wireless and computers, supporting digital literacy and digital inclusion.
- Benefiting all Torontonians by providing expanded opportunities to enjoy the city's and their community's cultural and literary life. Sunday hours in particular are family friendly and in high demand everywhere. They also serve people whose work keeps them from visiting the library during other days of the week. Library use, including visits, increases whenever Sunday service is added.
- Providing seven-day service all year round at all 100 branches across the city, allowing residents to access library service in their immediate community and, in most cases, within walking distance.

COMMENTS

Demand for Open Hours

Early results of 2024 open hours expansions

As part of the 2024 open hours expansion, eight branches added Monday service along with additional mornings and evenings in July, 2024. Early results show that:

- For July, there was a **61%** year-over-year increase in traffic for branches who received increased Monday to Saturday hours. Branches whose hours did not change increased year-over-year traffic as well, but only at about 6%.
- Furthermore, comparing June to July this year, branches whose hours increased Monday to Saturday saw traffic increase by **55%**. Branches whose hours did not change did not see a month-over-month increase in visitor traffic (1% lower June to July).

The value of library service

During the initial phase of TPL's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan public consultations, expanding library hours emerged as one of the key priorities raised by Toronto residents. Extending the operating hours of the branches will offer people in

Toronto a space to visit, participate in programs, study, work, and learn during evenings and weekends, responding to the diverse needs and schedules of library users.

TPL's value reaches far beyond the economic impact of dollars and cents – it profoundly touches people's lives, and TPL's new [Social Impact Study](#) measures this previously unquantifiable value. TPL recently partnered with the innovative Danish firm Seismonaut to assess the impact of the library and its services on Torontonians. The empirical, evidence-based results prove how vital TPL is to the lifeblood of the city, enabling Torontonians to grow and thrive, and demonstrate the need to continue to invest in library services at a time when social cohesion is more important than ever.

The Open Hours Plan

TPL's Open Hours Plan addresses the need for improved and equitable access to branch service across the city and sets out the framework and targets for its achievement. It identifies standardized bands of open hours, which are set for Monday to Saturday service, as well as Sunday service. These specific bands optimize hours of operation, staffing and scheduling efficiencies, and support consistent customer experience across the city. Bands of Sunday hours are included separately, as Sunday service is operationalized differently, according to provisions in the Collective Agreement.

A review of the 2018 plan determined that while its base approach and methodology (assessing busyness and location) remained sound, allocating more hours to neighbourhood branches across the city would have a significant impact on people's ability to access the library and its resources. Both the results of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan public consultations and the results of TPL's new Social Impact Study support this conclusion. As a result, new schedules of open hours are proposed, which will result in seven-day a week service, 12 months a year at all 100 branches by July 2026.

Table 2 below outlines the Board approved Open Hours Plan along with the proposed revised hours of service. Revisions include:

- Year round Sunday service, including Sunday programming where space permits, at 100 branches. This eliminates seasonal Sunday service, which resulted in closures in July and August at the majority of branches.

- Monday service at all 100 branches. This eliminates the 40-hour service band, which resulted in Monday closures at branches that fell into this service band.
- Swansea Memorial branch and the Todmorden Room branch will now offer staffed Sunday service while continuing to offer their current combination of staffed and self-service hours from Monday to Saturday.

Table 2: Open Hours Plan Comparison

Bands of Weekly Hours*	Schedule of Hours	2018 Plan # of branches	Proposed 2025 Plan # of branches
Monday - Saturday Service			
65.5 Hours 6 days with five nights	Monday – Friday: 9am – 8:30pm; Saturday - 9am – 5pm	42	42
62 hours 6 days with four nights	Monday – Thursday: 9am – 8:30pm Friday and Saturday: 9am – 5pm	26	26
50.5 hours 6 days with three nights	Monday: 10am – 8:30pm Tuesday and Thursday: 12:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday and Friday: 10am – 6pm Saturday: 9am-5pm	21	30
40 hours 5 days with two nights	Tuesday and Thursday: 12:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday and Friday: 10am – 6pm Saturday: 9am-5pm	9	0
Sunday Service			
Seasonal (Sept – June)	Noon – 5pm	40	0
Year round (Jan – Dec)	Noon – 5 pm	27	100

*Excludes late night service and eight-hour Sundays as there is currently no provision for these hours within the Collective Agreement.

Progress to Date

Between 2006 and 2023, 85% of TPL’s full Open Hours had been achieved, with 32,531 total annual hours of service added. Over 40%, or 13,812, of these additional hours increased service at 21 branches that serve NIAs. During this

time provision of Sunday service also more than doubled, increasing from 27 to 67 branches.

In 2024, Phase 1 of the implementation plan provided for: (a) Sunday service expansion to 67 branches with addition of eight new Sunday service locations beginning in September 2024; and (b) beginning in July 2024, eight branches increased their Monday to Saturday service by adding Mondays and additional mornings and evenings each week. The new Sunday service represents a 14% service increase over 2023.

2025 Budget Submission

Previous Council Approval – Phase 2 – Open Hours Expansion

For the 2025 budget submission, Phase 2 for expanded open hours, which includes longer Sunday hours and more Monday – Saturday hours, was previously approved by Council as part of the 2024 budget and accordingly will be included in the 2025 budget. The cost of Sunday service at 67 branches with five hours of service (increasing from 3.5 hours) and five branches moving to year-round service from seasonal service is \$761K in 2025 (\$2.284 million annualized). The cost of additional Monday – Saturday hours at 16 branches is \$914K in 2025 (\$1.828 million annualized). This expansion will increase Sunday service by 45% over 2024 service levels. See Attachment 1 under the header “2024 Approved Budget – Open Hours Expansion Phases 1 to 3” for more details.

2025 Service Enhancement Requests

The combined result of the revised Open Hours Plan, which includes Sunday and Monday hours expansions, will provide year-round seven-day a week service at all 100 branch locations at a cost of \$8.089M which would be included as a part of the 2025 operating budget submission.

Enhanced Sunday Service

Three levels of Sunday service enhancement are proposed, each one increasing the amount of service offered:

1. Year-round Sunday service at 33 new branches.
2. Moving the existing 40 seasonal Sunday service branches to year-round service, resulting in a total of 100 branches with year-round service.
3. Enhanced programming capacity on Sundays.

The costing in Attachment 1, under the header “2025 Budget – Expanded Sunday and Monday service”, is incremental for each level of service expansion.

Enhanced Monday Service

Additional Monday service is proposed for nine branches starting in July 2026. The nine branches would move from the 40-hour service band up into the 50.5-hour service band and will have Monday hours from 10:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. as per the hours of service in this service band.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Open Hours Expansion

**TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY
Open Hours Expansion**

Attachment 1

2024 Approved Budget - Open Hours Expansion Phases 1 to 3

Phase 1

8 branches increased Mon-Sat open hours
8 branches introduced Sunday service

Implementation	2024		2025		2026		2027		TOTAL	
	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs
July 2024	\$ 1.974	44.9	\$ 1.974						\$ 3.949	44.9
September 2024	\$ 0.475	7.0	\$ 0.951						\$ 1.426	7.0
	\$ 2.450	51.9	\$ 2.925	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ 5.375	51.9
Phase 2										
July 2025			\$ 0.914	20.6	\$ 0.914				\$ 1.828	20.6
July 2025			\$ 0.149		\$ -				\$ 0.149	-
September 2025			\$ 0.613		\$ 1.522				\$ 2.135	-
	\$ -	-	\$ 1.675	20.6	\$ 2.436	-	\$ -	-	\$ 4.112	20.6
Phase 3										
July 2026	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ 0.864	17.3	\$ 0.617	-	\$ 1.481	17.3
TOTAL BUDGET - Approved in 2024	\$ 2.450	51.9	\$ 4.600	20.6	\$ 3.300	17.3	\$ 0.617	-	\$ 10.967	89.8

2025 Budget - Expanded Sunday and Monday Service

Sunday Service at 100 Branches

Further Sunday Expansion

33 branches introducing seasonal Sunday service resulting in 100 branches (27 year round, 73 seasonal) with Sunday service

73 branches (33 new seasonal, 40 existing seasonal) move to year round from seasonal resulting in all 100 branches with year round Sunday service

Subtotal - Further Sunday Expansion - 33 branches introduced to year round Sunday service and 40 branches moved to year round from seasonal

Additional Sunday programming

Subtotal - all Sunday - Further Sunday expansion and additional Sunday programming

7-day weekly service

New Monday Service

9 branches introducing new Monday service moving to 50.5 hours from 40 hours per week resulting in a 7-day service week at 100 branches

Implementation	2025		2026		2027		TOTAL	
	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs	Cost (in \$M)	FTEs
September 2025	\$ 1.442	5.0	\$ 1.442				\$ 2.884	5.0
September 2025 (Budget impact - Start July 2026)			\$ 1.394	5.0			\$ 1.394	5.0
	\$ 1.442		\$ 2.836				\$ 4.279	
September 2025	\$ 0.504		\$ 0.706				\$ 1.211	
	\$ 1.947		\$ 3.542				\$ 5.489	
July 2026			\$ 1.517	25.6	\$ 1.084		\$ 2.600	25.6
Total new Open Hours Expansion - Sundays and Mondays	\$ 1.947	5.0	\$ 5.060	30.6	\$ 1.084	-	\$ 8.089	35.6

TOTAL OPEN HOURS EXPANSION (Budget 2024 to 2026)

2024	2025	2026	2027	TOTAL
Cost (in \$M)	Cost (in \$M)	Cost (in \$M)	Cost (in \$M)	Cost (in \$M)
\$ 2.450	\$ 6.547	\$ 8.360	\$ 1.701	\$ 19.056
FTEs 51.9	FTEs 25.6	FTEs 47.9	FTEs -	FTEs 125.4