

Speaking Notes for Leslie Wilson

General Purposes Committee

Monday, October 1, 2007

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you the Library Board's Facilities Plan and Strategic Plan which together form our Building On Success document. These plans lay out the major concerns of the Library Board and how we intend to address them. In many ways library services in Richmond have set the standard for best practices in North America. However, the Library Board's ability to continue to deliver a high level of service is facing major challenges. These challenges are:

- A deteriorating collection due to much heavier borrowing
- Inadequate staff resources due to very substantial increases in library use; and
- Inadequate spaces to meet current library demand and projected population growth

The actions required to meet these challenges are outlined in our Building On Success document and require the support of Council.

Facilities Plan

The Library has been an active participant in the many planning exercises going on over the last year or so and our Facilities Plan draws upon the excellent work done by the City and the many stakeholders involved.

The format and information provided in our plan follows the templates and processes used in the other City plans to ensure ease of integration.

The Library Board feels that it is essential that Library plans be fully integrated into Parks and Recreation and other City-wide facilities plans. Not only will this provide Council with a comprehensive picture of city-wide needs—thus ensuring the Library has appropriate priority—it will also ensure that the many opportunities for co-development and integration of services can be exploited.

The Library Board strongly believes that the public is best served by multi-use facilities. These facilities with their integrated services provide a higher level of convenience to the public and require lower capital costs and operating costs. By taking advantage of multi-use opportunities all community facilities will be able to grow faster than if we work independently.

Integrated planning is a critical first step for integrated services and planning requires current, objective and relevant information to ensure high quality decision making. As part of the 2008 Capital Budget the Library Board has worked with the City Facilities Department to propose a Feasibility Study for the Steveston, Cambie and Hamilton

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libraries. To date there has been no study dedicated to identifying library needs and how they can best be met. Such a study is essential in order to provide the Library Board, City Council and the community at large information on where library services should be going.

In reviewing the comments in the staff report, we certainly acknowledge that the specific years of implementation for various projects will require review and co-ordination with other projects being considered. However, we must stress to Council the urgency of addressing the capacity issue at Brighthouse Branch.

Strategic Plan

Richmond Library has proven to be very successful in identifying and providing the type of library services our community wants. For a number of years now we have been the busiest library in Canada on a per capita basis and the quality and range of our services has largely kept pace with the community.

With the completion of the Brighthouse renovation, however, library use has taken a quantum leap and we can no longer keep up without additional resources. Prior to the renovation Richmond was already the busiest library in Canada. Post-renovation library use has surged--Brighthouse branch circulation increased by an astounding 33%. 2007 year-to-date figures show that the increased usage is continuing and in fact increasing by a further 4.84%.

Richmond Library is over 20% busier per capita than other very successful libraries in Canada.

This unprecedented increase in use cannot be sustained without an increase in resources.

The main thrust of the Strategic Plan is a recognition that the Library is providing the public with the types of services they want and the public's unprecedented use of current services indicates their strong support of the library. In this setting the Library Board needs to focus on working with Council to provide the additional resources necessary to be able to continue to offer the current level of service.

Thus the Strategic Plan focuses on increasing the collections, staffing levels and physical space to meet the needs of the current population and to begin the planning for expanding and building new facilities for population growth.

On the bottom of page 2 in the staff report to Council, it is emphasized that the capacity issue for Brighthouse Branch must be addressed through operational changes. The 2008 operating budget as submitted by the Library Board will address the immediate need for increases in staffing and collections through additional level requests. These additional levels are not requested in order to provide new, higher level services, but rather to meet the level of library use we are currently experiencing. A relatively modest increase in operating budget will ensure that the Library can adequately meet the public demand for

books and other material and that we have sufficient staff to keep up with the dramatic increase in use.

In conclusion, we are seeking Council support for the following:

1. To endorse our Facilities Plan and to ensure that it is integrated with other City plans.
2. To support the 2008 Capital budget request for a Feasibility Study around library services to ensure library needs are adequately identified and sound planning information is obtained.
3. To support the Strategic Plan and its goals as expressed in the 2008 Additional Level Budget requests.

And now, along with our Chief Librarian, Greg Buss, I look forward to hearing your response to our plans and answering any question you may have.