

**RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD**  
**Presentation to General Purposes Committee**  
**September 2, 2008**

Our purpose today is to provide an informal update to Council on some key issues with which the Library is faced. On September 8th, the Library Board plans, as we have for many years, to be a delegation to the Council meeting in order to provide to you and the public our annual report on the community services aspects of the library. Today, however, we are here to let you know about some directions we are planning to take.

As you know, the population of Richmond is growing every day and becoming more ethnically diverse. Your library circulates more items than any other library in Canada, and we have many requests for increases in programs, materials and space.

We have 3 topics to discuss that we believe, with your help, will start to respond to those challenges.

**The first is planning for the future.** In October, 2007, the Library Board presented its Strategic Plan 2008- 2010 and the Library Facilities Plan. These documents continue to guide the Library Board's priorities and operations. Council endorsed the Library Facilities Plan and the Library Board appreciates the involvement and support received from City staff in ensuring that library needs are an integral part of the City's planning process.

The Board recognizes that there will be many more stages before specific library facilities can be identified for construction, and in the interim, the Board requests that the Library continue to be involved in the development of the Corporate Facilities Implementation Plan.

**The second is our newest location.** Services in Hamilton began June 2007 and now consist of a one-day (Saturday) service from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. offered in the community centre's rotunda. In addition, there is a library information computer kiosk available whenever the centre is open, allowing Hamilton residents to place holds on any item in the library's collection and the items will then be delivered to Hamilton for personal pickup. Even though it is a very limited service, it is well used by Hamilton residents, with approximately 1,100 items circulating per month.

Further growth of this service is dependant upon a permanent facility. The Library Board is looking forward to the results of the feasibility study regarding possible locations for community services. The Board requests that the Library be made aware of the results and be included in any planning that may result.

**The third is managing the highest per capita circulation in Canada.** Your library continues to be the busiest in Canada – by far! Richmond's per capita circulation is 24.31

items and the next busiest library's is 20.66 items. Richmond residents are voracious users of their libraries and the biggest challenge we face day-to-day is ensuring that there is sufficient material on the shelves for users to borrow.

Such heavy use of the library means that library shelves must be constantly restocked with returned materials and new materials. This puts great pressure on both our collections and our staff. Materials get worn out more quickly and must be replaced more frequently than in other libraries. In addition, we must purchase more copies of high demand items so there is something on the shelves of interest to customers who use the library in the evening.

High circulation also means a great deal of staff resources are required to check in, sort and reshelve material quickly so it can become available for the next customer. Staffing increases have not kept up with our increase in circulation.

The Library Board believes it can develop a two-prong strategy to address these challenges.

1. Develop a Community Fund Raising Initiative to help sustain the highest use areas of the collection. Funds raised through such an initiative would be used to replace worn out copies of heavily used items and to purchase additional copies of high demand material. If successful, such an initiative would not replace the need for our existing materials budget to be increased, but it would relieve the pressure of our existing book budget going to replacement rather than new material. Initially, this fund would also allow our various ethnic communities to help stock appropriate materials in their languages.
2. Install Automated Self-sorting Technology to relieve pressure to increase staffing. Our self checkout units have been a tremendous boon in being able to cope with long lineups of customers waiting to check out material. However, once the material is returned, there is a great deal of staff labour required to get it checked in, sorted and reshelved. There is now technology available to greatly speed up and streamline this process. The first step in automating this process would be to install an automated self sorting unit at a one time cost of \$250,000 and \$25,000 annually. The Library Board believes this would be a very cost effective solution to offset increasing demand for staffing.

We appreciate your support of your award-winning Library. To continue to be as cost-effective as possible, and to maintain our level of service to an expanding population, a budget increase is required. In the budget process for 2009, we will be submitting an additional level request for increased collection funding, and a capital request for the automated sorting system.

We would appreciate any comments on our direction as outlined, and are ready to answer any questions about this presentation or anything else you would like to know about your Library.

- Submitted by the Library Board