

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

Richmond Library Board Delegation to General Purposes Committee on September 2, 2008 – Briefing Paper

Staff Response

Issue: Key Issues and Opportunities for Richmond Library Board Discussion with Council

Background:

For many years, Richmond Library Board has presented its Annual Report to Council, by delegating at a Council meeting. At the same time as presenting its Annual Report, other issues and opportunities that the Library Board wish to discuss with Council are also often brought up. In discussions between the Mayor and the Chair of the Library Board, it was agreed that a different approach could be taken, whereby issues and opportunities for discussion could be brought forward to a General Purposes Committee (September 2, 2008), while the Annual Report alone is presented at a Council meeting (September 8, 2008).

Staff from the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department met with the Chair, Richmond Library Board and the Chief Librarian to establish the issues and opportunities to be brought forward at GP Committee on September 2, 2008. This Briefing Paper provides a summary of these, along with staff commentary.

Issues and Opportunities:

1. Planning for the Future. In October 2007, the Library Board developed a Strategic Plan 2008- 2010 and a Library Facilities Plan (together comprising a document entitled “Building on Success”), which guide the Library Board’s priorities and operations. At the October 9, 2007 meeting, Council gave a referral to staff to incorporate seven of the eight priorities¹ in the Library Facilities Plan into the Corporate Facilities Implementation Plan. While the Board recognises that there will be many more stages before specific library facilities can be identified for construction, the Board requests that the Library continue to be involved in the development of the Corporate Facilities Implementation Plan.

Staff comment: The Corporate Facilities Implementation Plan is currently being developed by Facilities Management, who confirm that this plan will take into consideration the strategic facility plans of all departments, including the Library Facilities Plan.

2. Library Services in Hamilton. The Library Board began a limited library service in Hamilton in June 2007, being a one-day (Saturday) service in the Community Centre rotunda. There is also a library information computer kiosk available for the public when the community centre is open. The Library Board advise that further growth of this service is dependent upon a permanent facility, and request that they be made aware of the results of the current feasibility study for additional community space in Hamilton.

¹ The eighth priority related to a Richmond Oval Resource Centre, which Council referred to the Richmond Olympic Business Office and Major Projects Office, for consideration as a tenant in the Oval.

Staff comment: A Hamilton Community Space Feasibility Study is currently being conducted by PRCS (with consultants contracted in July 2008). The purpose of the study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the needs for community space in Hamilton and to provide clear recommendations on how Hamilton's current and future needs for community space can be addressed. The results of the feasibility study will be reported to Council in February 2009. The need for library space in Hamilton is well recognised. The Senior Librarian, Special Projects, has been made a member of the staff Advisory Committee that has been set up for the Feasibility Study, and the Library Board is also identified as a Primary Stakeholder for consultation.

3. Managing High Circulation. Richmond Library has the highest per capita circulation of any library in Canada. The Library Board reports that such high circulation means that materials get worn out more quickly and must be replaced more frequently than in other libraries, and that more copies of high demand items need to be purchased. In addition, a great deal of staff resources are required to check in, sort and re-shelve material quickly, so it can become available for the next customer, and that staffing increases have not kept up with the increase in circulation. The Library Board would like to develop a two-prong strategy to address these challenges: a Community Fund Raising Initiative and the installation of Automated Self-Sorting Technology. In the budget process for 2009, the Library Board is submitting an additional level request for increased collection funding, and a capital request for the automated sorting system.

Staff comment: Staff have advised the Library Board that Additional Level Requests for the Operating Budget must be received by September 5, 2008. A Capital Submission for the Automated Sorting Equipment (a one-time cost of \$250,000, with a \$25,000 annual cost for maintenance) has already been submitted, and is currently being reviewed by the Land & Capital Team for the 2009 Capital Budget. The process for evaluating Capital Submissions by the Land & Capital Team takes into account factors such as: need and demand for the project, consideration of competing interests, any prior endorsement or approval by Council, a sustainability analysis including Triple Bottom Line considerations, and, finally, availability of appropriate funding sources.

Actions resulting from discussion:

Notes and questions:

Respectfully submitted by
 Lucy Tompkins
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