

## **Reinvesting in Our Future: The Toronto Public Library Branch Planning Study - Status Report**

*(City Council on November 23, 24 and 25, 1999, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)*

**The Policy and Finance Committee reports having:**

- (1) received the report (November 10, 1999) from the City Librarian;**
- (2) requested the Toronto Library Board to ensure that Members of Council are notified in a timely fashion when consideration is being given to closing library branches in their wards; and**
- (3) requested the Commissioner of Urban Planning and Development Services to provide all the necessary assistance to the Toronto Public Library Board in order to evaluate community requirements throughout the library system and, if necessary, report thereon directly to Council for its meeting scheduled to be held on November 23, 1999, on issues of concern.**

**The Policy and Finance Committee submits the following report (November 10, 1999) from the City Librarian:**

Purpose:

To provide the Policy and Finance Committee with a summary of the report, Reinvesting In Our Future: The Toronto Public Library Branch Planning Study, and an update on the current status of the report as requested by the Policy and Finance Committee earlier this year.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

If all phases of the plan were implemented as identified in the report, there are both operating and capital budget implications.

The capital investment required over the ten-year period identified in the report is a total of \$40,003,000.00, of which \$31,768,000.00 is currently reflected in the Library's proposed Ten-Year Capital Plan.

The net operating budget savings at the end of the ten-year period are \$1,042,000.00 annually. However, these savings do not include the increased operating costs for the proposed St. James Town branch or two potential additional branches (Scarborough City Centre, Harbourfront/Railway Lands).

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

Toronto Public Library was requested to report to the Policy and Finance Committee this fall on a review of its branch locations, considering the potential to reduce the number of library facilities based on usage, and the impact of amalgamation on border branches:

That the City Librarian provide the requested report pertaining to potential library closures to the Finance and Priorities Committee no later than September 1999. (Notices of Motions, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on April 26, 27, and 28, 1999.)

The branch review was also part of an overall framework to address service harmonization and support the Library's service planning.

A full report, recommending a ten-year plan with three phases, was submitted to the Toronto Public Library Board at its meeting on September 21, 1999. The Board received the report, but did not adopt its recommendations for Phase I, pending consultation with library users in a number of communities. Staff were asked to report back to the Board on the results of these Phase I consultations in January 2000. A full copy of the report has been sent to all Councillors.

Comments:

With an extensive branch network and an aging facilities infrastructure, the Library Board faces challenges in maintaining a vibrant library system that is well positioned to provide the combination of new and traditional services that the citizens of Toronto expect. The comparative analysis contained in the study indicates that the Toronto Public Library provides more "branch infrastructure" to its population than any other major North American library system. Conversely, the collection size and the hours of service offered at branches are lower than the average for comparable Canadian libraries. This infrastructure is the product of over 100 years of development and reflects the historical evolution of library services in the predecessor systems. Amalgamation presents an opportunity to take a fresh look at the Toronto Public Library system in its entirety, and identify how branches can build and contribute to an effective and efficient library network.

The study included all of the 98 branches of the Toronto Public Library. Library space available to residents, measured in square feet of library building per capital, was evaluated. There was also an examination of whether there was service area overlap between branches as defined by a 1.6 km service radius around each branch. In addition, branches were evaluated on facility condition, including the size of the branch, and the activity levels at each branch as measured by circulation and in-library use of materials, visits to the branch, reference questions answered and programs attended. Other data, including socio-economic and demographic data was collected. This analysis resulted in an identification of specific areas of the city where potential service change might be warranted. Proposed service changes were identified for each of these areas and evaluated based on the impact on cost, service levels and service equity. These service changes have substantial impacts on facility planning and require a capital investment, and a

phased approach was proposed which allows for a planned capital program as well as extensive community consultation. The following table provides a summary of the proposed service changes by area:

Areas for Proposed Service Changes  
Summary Table

Area	Description of Proposal
South Etobicoke	Expand Brentwood (Phase 2); Consolidate Humber Bay and Mimico into a new neighbourhood library at Park Lawn and Lakeshore (Phase 3).
York/West Toronto	Expand Bloor Gladstone (Phase 2); Rebuild Maria A. Shchuka (Phase 2); Refurbish Dufferin St. Clair (Phase 2); Close St. Clair Silverthorn and Davenport (Phase 2).
High Park	Close Swansea (Phase 1)
Downtown Toronto	Do not reopen Niagara (Phase 1); Build a neighbourhood library at St. James Town (Phase 2); Continue to assess the need for a neighbourhood library to serve St. Lawrence, the port lands, the railway lands, and Harbourfront (Phase 3).
East Toronto/East York	Close Todmorden Room (Phase 1); Expand Pape Danforth (Phase 2); Expand Jones (Phase 2); Close Queen Saulter (Phase 2).
South Central Scarborough	Expand Cliffcrest (Phase 3)
North York Scarborough Border	Expand McGregor Park (Phase 2); Consolidate Maryvale and Victoria Village at Victoria Park & Lawrence (Phase 3); Continue to assess the need for a neighbourhood library at Scarborough City Centre (Phase 3).
North Toronto	Close Mt. Pleasant (Phase 2)
North Etobicoke	Close Northern Elms (Phase 2)
Time Frame	Phase 1 (2000) Phase 2 ( 2000-2004) Phase 3 (beyond 2004)

If all phases of the plan outlined in the study were implemented, the overall branch infrastructure would be reduced by approximately ten percent (ie. from 98 branches to between 89 and 91 branches, depending on future development). However, the report also recommends a significant capital investment in branches to address service deficiencies at both the district and neighbourhood branches in order to realize an effective branch network which provides attractive and vital branch library service to the citizens of Toronto.

The Toronto Public Library Board has directed staff to proceed with community consultation. Consultation plans are currently being confirmed in consultation with local councillors. The

Board has requested a report on the results of these consultations for the Phase One branches by January 2000.

Conclusions:

The final results of the branch report will be refined and revised based on public consultation and the capital budget approved for the Toronto Public Library. Future capital and operating budgets will incorporate these results.

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Councillor David Miller, High Park, appeared before the Policy and Finance Committee in connection with the foregoing matter.