



To: Members of the Peterborough Public Library Board

From: Jennifer Jones, Library CEO

Meeting Date: February 8, 2022

Subject: Library CEO Report February 2022, Report PPL22-006

Purpose

A report to inform the Library Board on general matters concerning Library operations and services.

Recommendation

That the Library Board approves the recommendation as outlined in Report PPL22-006 dated February 8, 2022, of the Library CEO as follows:

That the report to inform the Library Board on general matters concerning Library operations and service be received for information.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no budget or financial implications resulting from the approval of the recommendation of this report.

Background

Programs

Library programming staff have arranged for Peterborough's Poet Laureate, Sarah Lewis, to provide a series of 4 workshops on spoken word poetry. At the end of the 4 weeks, we will have a final showcase where participants can share their spoken word poems.

We have received feedback from our program participants that their ability to participate in our Writing Circle and Adult Book Club programs has allowed them to connect with others during this unusual time. Some participants expressed that they are new to the Peterborough community and were thankful that these groups allowed them to meet and socialize with other members in the community.

Family Literacy Day

Rather than hosting a single large event in January 2022 as has been tradition, all partner organizations planned their own Family Literacy Day programs and events throughout the week of Family Literacy Day: Monday, January 24 through Saturday, January 29, 2022. The Library's events were posted on the national [Family Literacy Day website](#).

Collections

The Healthy Families Collection (HFC) has been dismantled. As a standalone physical collection, the HFC use has progressively decreased. The decline is in part due to change in the information-seeking behaviours of people as they move more to online sources. The Library is adapting and responding to this reality, by interfiling the HFC within our larger collections. This will make it easier for people to find what they are looking for, as well as make the HFC more discoverable when people are browsing for relevant topics.

We will continue to acquire new titles and label them with the distinctive yellow H spine labels. As well, the titles will still be identified within our catalogue as belonging to the designated Healthy Families topics. In addition, to meet increased online demand, we will be exploring the curation of special lists of ebooks and eaudiobooks that reflect the Healthy Families topics within our digital platforms.

DelaFosse Replacement Branch

The recommendations from the Library Board (report PPL22-004) were brought forward to General Committee at the January 17, 2022, meeting. Council supported the motions to close the DelaFosse branch permanently and include a replacement library branch in the new Arena and Aquatics Complex at Morrow Park. The vote was ratified at the January 31, 2022, Council meeting. More details will be coming back to the Board as the project progresses.

Ongoing Issues at the Library

It has been a challenging year at the library. The mental health and behavioural challenges staff have been contending with in the library are becoming more prevalent. The precarious balance we have been able to find has been strongly impacted by the increase in addiction issues presenting at the library.

Staff have been trying to address several issues that are beyond their comfort levels, without the necessary tools. Training on a variety of related topics has been made

available and undertaken by staff, but ultimately someone who wants to work at a library is not prepared for the social issues they are facing daily.

Staff are also facing their own individual challenges with mental health, compassion fatigue, and finding empathy for members of our community. The building itself is being damaged as more and more folks abuse the furniture and windowsills and use the space generally in unintended ways.

Regular library users have come in and reported that they feel unsafe at this time and won't be returning until things change. While we do have security services, it is not currently providing a solution, or the support staff need. We are also aware that a rigid institutional approach only leads to more problems in our environment. We are not able to enforce the Library's Code of Conduct on people who are past caring about consequences and punishments, or who are not in the right frame of mind to understand.

Staff have been pondering the question of changing our access priorities. We are weighing the importance of the Library to our community by keeping it open for all against the need to provide a safe and appropriate space for library use. We are not sure at this time what the best approach should or could be.

We are working toward possible future solutions and long-term approaches to address the ongoing challenges. We have reached out to other public libraries to share experiences and learn about their efforts to address these challenges. We are also reaching out to local community experts to explore partnerships that will provide staff and our community with the supports it needs to get through this challenging time.

Submitted by,

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