

Report to / Rapport au:

**Ottawa Public Library Board
Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa**

October 8, 2019 / 8 octobre 2019

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File Number: OPLB-2019-1002

SUBJECT: Update – Hours of Operation Review

OBJET: Mise à jour – Examen des heures d'ouverture

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

- 1. Receive this report for information;**
- 2. Approve the process for evaluating adjustments to hours of operation, as further identified in this report; and,**
- 3. Disband the Hours of Operation Ad hoc Committee.**

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa:

- 1. Prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information;**
- 2. Approuve le processus d'évaluation pour les ajustements aux heures d'ouverture, comme indiqué dans le présent rapport; et,**

3. Dissout le Comité spécial sur les heures d'ouverture.

BACKGROUND

As per Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Board ("Board") policy 002-OPLB Delegation of Authority (DOA), the CEO is delegated the responsibility to "set or modify administrative and operational policies," including hours of operation. As the Board is responsible for reviewing and recommending annual budget estimates to City Council, it is important that the Board be aware of any proposed changes to the hours of operation that may have the potential to impact future budgets.

OPL set hours of operation for its 33 branches at the time of amalgamation (2001). In 2004, harmonization of hours for large and medium sized branches was implemented. In 2005, the available operating budget provided for small improvements to rural branch hours and services.

OPL branch hours of operation vary from 12 hours per week to 59 hours per week excluding Sundays. While hours of operation are standardized in urban and suburban branches (with a few exceptions), they are significantly different in rural locations. Hours vary as follows:

- District branches (large): open 59 hours/week (Monday – Saturday);
- Community branches (medium): open 54 hours/week (Monday – Saturday);
- Community branches (smaller): open between 37 and 51.5 hours/week (Monday – Saturday); and,
- Rural branches: open between 12 and 34 hours/week (Monday – Saturday), depending on the branch.

A detailed listing of branch hours is available in Appendix A.

Until June 2019, 10 branches were open from 1:00-5:00 pm on Sundays from the weekend after Labour Day to the 1st week of June.

In 2017, Nanos Research was retained to gather public input among residents of the City of Ottawa to help identify preferences regarding library use and operational hours. This multifaceted consultation included web surveys for cardholders, library customer focus groups, and hybrid telephone and online surveys for the general population.

Document OPLB-2017-1004, Hours of Operation Survey Results was presented to the Board at its meeting in October 2017.

Based on the combined results of the public consultation conducted by Nanos Research, the following key points were identified:

- Majority of cardholders who participated in the consultation were satisfied or mostly satisfied with the hours of operation of their primary branch.
- Saturdays and Sundays are the most important days of the week for the library to be open;
- Mondays and Fridays are the most important weekdays for library use;
- Evenings and mornings are the most important times of the weekday;
- Early afternoons and mornings are the most important times of the weekend;
- Most respondents would like branches to be open on Sundays year-round; and,
- Hours of operation should be consistent.

While the results were very positive overall, staff committed to analyze the data and prepare options for consideration to best address customer feedback regarding OPL's hours of operation. Staff were to:

1. Examine hours of operation for consistency;
2. Explore the use of technology to supplement hours of operation; and,
3. Develop a process to evaluate future needs or requirements to adjust hours.

In 2018, an OPL Board Ad hoc Committee was established to provide strategic guidance to staff on how best to address the three keys points above. In 2019, following the appointment of a new Board, new members were appointed to the Ad hoc committee to continue this important work.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide the Board with an update on:
 - Changes to hours that have been implemented to-date;

- Cost-neutral changes to hours to be implemented in 2020;
 - Changes to hours with financial implications that may come to the Board for approval in the future; and
 - Work conducted to-date on the use of technology to extend access to library spaces.
- Seek approval of the process developed to evaluate adjustments to hours of operation; and
- Recommend that the Board disband the Ad hoc Committee on Hours of Operation.

DISCUSSION

1. Examine hours of operation for consistency

Using the data culled from the Nanos study, feedback from the focus group participants and individual comments made by survey participants, and by studying the surrounding demographics and patterns of use of the branches, staff prepared multiple scenarios with costings, including harmonization of hours in all branches.

At an estimated cost of more than \$4M, harmonizing hours of operation across all 33 branches (that is, at the maximum hours of 59 hours per week) is not fiscally prudent. Given most participants in the Nanos study were satisfied with the branch hours of operation, staff focused on options that would best address the most common areas of concern and had minimal or no budgetary impact. In particular, staff looked at ways to address the key areas of public concern regarding a) open hours on Mondays or Fridays, b) Sunday hours, c) consistency across rural branches, and d) consistency among community branches.

a. Open Hours on Mondays and Fridays;

As per the Nanos Study results, Mondays and Fridays are the most important week days for customers. A consistency review of hours of operations was conducted of similar sized branches. It found that Friday hours were inconsistent in two branches, when compared with other facilities of similar size and demand.

i. Addition of Friday hours of service in Greely (COMPLETE)

Ward 20 was the only service area with no hours of service on Fridays. To provide consistency of service and better meet customer needs in

this area, the Board directed staff at its May 2018 meeting to add three open hours of service at the Greely branch on Friday afternoons. The Greely branch started offering Friday hours from 3:00-6:00 pm in July 2018. The Board approved the additional costs with the 2019 budget.

ii. Addition of Friday hours of service in Ruth E. Dickinson (NEW)

A review of library operating hours on Fridays identified a gap in the South West area of Ottawa on Friday mornings. OPL's current hours of operation on Friday mornings provides for services to customers in the West (Beaverbrook), East (Cumberland), South East (Greenboro), Central (Main), and Urban West (Nepean CentrepoinTE) portions of the City. With a recognized inconsistency, staff undertook a gap analysis to determine if data supports the addition of hours in this service area.

As per the results of the gap analysis, external data review (EnviroNics Analytics; Nanos Study 2017; and Ottawa Neighbourhood Study), and internal branch data, staff validated the community need for the addition of three hours on Friday mornings at the Ruth E. Dickinson branch. This will solidify Ruth E. Dickinson as a District branch providing enhanced library service to Barrhaven, Riverside South, Manotick, Richmond, North Gower and other smaller communities in the south west of Ottawa consistent with those across the city.

As this recommendation has a financial implication, it will be brought forward to the Board for approval as part of the budget process.

b. Increase Sunday hours - Extension of Sunday hours by three weeks in June (COMPLETE)

Until June 2019, OPL offered Sunday hours at 10 of its large and medium sized branches from the weekend after Labour Day until the first Sunday in June. Since Sundays are one of the most important days of the week, and adults indicated that they wanted library service on Sundays for their children and teens until the end of the school year, the Board approved funding for an additional three Sundays in June as part of the 2019 budget. Sunday hours were extended by three weeks in June of 2019.

- c. Improve hours of operation in rural branches (see Appendix B), to be effective January 1, 2020. (NEW)

Based on the Nanos study, customers identified consistency of hours as a key concern. In addition, some rural residents asked that their local branch be open between 5:00 and 6:00 pm. Hours in rural branches were set before amalgamation and revolved mainly around the availability of staff or volunteers. Some branches closed for a half-hour or an hour between the afternoon and evening in order to provide the lone staff or volunteer with a meal break. These hours have never been changed.

By slightly shifting branch hours, staff will be able to provide uninterrupted service during the busiest and most popular times of the day, especially for commuters. The modification of hours will be achieved through the reallocation of staff resources, which will result in additional community benefits. This can be accomplished within the provisions of the Collective Agreement, and at no cost to the organization. Specifically:

- Osgoode, Richmond, and Munster branches will have increased hours of operation. The Osgoode branch will move from 28 to 30.5 hours a week, Munster branch will increase from 24 to 25 hours a week, and Richmond branch will increase from 34 to 41 hours a week.
- Based on 2019 Environics Analytics data, the Richmond community has a higher than average population of young children and older adults at home during the day, as well as adults working from home. The Richmond branch will be shifting its hours on Thursdays to be open from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. This will provide the community with a second weekday morning for programming (e.g. storytime) and regular service for the daytime population, while maintaining early evening hours for commuters.
- Munster branch, currently the only branch that has no weekday morning hours, will be open one morning per week. The branch currently offers community programming (e.g. storytime) one morning

per week, however, the branch remains closed as there is no other staff available to check materials out for customers. With the addition of a check out station in late 2019, the branch can be open to the public the morning of its weekly programming, enabling all customers access during one of the most important times of the day.

- Hours at the North Gower and Vernon branches will be slightly modified to remove gaps over the early evening service hours.

d. Ensure consistency among Community branches (NEW)

OPL's community branches operate 54 hours per week, with the exception of the four smaller locations: Carp, Manotick, Rockcliffe Park, and Vanier branches. Staff consulted growth studies, library use statistics, and community demographics to establish the optimum hours for these locations. This work, along with the application of the evaluation process (see below), will identify and prioritize any proposed adjustments in a fair and consistent approach. Future implementation of options will be presented to the Board for information, and should they require additional funding, will be presented to the Board for approval as part of the annual budget cycle.

2) Explore the use of technology to supplement hours of operation

Staff conducted extensive research into options for extending library hours with the use of technology. After environmental scans across public libraries world-wide, discussions with other Canadian public libraries, and with the advisement of the Board Ad hoc, staff investigated the potential use of technology to provide customers with extended access to library spaces.

Denmark was the first country to introduce the use of technology to extend hours of operation, with now more than 500 public libraries world-wide using technology to provide more consistent and convenient access to library spaces and better return on investment of taxpayers' dollars. In 2017, the Hamilton Public Library (HPL) introduced extended access to one of their smallest branches using Bibliotheca's Open+

Technology. Branch usage increased by 19% during the first five months of the pilot¹. It has since been made permanent, and the technology has been rolled out to a second branch. Staff visited HPL in 2018 to better understand how the technology worked and to meet with the team responsible for the pilot to answer questions on the implementation, including security and fit-ups to the building.

Toronto Public Library (TPL) has also been using Open+ Technology for extended hours in two of its smallest locations. Staff consulted the TPL team for information and guidance on the delivery of extended service with the use of technology. Given most public libraries world-wide, and especially in Ontario, have been using Open+ Technology to provide extended access to their spaces, staff met with the vendor Bibliotheca for a demonstration of the technology and to obtain additional information.

Staff has since been working on a business case for the use of technology to extend hours of operation in select locations. The Board Ad hoc advised staff to continue to explore the use of technology and other ways to extend access to library spaces and or/services, and, in the future, pilot alternate approaches to providing library services. New approaches that are deemed successful and require additional funding will be brought to the Board for approval through the annual budget cycle.

3) Evaluation process (for consideration of adjustments to hours)

For OPL's hours of operation to remain relevant and responsive to customers' needs, staff are committed to closely monitoring growth and development across the city, demographic trends, branch performance, public feedback, including specific requests from residents and elected officials, and other data that could initiate a review of branch hours.

Given OPL's limited resources and the need for fair and transparent decision-making, it is important that staff use an objective approach to review hours of operation. Similar to the Board approved model to assess current and new bookmobile stops, staff developed a data-driven process to evaluate hours of service across branches. The

¹ <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/10-big-ideas-from-around-the-world-to-inspire-ottawas-new-super-library>.

evaluation process recommended below will serve as a guide for analysis, tying in demographics and performance data to support decision-making.

The recommended process allows for a holistic review of library service areas and focuses on three areas of consideration: a) gap analysis, b) needs assessment, and c) cost analysis.

a. Gap Analysis

Using data available through Environics Analytics, staff will examine relevant demographic information of the local community, including metrics such as:

- population (daytime, evening, etc.)
- method of travel to work
- household population by age
- household population by number of children in household.

Staff will also review the hours of nearby branches (within 20-minute transit time and three nearest branches) to determine if there is gap in the service area.

b. Needs Analysis

Staff will analyze the levels of activity at the select location, such as public computer usage by hour and weekday and circulation by hour. Staff will also consider research findings / data from external sources to validate requests (e.g. Nanos Hours of Service Report, Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, Library Facilities and Growth Planning Study).

c. Cost Analysis

Should the first two criteria yield positive results, staff will cost the potential scenario to determine the financial impact. Any request will be brought forward for consideration through the annual budget cycle, in compliance with the Board's Delegation of Authority Policy.

Staff recommend that the Board approve the evaluation process described above, recognizing that the areas of consideration may evolve to include new or additional directions, reports, data sources, and/or metrics. Potential changes to hours that yield positive results would be presented to the Board for information, and should they require funding, would come to the Board for consideration and approval through the annual budget cycle.

Ad-Hoc Support

Since 2017, staff have conducted extensive analysis and research into improving hours of operation across the city to allow for increased consistency and service to customers. The recommendations herein are comprehensive and reflect the key priorities from the community. To that end, staff recommend that the Hours of Operation Board Ad hoc Committee be disbanded. OPL thanks the current and former Board trustees for their time, expertise, and guidance.

Next steps

The recently adopted Strategic Plan provides the framework by which to extend OPL's reach into the community, including finding ways to reduce barriers to service and defining the ideal experience across physical and virtual channels.

Staff will continue to explore the use of technology and other ways to extend access to library spaces and/or services, using a business case approach and piloting before presenting to the Board for information of permanent implementation or, if requiring funding, for consideration and approval through the annual budget process.

If approved, staff will use the evaluation process to review and assess future requirements and potential changes in hours of operation.

CONSULTATION

The Senior Library Management Team, the Board Ad hoc Committee on Hours of Operation and branch managers were consulted. CUPE 503 Library and local Councillors have been advised of the upcoming changes to hours in select branches.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Any request to permanently fund extended hours of operation or alternate approaches to providing access to library spaces/services will be considered by the Board through the annual budget approval process.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology impacts associated with this report.

BOARD PRIORITIES

The proposed approach to systematically review hours of operation supports “Redesigning the Library Experience”, specifically “assessing the impact of barriers to service”, and the Board’s overarching goal to “Increase the number of active cardholders by 2025 by improving OPL’s community relevance”.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendix A - OPL Branch Hours of Operation

Appendix B – Current and Proposed Hours for Rural Branches

DISPOSITION

Upon approval of this report, staff will:

1. Use the Board-approved evaluation process to review and assess changes to hours of operation, and, where required, bring items forward to the Board for consideration and approval as per budget cycle.
2. Request funding for Friday morning hours at Ruth E. Dickinson through the budget process.
3. Develop an implementation and communication plan for changes to hours in the rural branches, effective January 1st, 2020.

4. Continue to explore the use of technology and alternate ways to providing access to library spaces/services, and pilot new approaches before permanent implementation.
5. Disband the Board Ad hoc Committee on Hours of Operation.