

Report to / Rapport au:

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

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Submitted by / Soumis par:

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File Number: OPLB-2021-0902

SUBJECT: Hours of Operation – Next Steps

OBJET: Heures d'ouverture – Étapes suivantes

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

- 1. Receive this report for information;**
- 2. Receive the expansion of public hours of operation at Greely and Ruth E. Dickinson branches effective January 2022, as further described in this report;**
- 3. Approve the expansion of public hours of operation on Sundays effective 2022, as further described in this report; and,**
- 4. Direct staff to include the financial costs for expanding Sunday hours of operation as part of the 2022 draft operating budget.**

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. Prenne connaissance de l'accroissement des heures d'ouverture des succursales Greely et Ruth E. Dickinson effectif en janvier 2022, tel que décrit dans le présent rapport;**
- 3. Approuve l'accroissement des heures d'ouverture le dimanche effectif en 2022, tel que décrit dans le présent rapport; et,**
- 4. Dirige le personnel à inclure le coût financier pour l'accroissement des heures d'ouverture le dimanche dans l'ébauche du budget de fonctionnement de 2022.**

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.

On December 9, 2013, the OPL Board received report OPLB-2013-0125 Library of the Future Final Report and Strategic Plan Refresh. In the report, staff highlighted the results of the 2013 IMAGINE campaign, where approximately 3000 customers participated in an online discussion on the future of OPL. Two of the key barriers to accessing library services identified in the findings were: 1) "Constraints or limits in borrowing policies," and 2) "Inadequate or inconvenient hours of operation," including the need for more hours of operation on Sundays.

In the fall of 2020, the OPL Board approved the implementation of the Materials Recovery Model, thereby eliminating late fees; this helped address one of the key barriers to library use as identified in the IMAGINE campaign. The second barrier regarding inadequate or inconvenient hours of operation has been addressed

incrementally over the years, with continual reviews to ensure the needs of customers are better met.

OPL set hours of operation for its 33 branches at the time of amalgamation (2001), which included legacy hours for Sundays. In 2004, adjustments were made to hours of large-and medium-sized branches for improved consistency, and Sunday hours at the existing locations were harmonized based on the branch size. In 2005, small improvements to rural branch hours and services were made. In 2007, other minor adjustments were made to medium-sized branch hours.

An OPL user and non-user survey conducted by Phoenix Strategic Perspectives in late 2008 and presented to the Board in 2009 recommended that providing more and better hours of operation be considered to better respond to the needs of customers. In 2010, Sunday hours were harmonized so that all existing locations were open from the first Sunday after Labour Day in September to the second Sunday in June.

In 2017, OPL engaged the services of Nanos Research to obtain quantitative and qualitative data regarding public preferences for days and hours of operation. The results, further detailed in the discussion session, and next steps were shared with the Board at its October 2017 meeting in report OPLB-2017-1004 Hours of Operation Survey Results.

As per Board report OPLB-2019-1002 Update – Hours of Operation Review, a series of adjustments to hours were made in 2018 and 2019, with funding allocated via the 2019 budget process. Specifically:

- The addition of three (3) open hours of service at the Greely branch on Friday afternoons;
- The addition of three (3) open hours on Friday mornings at the Ruth E. Dickinson branch;
- The provision of uninterrupted service during the busiest and most popular times of the day at most rural branches; and,
- The expansion of hours of operation to include all Sundays in June at the existing 11 locations.

The Board also approved an evaluation process to serve as a guide for analysis, tying in demographics and performance data to support decision-making, with requests having a financial impact to be brought forward for consideration through the annual budget cycle.

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

- District branches (large): open 59 hours/week
- Community branches (medium): open between 54 and 57 hours/week
- Community branches (smaller): open between 37 and 51.5 hours/week; and,
- Rural branches: open between 12 and 41 hours/week

On Sundays, ten (10) branches and InfoService currently provide public hours of service from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., between Labour Day in September to the last Sunday in June. The branches that offer services on Sunday are geographically dispersed across District and medium Community branches: Beaverbrook, Cumberland, Greenboro, Hazeldean, Main, Nepean CentrepoinTE, North Gloucester, Ruth E. Dickinson, Orléans, and Stittsville. The purpose of this report is to seek Board approval, as further detailed in the report, to:

- a) Expand Sunday hours of operation at the existing 11 locations for improved access and more consistency in weekend service; and
- b) Direct staff to include the financial costs for the expansion of Sunday hours in the 2022 draft operating budget.

DISCUSSION

The expansion of OPL's hours of operation, especially on Sundays, has been a long sought-after customer request for more than a decade, through anecdotal qualitative requests. Customers and municipal Councillors (on behalf of their constituents) regularly request that OPL hours of operation be more consistent across branches, be extended on weekends, and that branches be open on Sundays year-round.

In 2017, OPL engaged the services of Nanos Research to obtain quantitative and qualitative data regarding public preferences for days and hours of operation. The following preferences were identified:

- Saturdays and Sundays are the most important days of the week for the library to be open;

- Morning and early afternoon are the most important times to be open on the weekend;
- Mondays and Fridays are the most important weekdays for library use;
- Mornings and evenings are the most important hours of the weekday for library use; and,
- Hours of operation should be consistent.

In developing its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, OPL engaged with the community to better understand their needs of a public library. In that process, hours of operation were identified as the most common barrier to service.

Furthermore, in March 2020, branches were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When public libraries were permitted to offer in-person services within provincially mandated guidelines, staff developed a phased approach for the gradual reopening of branches. Curbside returns and holds pick up were introduced first at the six (6) big branches, given the size of the locations, their geographic distribution across the city, and their ease of access by car or transit. Branches were added and services expanded in stages, with reduced hours of operation. Respondents to a customer survey on in-branch services in the fall of 2020 indicated, amongst other preferences, that they wanted more opening hours, in particular access to branches on Sundays.

In addition to the formal surveys completed above, many customers have reached out to InfoService and branch staff directly, requesting more hours, especially on Sundays. Customers cite a significant need for access to study spaces, computers, and the Internet, and many can only access these on Saturday and Sunday when they are not working or at school. Furthermore, customers have expressed the need for Sunday hours to spend quality time with their families at the library.

The following details the next steps to implementing enhancements to OPL's hours of operation. The enhancements address key areas of public concern, particularly consistency across branch hours, gaps of service during open hours, and better access to library services on Sundays. Staff will continue to use the evaluation criteria approved by the Board to validate any future recommended changes to hours of operation across branches and on Sundays on a yearly basis.

1) Expansion of hours of operation at Ruth E. Dickinson and Greely branches, effective January 1, 2022.

The Ruth E. Dickinson branch is currently a medium community branch that provides 57 hours of service per week to a large geographical area, with a growing population, in the southwest of the city. Friday mornings were added in 2019, making it more consistent with the hours of the five (5) district branches across the city. By reallocating staff resources, branch hours Monday to Thursday can move from the current 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. to 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The new hours will align the Ruth E. Dickinson branch with hours of operation at the five (5) district branches across the city, solidifying it as the sixth district branch, providing enhanced library service to Barrhaven, Riverside South, Manotick, Richmond, North Gower and other smaller communities in southwest Ottawa.

In 2019, branch hours at several rural locations were shifted to provide uninterrupted access during the busiest and most popular times of the day. The Greely branch, located in a growing rural area, currently provides 28 hours of service a week, and has seen an increase in use and circulation over the past years. It offers hours on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. By reallocating staff resources, hours on Wednesdays can be expanded so that the branch is open from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., offering uninterrupted service all day.

The additional hours at Ruth E. Dickinson and Greely branches can be accomplished within the provisions of the Collective Agreement, and at no cost to the organization. Because of this, the changes to these two branches fall within the authority of the CEO, as per the Delegation of Authority policy. The changes for Ruth E. Dickinson and Greely branches have been included in this report for information.

2) Expansion of Sunday hours at existing locations – target implementation date Q2 2022.

Ten (10) branches and InfoService currently provide public hours of service on Sundays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., between Labour Day in September to the last Sunday in June.

The addition of Sunday hours through to the end of June in 2019 helped address one of the more urgent gaps in Sunday services. Respondents in the Nanos Research survey also indicated that morning and early afternoon were the most important times of the weekend, and that they wanted consistent hours on Saturday and Sunday for improved

access to services for customers with families, and for those who work or go to school during the week.

To align with Saturday hours, and provide access to services on Sunday mornings, staff recommend expanding hours on Sundays to 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the existing 11 locations. The recommendation maintains hours currently offered, while adding mornings on Sundays for increased access to library services. The existing locations include the big (6) branches, ensuring expanded hours on weekends are available across the city and at larger locations that are easily accessible by car or public transit.

The annual financial impact of the additional Sunday hours at the existing locations is approximately \$800,000 based on anticipated 2022 rates, which includes funding for staff hours pre- and post-open hours.

All changes to hours detailed in this report align with the Board strategic plan priority to reduce barriers to service with the overall goal of increasing active cardholders.

Approval of the staff recommendation represents Board support for the changes. Following the practices identified in the Financial Framework, approved in February 2021, staff are bringing forward these costs in advance of the draft budget process. The financial commitment and Board approval for the expansion of hours to Sundays at existing locations will be brought forward through the 2022 budget process.

CONSULTATION

Public consultation regarding OPL hours of operation has occurred over several years and in a variety of different formats. Specific details on the public consultation are referenced throughout the report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

The recommendation in this report will improve access to in-branch services for all customers, including people with disabilities and seniors.

BOARD PRIORITIES

“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”.

BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS

The following Board-approved evaluation criteria are used when reviewing hours of operation:

Gap analysis (using Environics Analytics for demographic information)

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

Needs analysis (internal and external sources):

- Levels of activity, such as public computer usage by hour and weekday, circulation by hour, # of visits per day
- Research findings / data from external (i.e. Nanos Survey Report, Ottawa Neighbourhood Study)
- Hours of nearby branches

Public feedback

Labour market availability

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of the recommendation in this report to expand Sunday hours of operation is approximately \$800,000 based on anticipated 2022 rates of pay. The funding required is for compensation (salary, wages, and benefits), as well as incremental costs for overhead operating expenses at the 11 locations / services (i.e. utility costs).

The exact compensation-related financial impact for 2022 is dependent upon factors that have not yet been confirmed, including the effective date and the outcome of Collective Bargaining. If this recommendation is approved, staff will further refine the estimates for inclusion in the draft 2022 operating and capital budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

DISPOSITION

If approved, staff will include the financial commitment and subsequent full-time equivalent (FTE) request in the 2022 draft operating and capital budget for consideration by the Board in late November 2021.