

Date: March 10, 2017
To: Chair and Members of the Board
c.c. Paul Takala, Chief Librarian
From: Sherry Fahim, Director Digital Technology and Creation,
Tony Del Monaco, Director Finance and Facilities, and
Karen Anderson, Director, Public Service
Subject: **Rural Service Model Pilot**

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Hamilton Public Library Board approves establishing a pilot for the Rural Service Model at the Freelton branch based on the criteria established in this report.

That the Hamilton Public Library Board approves the allocation of up to \$35,000.00 from the Library Major Capital Projects Reserve (Acct #106008) for the purpose of carrying out this pilot.

That the Hamilton Public Library Board is committed to sustainably maintaining and enhancing library service in rural branches. The Library Board is committed to ensuring this model is not used to reduce overall staffing at rural branches.

That the Hamilton Public Library Board approves Bibliotheca as the authorized vendor to provide the technology for remote support and extended hours access for the Freelton Pilot.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This pilot would allocate up to \$35,000.00 from the Reserve Funds (Library Major Capital Projects Reserve Acct #106008) for the purpose of upgrading the infrastructure at Freelton branch to support the model. Improved infrastructure will include equipment to support self serve, remote support, enhanced security and access. Future annual maintenance cost of the infrastructure is projected to be under \$10,000. In the event the new model is not adopted, most of the infrastructure improvements will be a valuable investment in the long term sustainability of the branch.

Staffing libraries is a key driver of our operating budget. Under the new model we are proposing a minimum of 4 hours a day of staffed core service hours for 6 days a week. Extended service hours will be reviewed and presented for approval by the Library Board after further study and consultations. The recommendation on the proposed hours will include any changes to staff costs. If this model proves successful we should not anticipate staffing levels will be reduced at our rural branches, however, future adjustments may be needed within the 6 rural branches (BI, CA, FR, GR, LY, MH) to maintain balance.

The Freelton pilot would start sometime in the fall of 2017. The implementation would be dependent on having the additional infrastructure in place.

Bibliotheca is the Library's authorized vendor for RFID technology and services. The door access and other systems need to communicate with existing systems including our integrated library system (ILS), security gates and cameras, and self check equipment. Bibliotheca has installations of their systems in Europe and one Pilot in the United States. By partnering with Bibliotheca to bring this technology to Canada and expand the pilots to North American libraries, HPL will be able to keep costs low. In our research we have not been able to find other vendors providing a similar service to Canadian libraries.

BACKGROUND

The Hamilton Public Library is comprised of both rural and urban libraries. Library service hours are determined by the Board. As a result of long-term periods of budget pressures on municipal governments during the 1980s & 1990's and post amalgamation in 2002, reduced hours and closed days were introduced to meet budget targets. In 2002, the Board set new standardized system hours to bring consistency between the 3 former systems which reduced library hours overall by 15.6% and reduced the staff complement to meet wage parity challenges.

To keep operating costs under control, rural branches that serve smaller populations were consolidated and are currently open for shorter hours which has led to limited usage and reduced opportunities to serve these communities. In recent years, targeted efforts to enhance service hours have provided several improvements but have not met the concerns that libraries need to be open more hours to meet the needs of residents and more fully position the library as a community beacon.

The proposed Rural Service Model Pilot will use technology to extend hours to open the Freelton branch beyond when staff are present and will provide easily accessed remote staff assistance for customers.

RURAL SERVICE MODEL PURPOSE

The purpose of pursuing this model is to transform the Return on Investment (ROI) for rural branches and prevent the need for future closures and consolidations. With the new model it is expected that there will be increased usage by the community while still working within existing budget constraints. This model could also set up the possibility of serving other rural areas in the future with viable and cost effective library service. While this model holds potential and promises to be successful in extending hours in our rural branches, it is not a model that could be replicated in a suburban or urban setting.

RURAL SERVICE MODEL DESCRIPTION

The Rural Service Model Pilot will use technology to extend the hours the branch is open to customers. The branch would be staffed during core hours based on local needs. Staff would be present every day the library is open. The branch would only be open for extended hours when library staff is available to provide remote assistance via the phone or video.

Freelton is currently open 3 to 4 hours a day over 5 days with Friday and Sunday closed. Under the new model we are proposing a minimum of 4 hours a day of staffed core service hours 6 days a week. Staff at Central will provide support for the Freelton pilot.

BOARD COMMITMENT

Just as previous Library Boards provided assurances that the application of RFID technology would not be used to eliminate jobs, it is important to commit to ensuring rural staffing overall will not be reduced because of the model. Other important commitments include:

- HPL staff will provide remote support during the extended hours
- HPL staff will be present for core hours every day the library is open
- Overall, staffing levels will be maintained or potentially expanded although adjustments within the 6 rural branches may be necessary to provide balance.

While the Library Board cannot guarantee future municipal funding, this assurance would create a positive environment for investment in rural branches and will enhance services within current budget restraints. Also, increased activity levels in our rural branches will be helpful for ensuring future support.

RURAL SERVICE MODEL PILOT SCOPE

The following is in scope for the rural service model pilot at Freelton:

1. 2 way audio and video communication that supports easy and seamless connection of the customers with library staff when needed.
2. Remote intercom so library staff / security can make announcements.
3. Self-checkout and check-in to support customer self service.
4. Security gates to track customer visits and individual titles removed for proper accounting for any lost library materials. The gates' audible alarms would be turned off so errors do not create customer service issues.
5. High quality full video security camera coverage of the location, including coverage of entrances and exits, to ensure effective real-time monitoring and follow-up on investigations.
6. Automated door entry system that is remotely monitored and managed to open and close on a schedule. We are currently evaluating products to allow access to customers using their library cards during extended hours.
7. Electrical and network wiring changes to accommodate new technologies.
8. Minor facility renovations to secure non-public areas.

9. Technological infrastructure upgrades to increase bandwidth in the facility.
10. Establish metrics around material loss and library usage patterns by times of day and days of the week to assist in evaluating the impact.

MOVING FORWARD

Over the next few months we will coordinate with the Library Board Chair and Ward Councillors (14 & 15) regarding public consultations and communications about the model. The goal is to have the hours for the pilot determined by June. The implementation of the pilot is scheduled for the fall of 2017 and will be dependent on successful implementation of the infrastructure.

Staff will monitor the pilot and report any major issues to the Library Board on an ongoing basis. After 6 and 12 months, assessment reports will summarize the impacts on usage, community feedback and propose adjustments if needed. Should this model prove effective next steps would include recommending implementation at other rural locations.

APPENDIX I: CURRENT LIBRARY SERVICE HOURS FOR FREELTON AND SUPPORTING BRANCHES

Location	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Sat	Sun
Central - 55 York Blvd	9 - 9	9 - 9	9 - 9	9 - 9	9 - 6	9 - 5	1 - 5*
Freelton - 1803 Brock Rd	4 - 8	2 - 5	4 - 8	2 - 5	---	2 - 5	---
Waterdown - 163 Dundas St E.	10 - 9	10 - 9	10 - 9	10 - 9	---	10 - 5	---

*Sunday hours run from September (weekend after Labour Day) until the end of April