



Report to: Stratford Public Library Board
Meeting Date: August 4, 2020
From: Julia Merritt, CEO
Subject: Phase 3 Options

This report is brought to the Board for information.

Stage 3 of the re-opening plan allows for Libraries to fully open to the public. This includes:

- Washrooms (permitted in Stage 2)
- Computers (permitted in Stage 2)
- Browsing (returned materials still require quarantine, but in-house use does not)
- Programs, subject to physical distancing and gathering parameters
- Determining occupancy levels based on physical distancing requirements

Although washrooms and computers were permitted on June 12th, SPL was unable to take this step due to the budget reduction. As the budget reduction has concluded, SPL is proceeding with a significant expansion of services, namely: opening for computer/wifi access by appointment and extending curbside service. These timing of these changes are subject to completing the steps of training and orientating staff. The hours for both services will be:

- Mon – Thurs 10am – 8pm
- Friday – Sat 10am – 4pm

However, the staff do not have an immediate, satisfactory plan for proceeding with a physical reopening of the space. The challenges are:

1. The physical configuration of SPL does not adequately allow for physically distanced traffic flow.
2. There is insufficient staff available to provide the full suite of services/hours as well as moderate traffic and other required logistics.
3. In terms of risk assessment: given the normal volume of traffic and the complete range of ages, abilities, and vulnerabilities of those who frequent the library, it does not seem advantageous to create spaces for exposure when multiple alternate methods of service are available.

4. The physical space required, and the additional logistical work to provide curbside services does not permit the ability to offer a robust curbside service AND the regular number of service hours. A hybrid system would likely be confusing to the public but is possible.
5. Even if open, many of the core benefits associated with in-person visits will not be available: seating/extended visits, newspapers/magazines, children's activity space, etc.

Proposed Solution

SPL staff propose the following timeline for service at SPL, which focuses on a continuous increase in service while respecting the limitations noted above:

August

- the Library remain closed to the public, with evaluation to take place throughout
- Additional services:
 - o Increase in curbside hours, from 18 to 52 per week; 84% of regular hours
 - o Computer/wifi services by appointment, for the same hours as curbside
 - o Printing and photocopying
 - o ILLO services

September

- If Library still closed, additional services:
 - o MakerSpace Open Labs
 - o Programs and services added as able/appropriate, eg:
 - Extended computer appointment length
 - Video research support for students
 - Volunteer Home Delivery services

October

- Based on September evaluations

This timeline achieves the following:

1. Addresses the ongoing needs of those currently underserved in the area of internet/device connectivity.
2. Alleviates the need to monitor traffic flow through the library. With multiple floors and entrances, monitoring for the appropriate number of people will require additional staff which would subsequently reduce the number of open hours/services available.
3. Alleviates the need for the public to make decisions regarding the level of safety of the Library, as well as any confusion associated with attempting a hybrid



model of service (eg M/W/F curbside, T/Th/Sa in-person). As Stage 3 is still nascent, the additional time will allow for a smoother, if slower, return to service.

4. Allows the staff to continue to make modifications that will serve the long-term needs of the community.

Disadvantages of this approach:

1. Some conveniences are being lost: physical browsing of the collection cannot occur.
2. The public may expect SPL to re-open, and many other libraries are doing so.

Communications

Staff understand that the slower re-opening process may be upsetting to some people. The staff are committed to reviewing the situation as it evolves and regularly communicating with the City and the general public. The plan above aims to address the most critical services, admittedly sacrificing some levels of convenience or preference in deference to the physical challenges of the building and the finite staffing resources.

Based on the above assessment, SPL staff believe that the best balance of public service and public safety will be achieved by remaining closed to public entry and expanding curbside and other value-add services.