



## REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

**MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 26, 2009**

Session:	Public
Subject:	Employment Resource Centres
Prepared By:	David Winninger, Susanna Hubbard Krimmer, Margaret Mitchell,
Presented By:	Susanna Hubbard Krimmer
Purpose of Report:	For Information and Receipt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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### Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Library Board receive the attached report: ***London Public Library Business Impact Statement Re: LPL Employment Resource Centres.***

### Issue / Opportunity

In 2008, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities announced a plan to transform Employment Ontario. The goal of the ***Employment Ontario Transformation 2009*** strategy is to move towards one-stop shopping for clients. Employment Resource Centres, including those at London Public Library, could be phased out as a result of this approach. While the elimination of the LPL ERCs is not a certainty at this time, an advocacy process has been undertaken per Library Board motion L08/68.1, December 2008.

The library's role in supporting workforce capacity building is an important contribution to the achievement of the City of London ***Council Strategic Plan 2007-2010*** strategic priority: "Economic Prosperity". This strategy is defined as "Creating an environment for a resilient, diversified and inclusive economy". The stated goal is to "Accelerate the growth of a vibrant economy and foster private sector investment in the city". Therefore, LPL has also undertaken two steps involving the City of London:

- Consultation with key relevant senior staff: Jeff Fielding, Grant Hopcroft, Vic Cote, Ross Fair and Elisabeth White.
- Creation of the attached business impact statement to provide City Council and Civic Administration with information about the ***Employment Ontario Transformation 2009*** and its potential impact upon LPL and the essential employment information and referral services it provides to Londoners.

Mr. Vic Cote will be sending the business case forward to the Community and Protective Services Committee for consideration at an upcoming meeting.



February 3, 2009

## **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT – LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY**

### **RE: LPL EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRES (ERCs)**

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By enriching lives and empowering people through its core services, London Public Library (LPL) has had a long history of having a positive impact on local economic development. LPL contributes to the human side of local economic prosperity through its role in supporting workforce capacity building.

This report provides Civic Administration and City Council with information regarding the business impact of the possible elimination of London Public Library Employment Resource Centres (ERCs) one of the service delivery streams of Ontario Employment Services funded by the Province of Ontario through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU).

While the elimination of the LPL ERCs is not a certainty at this time, this report provides potential service implications and the financial impact in the event of the elimination of the funding by MTCU.

### **BUILDING WORKPLACE CAPACITY**

The City of London ***Council Strategic Plan 2007-2010***, lists "Economic Prosperity" as one of its eight strategic priorities. The strategy is defined as "Creating an environment for a resilient, diversified and inclusive economy". The stated goal is to "Accelerate the growth of a vibrant economy and foster private sector investment in the city". The City of London, ***2006 Economic Report Card***, provides information about how London is doing relative to this strategy, including the objective of "building workforce capacity".

By enriching lives and empowering people through its core services, London Public Library (LPL) has had a long history of having a positive impact on local economic development. LPL contributes to the human side of local economic prosperity through its role in supporting workforce capacity building:

- LPL literacy services support the development of the literacy skills that are essential to job readiness.
- LPL reference services empower people by connecting them to information and programs available through the library. People come to their public library, as a recognized and trusted institution, to seek vital information for career planning, job opportunities and small business management.
- LPL referral services empower people by linking them with relevant services and resources available in the broader community network of employment service providers.

Libraries also have an important place in the formal and informal network of government agencies, corporations, nonprofits, educational institutions and community organizations working together to build individual and community capacity, building on economic potential.

LPL has been a logical partner for initiatives that focus on people and quality of life. Thus, we are a part of the city-wide, network of employment service providers.

## **EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRES**

One specific way in which LPL has supported workforce capacity building, through our core service of information and referral, has been through Library Employment Resource Centres (ERCs). ERCs are located at the Central Library and five branch locations: Beacock Branch Library, Crouch Branch Library, Jalna Branch Library, Pond Mills Branch Library and Westmount Branch Library.

Customer service-oriented, knowledgeable ERC Facilitators offer the following services:

- Individualized reference assistance by specially trained staff to clients who need help with all stages of employment search such as self assessment, resume preparation, researching potential employers, accessing job sites, etc.
- Up-to-date information on a variety of relevant topics;
- Access to reference materials in a variety of formats, such as directories, brochures, books, videos/DVDs, for use at the ERC or at home;
- Access to digital information on the Internet or in databases to which the library subscribes;
- Provision of free access to Internet job search tools; and
- Access to appropriate self-serve technology tools for free: fax machines, telephones, 27 computers and appropriate software.

ERC Facilitators also refer clients to other relevant community employment and small business services. The Facilitators are knowledgeable about services available locally and can direct the clients to the agency most able to meet their specific needs. In turn, the breadth and scope of the services and resources of the library broaden the referral/outreach capability of other local workforce development agencies, contributing to a stronger community network for job readiness and worker "retooling".

Members of the public can also participate in workshops, programs and events on relevant, timely topics.

Londoners use and value their LPL ERC services:

- **Heavy Utilization:** Since 1997, over 496,600 visits have been made to LPL ERC services. In 2008, over 61,500 visits were made.
- **High Customer Satisfaction:** In customer surveys, a satisfaction rate of 80% and above has been achieved consistently over the years. Many client comments reflect the comfort felt in coming to the library to perform their job search such as "*I find this centre extremely accessible and I love the convenient location.*"
- **Valuable Referrals:** In 2008 ERC Facilitators referred 1,948 clients to other employment service agencies.
- **Rising Website Usage:** The "Searching for Work" link on the Library's website is the most popular link with a total use of 75,485 during 2008; the number of uses continues to rise.

## **BUSINESS ISSUE**

The ERCs are currently funded through partnership with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and are part of the suite of Employment Ontario Services.

## **Background**

LPL has offered ERC services since 1997. LPL initiated "Library Employment Information Services" at the Central Library in 1983 in response to community need. This need grew in the early 1990s with the recession of that time. In 1995, LPL was approached by Human Resources Development Canada to partner with them in the distribution of employment information through our branch system in order to make information more readily available to the public in an accessible and customer-service oriented setting. HRSDC choose LPL to partner with because the library is a recognized, trusted institution that has traditionally supported citizens in their efforts to do career development, seek employment or start small businesses. As well, they saw value in our numerous access points (i.e. branches) in neighbourhoods across the city and convenient service hours that exceeded walk-in service hours of government agencies.

Through labour market agreements, federal funding was transferred to the Province of Ontario in 2007. It is now under the auspices of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Currently, LPL is part of the London network of key partners in providing in accessible, high quality Employment Ontario services to our community.

## **Employment Ontario Transformation 2009**

In 2008, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities developed a plan to transform Employment Ontario (EO). As part of the "**Employment Ontario Transformation 2009**" process, a new model for Employment Services, which includes the ERCs, has been developed.

In 2008, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities announced a plan to transform Employment Ontario (EO). The goal of the **Employment Ontario Transformation 2009** strategy is to move towards one-stop shopping for clients. The ERCs could be phased out as a result of this approach. A memo to EO partners from Kevin French (Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment and Training Division) dated December 5, 2008 states: "Organizations that provide Higher Skills Training and Foundation Skills within the EO network will have a prominent role in the transformation ahead".

Public libraries, which deliver employment and information referral services and do not currently provide the full range of employment services (such as client planning and assessment), likely will not be among the organizations selected for a prominent role in the new ES model.

The memo from Kevin French also states that: "In 2009, the Ministry will begin the design and development of new service delivery guidelines and models for these services, including Literacy and Basic Skills and adult learning programs." Literacy services are part of public library core services. We know through long experience that many people come to the library to build their literacy and numeracy skills to improve their employment prospects.

LPL does not have specific information at this point in time, about the place of public libraries in the new model either in the provision of information and referral services or literacy services. We are deeply concerned that there will be a negative impact upon our ability to serve Londoners, especially in the coming economic downturn.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The annualized financial contribution to LPL of the MTCU ERC contract is \$612,000. This funding covers: wages and benefits for 10.5 full time equivalent employees; collections; computer hardware and software; public programs, workshops and events; furniture; stationary and supplies, printing/advertising; telephone and fax lines/equipment; mileage and travel. The library provides in-kind contribution of space; facility maintenance and utilities.

Should the funding for ERC's be eliminated through the **Employment Ontario Transformation 2009** model, the Library would be unable to continue the current scope and level of employment information and referral services within the LPL Operating Budget.

### **Time lines**

The current LPL contract with MTCU expires on September 30, 2009. Kevin French, in recent correspondence dated January 30, 2009, states that since his previous correspondence of December 5, 2008, MTCU has begun to take into consideration the evolving challenges presented to Employment Ontario by the current global economic situation. MTCU will continue a planned, managed and phased approach to implementation of the new service model. At the same time, MTCU will work with the EO network to ensure business continuity. In the letter, employment service providers were assured that current employment service contracts will be extended to accommodate "the kind of measured judgement that decisions going forward will require" and that the ministry will confirm and communicate the status of all organizations delivering employment services. At this time, the Library Board is waiting to hear what this will mean for the LPL ERC contract.

### **SERVICE IMPACT**

It is important to consider the response of the public and the London network of service providers to any change to the level of employment information and referral service currently provided by London Public Library.

- LPL would be unable to continue the scope and level of the current services to Londoners within the LPL Operating Budget.
- Londoners who are motivated and able to research and conduct their own independent job searches would be impacted by the reduction of library resources.
- The local community access to the employment services network for individuals through their local branch libraries would be eliminated.
- The ability of LPL and City of London to respond proactively to the needs of its citizens especially in a time of high need due to the current economic environment would be significantly reduced.
- The achievement of the City of London's **Council Strategic Plan, 2007-2010** related to economic prosperity and workforce capacity would be diminished.
- LPL's contribution to the human side of local economic prosperity through its role in supporting workforce capacity building would significantly diminish.
- LPL's level of support for other community employment partners who by working together and referring clients build individual and community capacity would be reduced.

Wednesday, February 04, 2009

Mr. Vic Cote  
General Manager of Finance & Corporate Services and Acting City Treasurer  
The Corporation of the City of London  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London, Ontario  
N6A 4L9

Dear Vic:

Please find attached a report which provides London City Council and Civic Administration with information regarding the business impact of the possible elimination of London Public Library (LPL) Employment Resource Centres (ERCs) one of the service delivery streams of Ontario Employment Services funded by the Province of Ontario through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU).

London Public Library has had a long history of having a positive impact on local economic development. LPL contributes to the human side of local economic prosperity through its role in supporting workforce capacity building. One specific way in which the LPL has supported workforce capacity building, through our core service of information and referral, has been through Library ERCs.

In 2008, the MTCU announced a plan to transform Employment Ontario. The goal of the **Employment Ontario Transformation 2009** strategy is to move towards one-stop shopping for clients. The ERCs could be phased out as a result of this approach. While the elimination of the LPL ERCs is not a certainty at this time, this report provides potential service implications and the financial impact in the event of the elimination of the funding by MTCU.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Winninger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Winninger  
Chair  
London Public Library Board

CC: Jeff Fielding - Chief Administrative Officer, City of London  
Ross Fair - General Manager of Community Services  
Elisabeth White - Manager, Employment Initiative