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## Library Board Report

To: Newmarket Public Library Board

From: Todd Kyle, C.E.O.

Date: November 18, 2020

RE: **Update on library re-opening in alignment with COVID-19 Response Framework**

### Background:

The Library continues its efforts to re-open and re-introduce services. With the introduction of the new provincial COVID-19 Response Framework, staff are working on a detailed plan to continue these efforts in alignment with the 5 levels of response, of which York Region is currently designated as Restrict.

Under the guidance of the Library Board, the Library re-opened with restricted hours and services on July 28, 2020, after roughly a month of curbside-only service. The Library has continued to expand hours and services offered in a safe manner and the current service hours are 11:00 – 7:00 Tuesday to Thursday, and 11:00 – 5:00 Friday and Saturday.

This report outlines the current status of library services in relation to the Response Framework and provides a high-level overview of the Library's preparations for next steps when the regional level changes.

### Discussion:

#### Current Public Health Measures

Under the previous Stage 3 regulations, public libraries were allowed to open as long as borrowed or consulted materials underwent a quarantine process before being borrowed or used by others. In the current Restrict zone, libraries continue to be subject to a 50-visitor limit and to requirements for screening, contact tracing, and mandatory face coverings. In addition, workplace health and safety guidelines continue to encourage that visits be limited in time duration.

#### Implementation by the Library

The Library continues to follow international best practices around the quarantining of materials, is actively promoting online borrowing of digital collections, and is providing a wide array of programming online. While the Library shelves are closed, users are able to borrow materials either by placing holds online or over the phone and are able to request staff to retrieve materials while they wait. A limited number of computers and individual study spaces are also available with reduced time limits.

The Library is currently aligning service levels and opportunities to the COVID-19 Response Framework that will guide the relaxation of restrictions and reintroduction of services, including: opening of browsing, more protected study spaces, and an eventual return to small group in-person programs and room rentals. To maintain physical distancing in the library's constrained space as these services are introduced, staff are currently procuring clear acrylic shields to protect study and meeting spaces. At this point there are no immediate plans to increase hours of service, as it has proved immensely valuable for staff to be able to pick and re-shelve materials on hold while there are no members of the public present.

### **Financial Considerations**

The Library is currently not running any paid programming. Any performer expenses for virtual programs are being provided for through much appreciated donations from community members. All other self-generated revenue streams are currently suspended, resulting in a reduction of revenue. However, due to mitigating measures taken to reduce expenditures, the Library is on track to record a significant net savings for fiscal year 2020. The Library is looking to restart targeted revenue streams before the end of the year and in line with the Provincial framework.

Revenue streams currently suspended include overdue fines, processing fees for lost items, and collection agency fees for past-due debts. The process of sending reminders for overdue items, and for billing for the replacement cost of items more than 5 weeks late, has been re-started; however, most billed items are likely to be returned without any charges paid. A bigger question will be whether the Library will once again begin charging fines as we move through the recovery phases. Many libraries across the country have taken the opportunity to reflect on the inequities created by charging fines, inequities worsened by the unequal impact of the pandemic on socio-economically disadvantaged populations. By the beginning of 2021, the Board may wish to consider whether to extend the permanent fine-free status for children's material borrowed by children, to all materials for all users.

### **Conclusion:**

The following motion is recommended:

**THAT the Library Board receive the report on library re-opening in alignment with COVID-19 Response Framework;**

**AND THAT the Library Board authorize the C.E.O. to take all actions necessary to give effect to further re-opening in alignment with the Framework as described.**