



“I would not be able to help the families that I do if we did not have our Library.”

Background

The Thunder Bay Public Library is one of Thunder Bay’s most successful and valued services. The Citizen Satisfaction Report ranks the Library #1 among all publicly provided services in the city, tied with the Fire Service with a 94% satisfaction rating. Residents of Thunder Bay choose the library over all other recreation and cultural activities with almost half a million books and materials loaned out to residents, more than 1.1 million visits and 770 programs delivered to the community in 2022 alone.

The Library is a critical partner to achieving many of the City’s strategic objectives as laid out in the Strategic Plan.

- 1. LEAD:** We are helping our city overcome legacies of racism and discrimination and actively building bridges with the Indigenous community. Our team of Indigenous librarians and technicians are cultivating strong bonds with Indigenous families as well as Indigenous service providers to create welcoming hubs of Indigenous culture at the library. A prime example is our dedicated ‘Indigenous Knowledge Centres’ (IKC) at all four library branches. Brodie Library has the most developed IKC, with a rich collection of materials from which all community members can learn about Indigenous culture, history, social systems and politics. The physical space itself has been curated by Indigenous community members with custom built furniture co-designed and manufactured in a library-led partnership between local Indigenous residents and Sheridan College students.
- 2. LEAD:** The Library has developed a special collection and education campaign around sustainability, climate change and climate adaptation. This features a wide range of books and educational materials so that community members can know what they can do in the fight against climate change and be informed citizens as part of their democratic duties.

In this Briefing Document:

- 3 Personnel Services
\$5,929,000
- 4 Rent and Financial Expenses
\$136,000
- 4 Operating Expenses
\$969,200
- 4 Other Revenues (Used to Offset Budget Request)
\$400,500

Total 2023 Operating Budget Request:
\$6,633,800



3. **GROW:** We support the creation of new business and the CEDC's Starter Company Plus program. Librarians deliver workshops to new businesses and entrepreneurs on our databases and market research tools to help them understand their customers, tailor products and services to the local market and gain access to leading market intelligence that would normally cost thousands of dollars.
4. **GROW:** The services provided by the Library align perfectly with the Community Safety and Well Being Plan adopted by the City. We contribute actively to all 6 priorities under the plan and are a major referral service to service agencies in town.
5. **RENEW:** Waverley Library and Brodie Library are major anchors in our downtown cores. They bring people from all walks of life into our downtowns to use library services which in turn encourages shopping at our local downtown businesses and increases foot traffic for retailers. Our two major library branches also serve as critical social infrastructure for our downtowns. They provide a safe and accessible space for vulnerable residents year round. This is especially critical during our long winter months where the Library is one of the few warm, free spaces available to everyone. In addition, we partner with social service providers such as Alpha Court and Canadian Mental Health Association to serve our most vulnerable in the locations that they are frequenting. This helps reduce the strain on other service providers and allows our downtown businesses to focus on serving their paying customers.
6. **SERVE:** The Library's digital services are part and parcel of the City's efforts to modernize its digital infrastructure. Our digital services are heavily used, with over 600,000 visits to our website and 300,000 engagements with our social content in 2022. Modern information systems are largely digital and the investments the Library is continuing to make in its web based services are key to the modern, dynamic and digital future of the city.

In addition to our direct contributions towards the City's Strategic Plan, we work closely with over

40 local agencies to realize the needs of Thunder Bay's residents. These partnerships include business oriented work with the CEDC (Community Economic Development Commission), PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise and AETS (Anishinabek Employment and Training Services). Social and cultural partners include the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association, Roots Community Food Centre, Alpha Court and NorWest Community Health and educational partnerships with institutional partners such as Science North, Lakehead Public Schools and Lakehead University.

Despite our central importance to a wide network of community members and dynamic local organizations, the Library's operating budget has increased by only 0.02% over the last 15 years, after accounting for inflation. This is despite rising labour costs, materials expenses, utility costs, insurance and legal fees, etc. This chronic under-funding of our operating budget has resulted in a diminishing capacity to deliver high quality programming and be situated in high quality facilities.

For example, we are now paying subscription costs for the majority of our computer software as the business models of the software industry evolve to the 'software as a service' structure. These costs simply did not exist in the same capacity in the past. Similarly, operating costs for our IT operating infrastructure, digital databases, e-books and other new types of services that are in high demand are much more expensive to maintain than traditional library services. Labour costs have been rising across all industries and attracting and retaining high quality talent is driving up the cost of doing business.

After accounting for inflation,
the Library's operating budget
has increased by just
0.02%
over the last 15 years.

A compounding factor which weighs on our operating budget is the lack of capital investment in energy efficient buildings - which drives up utility costs. For example, the majority of our windows at Brodie and Waverley Library are over 40 years old and well past their replacement date - driving up heating bills. Our lighting systems across our branches need upgrading to modern LED standards and our electrical systems are due for an overhaul, including the main panel at Brodie, which would significantly reduce our power usage. The chronic under-funding of our capital budget has resulted in higher shares of our operating budget being diverted from delivering high quality programming into utility bills.

The increase in our operating budget represents a 3.5% increase from the 2022 budget. This is a very conservative request, well below the rate of inflation.

Personnel Services

Budget Request of \$5,929,000

This represents the wages and benefits for our Library staff. There are 59 full time FTE (full time equivalent hours) and 13.5 part time FTE. Our staff do everything from delivering children's literacy programs to helping those who struggle with technology apply for jobs and housing. Library staff make democracy accessible with our election events and support the business community by hosting the Craft Revival. They are research specialists, advisors to new parents, navigators for vulnerable residents and critical social connections for seniors. The Library is where community happens and librarians are on the front line of our community building efforts.

We host 1.1 million visits per year, have loaned out over 500,000 books and educational materials and have put on more than 770 programs. The Citizen Satisfaction Survey of 2022, conducted by Ipsos, shows that the Library was tied for 1st place with the Fire Service with 94% of citizens expressing that they are very satisfied with Library services.

Our latest staff initiative involves the hiring of "Safer Spaces Technicians." These skilled staff



members have backgrounds working with the homeless and most vulnerable populations in Thunder Bay.

Many residents who struggle with mental health and addiction issues use the Library regularly. It is one of the few safe, warm and free public spaces they can be in and where they feel welcome. Accordingly, we responded by hiring specialist staff who have the expertise to effectively deal with what can sometimes be difficult patrons. They are able to direct them to social service providers and help them navigate often tenuous situations while simultaneously keeping our traditional Library users feeling safe and secure when visiting the Library. This also saves countless police hours as 911 calls from the library have dropped significantly as our 'Safer Spaces Technicians' are able to de-escalate and defuse situations and keep every Library user feeling safe and getting the service level appropriate to their needs.

Rent and Financial Expenses Budget Request of \$136,000

This represents the rent we pay for the County Park branch located inside County Fair Mall as well as some incidental expenses such as bank fees. Rent fees have been increasing at County Fair Mall, despite deterioration to the mall interior. Our County Park branch is very popular and well used by neighbourhood residents. However, the interior of the County Fair Mall is not ideal space. A higher quality location in the County Fair area would be ideal.

Operating Expenses Budget Request of \$969,200

This includes all of the operating items required to service the community. It accounts for heat, hydro and water, internet and phone service, legal fees and auditing charges. Items such as materials to run our programs, subscription-based software for our computer systems and maintenance costs for the elevators at Brodie and Waverley branches are also included here. Generally all of the operational, ongoing expenses incurred by the Library as it delivers its programming and services.

New areas of significantly increasing costs are eBook subscription services and online database subscriptions. We have experienced a huge increase in demand for digital Library services – growing by 27% over the course of the pandemic. Digital Library resources are significantly more expensive to offer to the public and so we have seen a notable increase in costs on this front.

Other Revenues Revenues Used to Offset Budget Request: \$400,500

We receive an annual lump sum grant from the Province to fund Library services in the amount of \$227,500 and we expect to raise an additional \$173,000 over the course of 2023 through private donations, sponsorships, internal Library and lease revenues and alternative sources of grant funding.

Your Library in 2022



hosted
more than
1.1 million
visits



put on over
770
programs
free to the public



loaned nearly
half a million
books & educational tools



staffed **4** branches
with **59** full-time FTE
and **13.5** part-time FTE

94%

of citizens

*are satisfied with
their Library services*