



**Thunder Bay
Public Library**

2024 CAPITAL BUDGET



Background

The Thunder Bay Public Library is one of the most foundational institutions in the fabric of local life. Residents of Thunder Bay choose the Library over all other recreation and cultural activities. We host more than 1.184 million visits per year, have loaned out over 509,339 books and educational materials and are on track to put on more than 2,198 programs in 2023 alone. The 2022 Citizen Satisfaction Survey 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.

The Library's basic mandate is to share knowledge, facilitate learning and build community. It is where many children get their first books and learn to read. It's where new parents come to learn from each other and build support systems for themselves. It's where children struggling at school get free reading support which can help boost their reading levels. It's where teens can safely hang out, off the streets and away from drugs and negative influences. It's where many bridge the digital divide and gain access to public resources that enable them to apply for jobs, search for housing and stay connected with loved ones. It's where citizens learn about their local democracy and where seniors stay active and engaged.

In 2023, your Library...



hosted
more than
1.184 million
visits



loaned over
half a million
books & educational tools



put on over
2,198
programs
free to the public

In this Briefing Document:

- 1 Building Maintenance and Repair
\$315,000
- 2 Digital Infrastructure Maintenance
\$131,300
- 3 Core Public Service Infrastructure
\$404,300
- 4 Special Project - Consulting
\$150,000

Total 2024
Capital Budget
Request:
\$1,000,600

The Library saves citizens tens of millions of dollars per year by

- offering free, loanable collection
- providing educational programs
- enabling access to services
- hosting publicly accessible space

Without the Library each person would otherwise have to pay for each and every item individually, putting it beyond the reach of the vast majority of our residents. The Library is one of the most powerful collective buying programs ever to exist and improves our quality of life in ways we simply could not attain individually.

On June 26, 2023, City Council unanimously endorsed the Library's Master Facilities Plan (MFP) and instructed the Library and City Administration to move to phase two and attain a full costing for scenarios 2 and 3 as outlined in the MFP. This capital budget reflects that direction and the tentative uncertainty that exists regarding the future of our capital infrastructure. We have focused 2024 capital expenditures on facilities and infrastructure that Council has endorsed keeping as public buildings. Council has recognized the precarious state of our buildings and the need to modernize and reform the Library's physical presence across the city. While phase two of the Facilities Plan is now well underway, we must recognize that we still must maintain basic infrastructure and safety standards at all of our existing buildings until such a time as Council finalizes their plans with regards to Library facilities.

Accordingly, this budget represents a status quo situation for the Library. It is very similar to the budget granted by Council in 2023 with a basic 5% increase in capital expenditures to account for inflation and rising prices. Any reduction in this budget would represent a cut to Library services and standards. The exception is the additional funding being requested relating to consulting fees associated with the full costing of the Master Facilities Plan as required by Council's directive of June 26, 2023.

Building Maintenance and Repair – Budget Request of \$315,000

City Council's endorsement of the Library's Master Facilities Plan on June 26, 2023 has given us tentative direction as to the future of our buildings. Continued investment in Waverley Library and Mary J.L. Black Library are the main priorities for 2024, followed by the upkeep of the rented space at County Park Library. Given the potential of divestment of Brodie Library, no major long term investments are being planned for the building in 2024. However, basic maintenance standards must be kept for Brodie Library which necessitates continued spending on building maintenance and repair. This is to ensure the safety of our patrons and staff and the functionality of the infrastructure.

Despite the approval of a new Master Facilities Plan, the Library continues to suffer from a massive infrastructure spending gap. The Library has accumulated a \$21 million infrastructure deficit over the last 17 years. This figure is derived from the City's own Long Term Capital Plan which was approved in 2007 for the Thunder Bay Public Library. In 2021, TBT Engineering was hired to do an assessment of the three Library owned buildings (Waverley, Brodie and Mary J.L. Black) to determine immediate and high priority needs. Excluding any work at Brodie Library, TBT Engineering determined that \$1,851,630 of priority work was needed over the course of 2022-2024. Of the \$1.8 million dollars in priority work, we have been allocated approximately \$600,000 from the City in 2022 and 2023. If Council fulfills our funding request for 2024, this will still result in an approximately \$900,000 shortfall from 2022-2024, excluding any work at Brodie Library.

Some examples of high priority work scheduled for 2024 includes:

Replacing the secondary switchgear at Waverley Library - this is a key electrical system for the building which is over 50 years old. Engineering reports indicate that the age and condition make it a possible fire hazard and needs replacing - \$125,000

Fire alarm and sprinkler system upgrades at Waverley Library - Our fire system has reached the end of its life and needs upgrading to maintain

the safety of library staff and patrons - \$100,000

Lighting upgrade to LED and energy efficient standards at Mary J.L. Black Library - The original lighting systems installed during construction have reached their end of life and are now far behind energy efficiency standards. This upgrade will lower utility costs and our GHG emissions as we install new energy efficiency systems - \$55,000

Ceiling and beam repairs at Mary J.L. Black Library - Determined to be priority work by TBT Engineering to ensure continued structural integrity and as preventative maintenance - \$60,000

In addition, outside of the scope of the TBT Engineering 2021 assessment, is the reconstruction of the main entrance ramp at the Waverley Library. This ramp is structurally failing and does not meet modern accessibility standards. For example, by modern accessibility and engineering standards, it is not safe for someone in a wheelchair to access the Waverley Library due to the steepness of the ramp. The cost to reconstruct the ramp to meet legally required accessibility standards is estimated to be at least \$500,000.

We have applied for a \$6 million federal GICB grant to conduct a major retrofit and renovation of Waverley Library and are anticipating a positive response. We expect to know if we were successful in the grant application by Spring 2024.

The \$315,000 requested represents a modest 5% increase from 2023 and will be allocated to priority items as laid out in our current building maintenance plan and combined with and leveraged against any grant money we can secure to further our building maintenance goals.



Digital Infrastructure Maintenance - Budget Request of \$131,300

This budget accounts for the IT hardware and software that supports our core functions. It includes items such as staff computers, network infrastructure, cloud computing systems, security hardware and technology, as well as items such as public access computers and printers. The 2024 budget includes an overhaul and rebuild of the TBPL website and a substantial update to our digital infrastructure including our file storage system.

One of the costly items in this budget are the public access computers and the infrastructure that supports this system of services. The demand for public access computers is extremely high. Nearly 15% of Thunder Bay residents live below the poverty line (low income measure). Many of these people rely on the Library for access to all things digital. Without reliable high speed internet access, one can not participate in public life whether it be applying for jobs, connecting with social service and medical providers, pursuing educational opportunities or maintaining critical relationships with family and loved ones. In a time of soaring cost of living, many cannot afford home computers and monthly internet bills. Without these essential tools, it is near impossible to gain employment, pursue education, access housing, consult with medical professionals, or stay connected with loved ones who may live in more remote areas.

The budget request of \$131,300 is a 5% increase over the previous year. This is despite a more than 5% increase in costs for digital services.

Core Public Service Infrastructure - Budget Request of \$404,300

This category includes all of the main items that Library users and the public interact with on a regular basis and which suffer from a high degree of wear and tear. This includes the purchase of all of our books, DVDs and multimedia items and is used to supplement the cost of our research databases, e-books, magazines and e-magazines which are underfunded by our operating budget.

This budget line also includes all of our office furniture, public chairs, tables and desks, maintenance equipment, signage, audio-visual equipment and microfilm readers for research needs. Fees for major consulting projects that have impacts over multiple years are also included in this budget.

Lastly, this category includes Library vehicles which are used to transport equipment, supplies and materials between branches. This facilitates easy pick up for Library users as we avoid needing to purchase duplicate supplies to serve all our branches. These vehicles allow for maintenance staff to efficiently and effectively service all 4 branches thereby reducing our need for additional staff.

For context, Thunder Bay has one of the lowest investments in Library materials per capita in the province. We are in the bottom 25th percentile, according to research gathered and reported by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council.

The budget request represents a 5% increase from 2023 after accounting for the deferral of the replacement cost of the larger cargo van, which has reached its end of life.

Special Project - Central Library Consulting Costs - Budget Request of \$150,000

As per Council's direction in the June 26, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting, the Library is proceeding with phase two of the Master Facilities Plan which includes costing of the creation of a central library. The major work involves external architectural and design consultants to produce an accurate and relevant estimate of the renovation costs for the central library branch. The costs for external consultant work on this matter are estimated to be \$150,000.



The community told us:

The Library is such a wonderful resource for us all. It's accessible to people of all ages and income levels, to people of all backgrounds. It is one of the few places where all of us come together to enjoy books, computer games, programs, and always there's a busy but helpful staff person.