
The Blue Mountains Public Library

Report To: The Blue Mountains Public Library Board
Report Name: ADM.20.20 Re-Opening Plans for BMPL Facilities
Prepared by: Dr. Sabrina Saunders, CEO

A. Recommendations

THAT this Board receive as information ADM.20.20 entitled, “Re-Opening Early Plans for BMPL Facilities”.

B. Background of Closure

On March 15, 2020 the CEO closed the BMPL facilities due to COVID-19. On March 16, 2020 TBM approved the closure of all Town owned facilities, including LE Shore (LES). At the March Board Meeting, the Board moved the Pandemic Plan draft to be considered a working document, authorizing the CEO to work within the document. The Pandemic Plan and POL-ADM.20.01 Pandemic Response policy were both approved at the April Board Meeting.

C. Provincial Orders

The provincial government ordered Public Libraries to close on March 17, 2020 as part of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Following this order, the BMPL staff instituted a curb-side pick-up which continued until the Non-Essential Worker Closure Order came into effect on March 24, 2020. In order to provide continuity of services virtually, the CEO ordered staff to work from home focusing on virtual branch content such as e-resources and online programming. On May 14, 2020 the province of Ontario announced that as of May 19 Public Libraries may offer curb-side pick-up as part of the Ontario Phase I opening plan.

D. Reopening Concerns

Prior to the provinces announcement of Phase 1 to begin May 19, 2020, the CEO, with JHSC and Managers, began considering what a Staged reopening of the BMPL would look like, and what core needs must be in place to do so safely. The following concerns are being considered as we make plans for reopening. These are not exhaustive, but do constitute the key issues in the advancement through any reopening stages.

The two foremost needs are the ability to provide a 2m physical distancing and PPE including hand sanitizer. The rate of consumption in March for hand sanitizer was 1 bottle per 8 hour day (1.5 bottles on longer days). The BMPL stock of hand sanitizer is depleted and our next shipment is scheduled to arrive in four weeks. That means BMPL must be able to have a minimum of 4 weeks of product on site prior to opening, in order to maintain a healthy workplace.

Masks for both staff and patrons entering the building will need to be acquired. Staff masks are needed for shift work, and need to be non-medical grade but suitable for extended durations. Additionally, patrons who wish to enter the building may also be required to wear a mask to enter. Other considerations are the installation of plexiglass to protect at the front desk and in staff areas as there is no ability to work a full complement of staff and maintain a 2m physical distancing.

Materials Safety has been an ongoing discussion by librarians across the continent. The CDC provided a one-hour webinar on library and museum materials handling on April 22nd which identified length of hold required for contaminated materials prior to handling. There is still ongoing debate if this is an accurate account of the safety measures required since the discussion was on paper materials and many books have plastic covers or plasticized jackets. Of course, BMPL also circulates other materials such as DVDs (plastic cases) and equipment (metal, glass and plastic) where each were described to have up to 72 hours of life cycle for the virus. This means these materials would need to be held for 3 days prior to reshelving, placing on hold cart for pick up, or recirculating to the community.

Facility cleaning, especially of high touch surfaces must be cleaned regularly. BMPL staff do not have the ability to follow patrons throughout the building, cleaning behind them. This means bathrooms, seating, computers stations, and other high touch surfaces would need to be off limits to patrons until such time as we are told differently by Health Agencies. Or have more staff/janitorial resources to maintain the building. As in March prior to closing, we can maintain specific areas such as the circulation desk and other staff areas, and will only have areas available which we can manage disinfecting on a set schedule dictated by MoL and Health Agencies.

Flow of traffic (single direction aisles) would provide a clear path for patron browsing without having to breach the physical distancing. The result of single pathways will mean the library will need to have some areas rearranged to provide proper distance at the entry and congregating areas removed. Some portions of collections may be removed to make wider walking paths and may need to be stored until later Stages of the reopening process.

When we move to seating again, such as computer seats, we will need to ensure these are not within the 2m of the walking path or each other. Therefore, more than half the PC stations will be removed to maintain the 2m physical distancing. If Council agrees to maintain the LES capital budget for new furnishings, the planned relocation of computers can occur, as well as shelf replacements. This will open areas and provide more PC seating in smaller clusters across the building, which will increase the number for available stations throughout the pandemic.

Vulnerable visitors may need to have a specific day or time available to them. Day and time will need to be further discussed with staff. This may mean alternate hours occur at facilities.

While the CDC did not provide a number of patrons per square foot, many other sectors planning to work at 25% capacity (such as restaurants). This is something libraries are currently working with the Ministry to develop. BMPL will not be able to provide 2m physical distancing while remaining at even 50% capacity. Staff will be working with library service agencies and Health Agencies to determine a suitable capacity for LES.

CHD, when it also reopens, will have a maximum capacity and will also include capacity of one group (family) at a time as there is no safe way to have multiple visitors from different households. With researchers requesting to return to CHD we are entertaining offering specific days for researchers (by appointment) with other days for museum/library guests.

Staff availability for operational hours while continuing expanding virtual services is also a concern. Face to face programming may be months or even years away. The types of programs offered virtually have been very successful but are taking significant staff time. To keep these types of programs going is not possible if we return to our regular days and hours of operation. Therefore, we may need to balance the programming needs with a limited days/hours of facility operations for browse time in the building.

E. Stages of Opening

There is no set timeline to reopening BMPL facilities and face to face services. The Premiere stated reopening the province *is a roadmap, not a calendar* and we are working within that guideline. Also stated at the May 14th provincial press conference, is that while *public libraries may reopen Phase 1 services of curb-side pick-up, it does not mean we must open, nor should we do so until we are capable of doing so safely.*

While a list of BMPL proposed “Stages” for opening are below, these are an early draft and will be further informed by protocols expected from the Ministry, MoL, AMPLO, FOPL, SOLS, and CULC in the coming weeks.

BMPL Stage 1a: Recall staff to work limited shifts at BMPL in preparation for curb-side Holds Pick-Up [One Week prior to 1b]. Wi-fi will remain available outside the building for those remaining in their cars or for seasonal workers in designated exterior areas.

BMPL Stage 1b: Holds Pick-Up instituted. Alternate hours will be in place. LES only. During this time the LES facility will be evaluated and retrofit for meeting all physical needs for Stage 2 and beyond. Modifications will occur. Wi-fi will remain available outside the building for those remaining in their cars or for seasonal workers in designated exterior areas.

BMPL Stage 1c: Holds Pick-Up may be added to CHD at some point in the future depending on length of Stage 1. During this time the CHD facility will be evaluated, and if possible, retrofit for

meeting all physical needs for Stage 2 and beyond. Modifications will occur. Wi-fi will remain available outside the CHD building for those remaining in their cars or at picnic tables.

BMPL Stage 2: Building will open to the public for materials browsing only (no seating, no gathering, no computers). Wi-fi will remain available outside the building for those remaining in their cars or for seasonal workers in designated exterior areas. Hours may be limited (per day and days per week). Number of patrons will be limited. Flow of traffic will be set throughout the building (directions) to minimize breach of physical distancing. Specific groups (seniors, vulnerable sector) may have set times/days available to visit. PPE will be required for staff. Hand sanitizer for 4 weeks will be required (2 weeks if supplies become more readily available). Patrons may be required to wear cloth masks onsite. Staffing will be minimal with most staff hours occurring from home to complete administrative work and virtual programs.

BMPL Stage 3: Limitations for gathering will be lifted and patrons may access seating and computers, providing physical distancing is maintained. No face to face programs or onsite gatherings (workshops or activities) will occur. Wi-fi will be available inside the building and remain available outside the building for those remaining in their cars or for seasonal workers in designated exterior areas. Hours may be limited (per day and days per week). Number of patrons will be limited, but may also be increased from Stage 2 if Health Agencies designate. Flow of traffic will be set throughout the building (directions) to minimize breach of physical distancing. Specific groups (seniors, vulnerable sector) may have set times/days available to visit. PPE will be required for staff. Hand sanitizer for 4 weeks will be required (2 weeks if supplies become more readily available). Patrons may be required to wear cloth masks onsite. Staffing will be minimal with most staff hours occurring from home to complete administrative work and virtual programs.

BMPL Stage 4: Further limitations are lifted and gathering in small programs (25-50) or gatherings in small spaces (Boardroom for 10 people) are permitted and encouraged. [This may be months or years away as the directed by Health Agencies] and will constitute the last stage before returning to a 2019 service model. All other recommendations will be determined once the Health Agencies state options for a gatherings and full on-site services.

F. Finalizing the Plan

The FOPL, OLA, SOLS and OLS-N are meeting with the Ministry on Friday, May 15, 2020 to discuss reopening of libraries in stages. Recommendations will follow, presumably as early as the next week (after May 19th Phase 1 onset). Additionally, CULC and AMPLO are also looking at guidelines specific to the library sizes they represent. These will be informed by Ministerial and Health Agency recommendations. Our proposed Stages may be adjust following these guideline and recommendation releases. Within the days and weeks following this anticipated information release, BMPL will finalize our plan for Staged Reopening and release potential dates for Stage 1 to the public. We do not anticipate Stage 1b occurring before Monday, June 1, 2020.

G. Survey of Other Medium Sized Ontario Public Libraries

The BMPL belongs to the Association of Medium Public Libraries in Ontario (AMPLO). As such, those in the same size class as BMPL have been sharing information since January on the pandemic, and are working in concert to develop best practices and vet reopening strategies. Most libraries in our class are considering starting the equivalent of our proposed Stage 1 between June 1 and June 15, with this continuing for no less than three months (August 31st).

Even if BMPL was informed the province was moving to Phase 2 today, we are weeks to months away from having the level of capacity required for facility reopening. MoL directives for worker health and safety are prescriptive, and modifications will need to be made to workspaces and then public spaces prior to facility opening.

Additionally, PPE and hand sanitizer ordered in March are still backordered with expected date of delivery of June 15th. Additionally, the supplies ordered on May 13th, intended to provide one month of service, have no available date of delivery. We will work through the TBM purchasing agreement to identify if they have a better supply chain, and will also investigate the provinces new PPE website, but we do not anticipate the regular supply chair required to move to BMPL's Stage 2 will be available until at least late summer.

Respectfully Submitted,

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