



Administrative Report

To: Members of Essex County Library Board

From: Robin Greenall
Chief Librarian/CEO, Essex County Library

Date: Wednesday August 25, 2021.

Subject: **Branch Service Report**

Background

Due to COVID-19, the Essex County Library has been adjusting and restructuring its operations to maximize its service offerings within the parameters of government and local health authority regulations and restrictions. Over the course of the past 18+ months, it has been both a challenge to work through the disruptions to our services delivery, and an opportunity to review how the Essex County Library offers services across our communities.

Discussion

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Essex County Library adjusted their delivery of public service to reflect the government restrictions and regulations. To maintain a consistent and sustainable deliver of service to all local municipalities the Essex County Library adjusted staffing schedules and reduced the number of service points from 14 branches to 7.

	Total number of Branches	Total number of Service Hours per week	Total number of weekly staffing- public service hours

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Pre-Covid March 16, 2020	14	432	1,003
Covid Adjustment July 2020	7	420	917

**Estimated staffing hours – vacant staffing positions due to terminations were not necessarily filled*

By reallocating staff to one facility within each municipality we were able to create small working teams to work and supply only within one site. This allowed us to maximize the number of public service hours provided to the community and minimize the potential risk of COVID-19 cross exposure between staff and service sites.

Branch	Pre -COVID Public Service Hours	Public Service Hours Adjusted
Amherstburg	49	60
LaSalle*	55	60
Tecumseh*	55	60
Lakeshore – ATRC *	55	60
Lakeshore – Stoney Point	12	
Lakeshore - Comber	12	
Lakeshore – Woodslee	17	
Leamington*	55	60

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Kingsville – Highline	49	60
Kingsville – Ruthven	12	
Kingsville – Cottam	12	
Essex Centre	49	60
Essex – McGregor	17	
Essex- Harrow	32	
TOTAL	432	420

**Sunday Service hours not included*

Adjustments to service delivery

Due to Provincial regulations and restrictions, the Essex County Library adjusted the delivery of services. The following services were supported through the 7 main library sites:

- 60 public service hours per week in each municipality
- Hours were adjusted from 9A- 8P Monday thru Thursday, 9A – 5P Friday and Saturday
- Curbside service – when required due to provincial closures of sites (March – July 2020, December 2020 July 2021)
- Direct to home mailing for all Essex County Library members, regardless of location or proximity to a library branch.
- Phone service – staff available to assist with phone inquiries and resource support
- Online services
- Online programming via social media sites and virtual meeting platforms
- Programming kits – for home use

As of July 26th, 2021, the Essex County Library opened the 7 main site locations for public access, one site per municipality. Each site provides public access to in-branch resources, WIFI and public computers, printing, and staff

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support. It is the intention for the Essex County Library to continue to increase the range of services within the limits of provincial regulations and health restrictions. Service will include:

- In- branch programming
- Community access to programming spaces
- Outreach services

Due to the recent surge of the COVID-19 case counts and the increased risk of transmission of the COVID-19 variants, the Essex County Library administration is recommending a cautious approach to increasing large group interactions or group use of library spaces. It is recommended that programming and outreach service are limited/restricted until additional staffing is secured, and all sites can independently support public service hours, before expanding program offerings.

The Essex County Library has adjusted their schedules to meet the parameters of provincial regulations to maximize service delivery. Some of these adjustments would be beneficial to the community and the organization if maintained.

Recommendation for Branch Service Adjustments

Maintain one main branch per municipality.

Recommendation is to maintain one branch per municipality at 60 hours a week as this provides a consistent level of service for each local municipality; implementation of this adjustment further provides:

- A consistent staffing structures of 2 staff for all open hours. Consistently scheduling 2 staff at each main site supports better communications within the team as staff are working alongside each other throughout the week (when possible), increase flexibility for programming opportunities as staff have a set scheduled for work, and decrease last minute scheduling emergencies for sick or sudden personal leave request.
- An additional half hour of staff scheduling prior to public service at each main branch location. The schedule adjustment of one-half hour at each main site for one staff to prepare the site and resources (holds, returned materials) is beneficial for both staff and the public.

Prepare identified sites for Enhance Community Access services

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During the 2020 and 2021 budget recommendations, the Board and Council approved the budget request to install Bibliotheca Open+ technology at the McGregor, Harrow and potentially Woodslee sites. Open+ technology will allow patrons to have access to the facilities outside of traditional library service hours. The previous recommendation and approval by the Board was to implement to increase public access to the McGregor facility (September 2021) and the Harrow facility (late November 2021). Each site would provide 20 hours of staff service and 49 hours of public access. The Woodslee branch would be considered for renovations and installation of the service during the 2022- 2023 budget year.

Branch	Pre -COVID Public Service Hours	Post Covid Public Service Hours	Weekly public service staffing hours
Amherstburg	49	60	121
LaSalle*	55	60	121
Tecumseh*	55	60	121
Lakeshore – ATRC *	55	60	121
Lakeshore – Stoney Point	12		
Lakeshore - Comber	12		
Lakeshore – Woodslee	17	49*	20
Leamington*	55	60	191
Kingsville – Highline	49	60	121
Kingsville – Ruthven	12		

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Kingsville – Cottam	12		
Essex Centre	49	60	121
Essex – McGregor	17	49	20
Essex- Harrow	32	49	20
TOTAL	432	567	977

The above adjustments are within the traditional staffing hours for the Essex County Library. However, the staffing hours would exceed the budgetary limits if the four remaining branches were to return to their traditional hours and service delivery model.

The traditional small branch facilities operate in the communities of Ruthven, Cottam, Stoney Point and Comber. Each site operated 12 public service hours per week. Without readjusting the hours of service at the 7 main sites, returning the 12 branches to their traditional hours of service would have budgetary impact of staffing hours.

To maintain budgetary limitations for staffing, the following options are made for the board's consideration.

Option One: return the main branches to their traditional hours of service.

This option would return the seven main sites to the traditional hours of service (See chart 1 above). It would proceed with the Enhanced Community Access at McGregor, Harrow and eventually Woodslee. This option would be supportive of the traditional budget; however, it may limit the ability for Essex County Library to expand or enhance service options, as the traditional schedule supports a -in branch service, instead of expanding services through outreach opportunities.

Benefit- this option supports traditional service levels and expectations

Impact – not an effective use of staffing time and effort.

Upon review of the Essex County Library circulation and patron membership counts would identify locations with higher circulation and patron use. These

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branches would be best positioned to act as the primary branch within each community. Providing consistent hours at each of these locations would allow patrons broader hours of access to resources and services.

Branch Patron Circulation for the 2017 – 2020 years

Branch	Year	Annual Circulation*	Annual Circ per service hour
Amherstburg	2017	46,532	20.7
	2018	42,353	17.2
	2019	49,546	20.2
	2020	16,818	11.1
	2021	13,596	7.0
Comber	2017	3,623	6.5
	2018	3,445	5.7
	2019	5,318	8.8
	2020	935	7.9
Cottam	2017	3,616	6.5
	2018	3,470	5.7
	2019	3,970	6.6

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	2020	985	8.2
Essex	2017	50,247	22.3
	2018	52,340	21.3
	2019	49,613	20.2
	2020	22,442	14.9
	2021	16,607	8.6
Harrow	2017	24,036	16.3
	2018	25,291	15.8
	2019	23,651	14.8
	2020	5,073	15.8
Kingsville-Highline	2017	53,354	23.7
	2018	59,821	24.4
	2019	60,217	24.6
	2020	30,689	20.3
	2021	18,574	9.7
Lakeshore – ATRC	2017	43,756	22.6

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	2018	50,602	24.1
	2019	46,898	22.3
	2020	18,784	11.9
	2021	12,704	6.6
LaSalle	2017	86,683	34.2
	2018	100,788	36.6
	2019	102,021	37.1
	2020	40,826	26.0
	2021	41,356	21.5
Leamington	2017	67,204	29.6
	2018	64,692	23.5
	2019	62,926	22.9
	2020	33,114	21.1
	2021	13,924	7.2
McGregor	2017	10,901	13.9
	2018	10,291	12.1

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	2019	9,501	11.2
	2020	1,554	9.1
Ruthven	2017	3,734	6.7
	2018	3,996	6.6
	2019	4,153	6.9
	2020	925	7.7
Stoney Point**	2017	7,596	9.7
	2018	7,765	9.1
	2019	6,090	7.7
	2020	1,002	8.3
Tecumseh	2017	71,079	28.1
	2018	82,686	30.1
	2019	78,801	28.65
	2020	30,843	19.6
	2021	19,215	10.0
Woodslee	2017	8,513	10.8

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	2018	9,129	10.7
	2019	8,891	10.4
	2020	1,700	10

Circulation of patron and service use only (minus staffing use)** Stoney Point hours of operation were 17 hours per week for the years 2017, 2018, and 2019 and 12 hours per week for 2021*

Reviewing of circulation statistics for all Essex County Library Branch notes the concentration of in-branch resource use and demand.

Patron/ membership usage counts

Branch	Number of Assigned Users	Number of Unique Users 2017	Number of Unique Users 2018	Number of Unique Users 2019	Number of Unique Users 2020
Amherstburg	9,341	1,717	1,665	1,827	949
Comber	913	129	142	138	68
Cottam	874	193	157	152	104
Essex	6,729	1,449	1,527	1,504	883
Harrow	4,010	710	716	729	433
Kingsville- Highline	8,138	1,981	2,119	2,133	1,276
Lakeshore- ATRC	8,671	2,043	2,108	2,099	1,105
LaSalle	16,851	3,685	3,877	3,854	2,314

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Leamington	12,350	2,138	2,067	2,366	1,416
McGregor	1,284	289	290	278	131
Ruthven	707	104	118	110	73
Stoney Point	1,125	297	296	274	137
Tecumseh	12,364	2,535	2,665	2,682	1,615
Woodslee	1,020	243	242	228	137

Review of patron membership assigned to each branch locations and number of unique users who circulated material within a year.

It would be recommended that the Board consider to not return to a traditional model of service hours and adjust the service hours at one branch within each municipality to support the higher demand of resource use. These branches being Amherstburg, Essex Centre, Kingsville, LaSalle, Lakeshore – ATRC, Leamington, and Tecumseh.

Option 2 Change service delivery methods

To support the adjustment of seven main branches and 3 enhanced service locations, the board may consider adjusting the service provided at the 4 remaining locations to a programming and outreach model

This recommendation would propose adjusting library service delivery for the Ruthven, Cottam, Stoney Point and the Comber communities, the following services would be provided:

- Programming (Storytime, book clubs, STEM programs....) at designated community centers (where available)
- Direct to home mailing of resources (return included)
- Outreach – *partnering* with local schools, organization to delivery program or service to their meeting locations. Attending local events and festivals

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- Community partnerships – identify community partners that could support patrons access to neighbouring library facilities through transportation supports
- Designated book mobile dates

Benefits – the Essex County library would maintain the delivery of library services within the identified communities in a cost-efficient manner.

The adjustment of service with the closure of branches would be an estimated operating cost saving of \$67,264.97.

Branch	Utilities	Janitorial	Security	Internet	Equipment
Ruthven	\$3,410.45	\$8,400.00	\$377.82	\$3,663.36	\$1,500.00
Stoney Point#	\$3,121.32	\$8,400.00	\$377.82	\$3,663.36	\$1,500.00
Cottam	\$2,572.25	\$8,400.00	\$377.82	\$3,663.36	\$1,500.00
Comber	\$2,396.23	\$8,400.00	\$377.82	\$3,663.36	\$1,500.00
TOTAL	\$11,500.25	\$33,600.00	\$1,511.28	\$14,653.44	\$6,000.00

**Above table does not include estimated annual staffing costs, annual resource capital costs or incident costs.*

Implications – While the Essex County Library would maintain service delivery and programming within each of the communities. this option recommends the closure of the local facility which could have emotional implications for community residents as a perceived loss of service.

Option 3 – Proposed changes to site use and purpose.

This option would recommend that the Essex County Library approach the Councils of the municipalities of Kingsville and Lakeshore to request that the site be changed from a single use library space to a multi-use community space. This option would allow the library to adjust their service delivery model and repurpose the site facility.

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To proceed with this option the Essex County Library would be seeking a commitment from municipal partners to renovate the existing spaces for community use. Renovations of each space will need to address the following concerns:

- Address accessibility issues such as main foyers and washrooms
- General appearance which may include renovating and updating floor coverings, wall coverings and lighting

With this option the Board and Municipalities would assess each individual branch as a potential site by assessing any safety concerns, the cost renovations, the cost to install equipment, and the cost-of-service delivery.

In turn the Essex County Library would be supporting the repurposing of the space by committing funds to:

- Install security and access equipment (card readers, cameras, patron kiosk or lending lockers)
- Maintain, and where possible upgrade internet and WIFI connections.
- Update furnishings and equipment for community use.

The estimated cost per site for the Essex County Library would be approximately \$150,000

This option would create a community space whereby a portion of the day/ week would be available for:

- Local organizations and agencies to have access to register and book for their use
- Community groups to use for small meetings
- Local agencies and service providers to use for private interviews and client meetings.
- Local Municipality to use for program and service delivery
- Essex County Library to use for programming delivery

In addition, a portion of the day/ week would be scheduled and dedicated for library members to access the space for self-supported WIFI service and resource pick up.

Branch	Pre -COVID Public Service Hours	Post Covid Public Service Hours	Weekly public service staffing hours

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Amherstburg	49	60	121
LaSalle*	55	60	121
Tecumseh*	55	60	121
Lakeshore – ATRC *	55	60	121
Lakeshore – Stoney Point	12	Est. 40	Est.3-5
Lakeshore - Comber	12	Est. 40	Est.3-5
Lakeshore – Woodslee	17	49*	20
Leamington*	55	60	191
Kingsville – Highline	49	60	121
Kingsville – Ruthven	12	Est. 40	Est. 3-5
Kingsville – Cottam	12	Est. 40	Est. 3- 5
Essex Centre	49	60	121
Essex – McGregor	17	49	20
Essex- Harrow	32	49	20
TOTAL	432	727	989 - 997

Benefits - the traditional 12-hour facility will be converted from a single use space to a multi- use facility. The community would have access to a

space for meetings, interviews, and programming. The local municipality would have access to the space for programming or service needs. The library would maintain presence in the community through resource access, programming and WIFI services.

Expanding the service options and installing access equipment provides time for the municipality and the Essex County Library to review site usage, for example an assessment period of 5-year time frame (average life span of the equipment). During this time a fulsome assessment of how the community uses the space can be recorded. This data can support the municipality and the Essex County Library how to adjust/ change the service options depending on overall demand or community use.

Implications: risk of upfront cost for renovations do not translate to increased use. Not all sites maybe suitable for service adjustments.

Covid-19 has been created an environment that has been disruptive to our traditional services and an opportunity to explore service alternatives. During this time of constant service disruptions and adjustments, few complaints have been received regarding branch closures. Of the complaints received, a majority of those were from individual community members focused on the Harrow branch, and timelines for its opening. As we continue to be creative in how we maintain a connection with our members across the County, this is the ideal time to consider adjustments as to how we deliver services to our community

Recommendation

The following recommendations are presented to the Essex County Library Board for their consideration and approval.

1. That the Essex County Library Board approve the permanent increase and adjustment of hours for the following sites: Amherstburg, Essex Centre, Kingsville – Highline, LaSalle, Lakeshore – ATRC, Leamington, and Tecumseh to 60 hours week.
2. That the Essex County Library Board approve the adjustment of services for the community of Cottam, Ruthven, Stoney Point and Comber and submit a report being drafted to the Local Municipal Councils of Kingsville and Lakeshore requesting their commitment to a partnership and renovations of their community spaces for the 2022 year. (Option 3). If the local Councils are not able to support renovation and development of

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a shared community space, that the Board would adjust their service delivery in the respective community to an outreach and programming model (Option 2).

Submitted by

Robin Greenall

Robin Greenall
Chief Librarian/ CEO