



Date: February 19, 2025
To: Chair and Members of the Library Board
From: Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian
Subject: **Letter from the Board - 2025 Direction (1st Review)**

Each year, the Library Board issues a letter to provide Staff with updates and context for the year ahead. While Strategic Plans are typically approved every four years, this letter offers a chance to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of the current year. The Board approved the current [Strategic Plan](#)ⁱ in May 2023. This letter also serves to update and supplement the operating budget submission and the [Multi-Year Business Plan](#)ⁱⁱ.

HPL has a lot to be proud of in how we, as an organization, have adapted to the disruption of the pandemic and the increasing crises of homelessness, mental health and addictions. These crises have impacted our operations. During the last several years, we have focused on aligning our work to be as impactful as we can within our mandate as a public library. For example, we have used many staff departures during the pandemic to build back service hours that are significantly expanded and more consistent. This was an important step to address barriers to using the Library that were identified in ongoing feedback and our Community Surveys.

We commence 2025 with every expectation that this year, we will be able to resume the momentum we had been experiencing before the cyber disruption. That disruption had a significant impact on usage. Sincere thanks go out to Staff for all their work responding to the crisis and restoring services. Although most public-facing services have been rebuilt more securely, much more work needs to be done to complete the process of rebuilding our information technology (IT) infrastructure. At the same time, we also work with the City on building new enterprise systems.

The pandemic, the declared crises and the cyber disruption have impacted our operations and business planning processes. With services now restored, we need to put extra focus this year on staff and organizational resilience. That resilience is the best way we can prepare to support Hamiltonians in future challenges we face as a City. With economic uncertainty ahead and a possible protracted trade dispute impacting residents, we need to be ready to support learning, access and skills development.

LIBRARY SERVICES

This year, we will focus on maintaining existing library service hours and study halls. We will continue to grow library programs within existing capacity and work with aligned partners to advance shared goals sustainably. Our focus on enhancing effectiveness

and resiliency in 2025 will necessarily look at how Library Members interact with us to use our services. As an organization we are committed to ensuring that the services and technology we deploy are *Useful* (solve a problem, advance a goal), are *Usable* (simple, intuitive, conform to standards) and *Used* (*people utilize it*). As we optimize our services, ensuring we are effectively presenting and marketing our services will be an ongoing effort.

ENHANCING RESILIENCY AND COLLECTIVE WELLNESS

As a public library, our mandate and strategic direction challenges us to meet individuals, families and the community's current challenges. This means that while our core mission and values as a library do not change, what services we deliver and how we deliver them continue to evolve over time. To continue to advance City priorities and effectively provide library service, we need to dedicate significant focus and effort in 2025 on strengthening our organizational capacity. As we focus on improving our effectiveness as a public library, we will continue to maintain a multi-faceted approach to enhancing safety and security in our spaces consistent with our values. We will continue to engage with trusted partners to bring support to our spaces based on need.

Information Technology Infrastructure

We will continue collaborating with the City to advance the segregation of our network infrastructure. Our focus will remain on enhancing IT security, improving service performance, and upgrading our infrastructure to meet modern IT standards. This includes deploying a robust, new WiFi network to equip HPL staff with the tools needed for a mobile-ready workplace. Additionally, the new WiFi solution will enable HPL to provide members with a secure network supported by user authentication. To ensure optimal performance, we will closely monitor IT network visibility and functionality. As we rely on the City's enterprise financial and human resources systems, we will actively support the City's implementation efforts. This collaboration will allow us to maintain accountability to the Library Board and ensure transparency with the City.

Service Planning and Monitoring

To deliver excellent service to our community and to make smart investments in existing and new facilities, we must leverage data-driven decision-making. As we upgrade our systems for improved performance and security, it's crucial to implement robust tracking mechanisms and generate meaningful metrics. These metrics should be actively monitored by management and effectively reported to the Library Board and funders.

Our pandemic response demonstrated the value of adaptive tracking, quickly shifting from monthly to weekly data collection to manage compliance and staff workloads. Following the cyber disruption, we've restored our tracking systems and are now positioned to conduct a strategic review of our data practices. By analyzing the data, we will be able to identify service improvement opportunities, align offerings with current community needs, optimize resource allocation and develop more responsive and

targeted programs.

Improving Workflows and Processes

With all the changes that have happened over the last several years, often driven by external factors, we need to work with Library staff to ensure processes and systems are optimized. Ensuring the tasks/processes we engage in add value to members of the community is an important component of increasing our impact. Staff learning and development has been a major focus of HPL's for years. We need to actively engage staff in reviewing processes and procedures, making sure services and technology are optimized so staff can focus on program delivery and supporting library members.

Programs and Partnerships

Library-led programs for people of all ages are in high demand. Within existing capacity, we will continue to offer programs that provide people with positive learning and community activity. We will continue to work with partners to complement our library-led programs and to connect residents with services and support. HPL will continue to strive to animate our spaces with shared learning opportunities and free access to performances.

Facilities Master Plan and Sustainability

In 2025, we will focus on working with the Library Board to update our Facilities Master Plan to guide us to a more sustainable and impactful future. That will include exploring past successes, current trends, and future uncertainties. Internally, a new staff Sustainability Steering Committee has been established and will begin developing a framework to integrate sustainability into our operations more systematically. Additionally, we will continue to work on the Bookmobile RFP, with plans to go to market in the last quarter of 2025. Collaborating closely with City Fleet, we are exploring more sustainable options for replacing our aging bookmobiles, including the possibility of electric or partially electric vehicles to serve our communities better.

ⁱ https://www.hpl.ca/sites/default/files/23-05-StrategicPlan_Approved.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ <https://granicus-azmop-peak.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/uploads/attachment/pdf/9267/MultiBusinessPlanReport2024-2ndReview.pdf>