HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 8
Budget Committee
February 26, 2025

TO:	Chair and Members of Budget Committee (Standing Committee of the Whole on Budget)
SUBMITTED BY:	Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE:	February 13, 2025
SUBJECT:	**Proposed 2025/26 Halifax Public Libraries Budget and Business Plan**

ORIGIN

As per Administrative Order 1 and the Budget and Business Plan consultation schedule presented to Regional Council on November 19, 2024, staff are required to present the draft 2025/26 Business Unit Budget and Business Plans to the Budget Committee for review and discussion prior to consideration by Regional Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Budget Committee direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Incorporate the Halifax Public Libraries proposed 2025/26 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation, into the Draft 2025/26 Operating Budget.

BACKGROUND

On January 12, 2021, Regional Council adopted a Strategic Planning Framework, establishing priority outcomes for their term, and directed staff to develop plans to advance these outcomes.

As part of the design of the 2025/26 Budget and Business Plan development process, the Budget Committee is reviewing each business unit's budget and proposed plans, in advance of completing detailed municipal Budget and Business Plan preparation.

DISCUSSION

Staff has prepared the proposed 2025/26 Halifax Public Libraries Budget and Business Plan consistent with the 2021- 2025 Strategic Priorities Plan approved on December 1, 2020.

Following direction from the Budget Committee, staff will proceed to prepare the detailed Budgets and Business Plans for inclusion in the proposed 2025/26 HRM Budget and Business Plan documents to be presented to Regional Council's Budget Committee, as per the process and schedule approved on November 19, 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations in this report will lead to the development of a proposed 2025/26 Budget. There are no immediate financial implications from this recommendation. The broader financial implications will be discussed and debated as the budget is developed in more detail.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Although there is no immediate risk associated with this report, there may be risks associated with individual decisions during the budget debate that could favour short-term results over longer-term strategic outcomes. Individual decisions made during budget debate will, however, be considered for both short- and long-term impacts to levels of service, asset condition, and cost.

In addition, the administration seeks to reduce these risks in three ways: by providing Regional Council with several fiscal options to assist in the achievement of longer-term strategic outcomes, by assessing both corporate and capital project risk, and by providing the opportunity to draw Regional Council's attention to project or program related risks when reports are presented for consideration.

Enterprise risks are reviewed as part of the strategic planning process and mitigating initiatives incorporated into business planning activities to reduce or eliminate the impact and likelihood of the risk occurring.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The 2025/26 budget process seeks to solicit public comment by inviting members of the public to provide feedback prior to each business unit budget and business plan presentation.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Budget Committee could choose to amend the Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the supporting presentation through specific motion and direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare the Budget and Business Plan for inclusion in the proposed 2025/26 HRM Budget and Business Plan documents.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Charter, section 35 (1) The Chief Administrative Officer shall (b) ensure that an annual budget is prepared and submitted to the Council.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – 2025/26 Halifax Public Libraries Proposed Budget and Business Plan

Attachment 2 – Halifax Public Libraries Collection Investment Staff Report, November 15, 2023
Attachment 3 – 2025/26 Halifax Public Libraries Budget and Business Plan Presentation

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Mairead Barry, Director Strategy, Halifax Public Libraries
Financial Approval by: Jerry Blackwood, CFO, Executive Director of Finance & Asset Management
Report Approved by: Asa Kachan, CEO & Chief Librarian, Halifax Public Libraries

HALIFAX

HALIFAX PUBLIC LIBRARIES

2025/26 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN

MISSION REFLECTING OUR COMMUNITY, WE ARE A RESOURCE FOR EVERYONE AND A LAUNCH POINT FOR GROWTH.

READING THE BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN

Council and Administrative Priorities are represented within the *Budget and Business Plan* using the legend below. Estimated Completion (EST) applies to deliverables carried over from previous business plans and is the estimated date of completion. Target (T) applies to new deliverables and is the original target completion date.

Council Priorities	
	Prosperous Economy
	Communities
	Integrated Mobility
	Environment

Administrative Priorities	
	Responsible Administration
	Our People
	Service Excellence

LENSES

Lenses enable the municipality to consider a problem, decision, or action to be undertaken from different points of view. They highlight foundational guideposts that will always be a priority for the municipality. The municipality has adopted the following lenses through which business unit work is planned.

Environment and Climate Action (ENV)	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA)	Risk Management / Continuous Improvement (RM/CI)
The municipality recognizes that its success in addressing the climate crisis and protecting the environment (implementing HalifACT) requires the integration of environment and climate action in all corporate and community planning, policies, infrastructure, investments, and services. In its decision-making, the municipality prioritizes environment and climate action to achieve net-zero emissions, safeguard communities and infrastructure, and protect ecosystems.	The municipality recognizes that to enable success, it must value, understand, and draw on the diverse views, ideas, lived experiences, skills, and knowledge of its residents and employees. In its decision-making, the municipality applies an EDIA lens to build more inclusive communities, programs, and services, and to actively remove systemic barriers. This approach ensures that all voices are considered in shaping the future, promoting fairness and access for everyone.	The municipality recognizes that success requires evidence-based decision-making and effective management of operational and strategic risks. In its decision-making, the municipality applies a RM/CI lens to identify, assess, and appropriately manage risks, while also driving continuous improvement in processes and service delivery. This approach ensures the organization remains adaptable, resilient, and focused on enhancing overall performance.

The municipality ensures consistent use of the lenses in its operations and planning. The following are examples of some applications of the lenses in the budget and business plan.

Environment and Climate Action

- Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- Public Safety
- Building Literacy
- Indigenous Spaces
- Local and Family History Collections
- Launch of Strategic Plan
- Respectful Workplace Policy

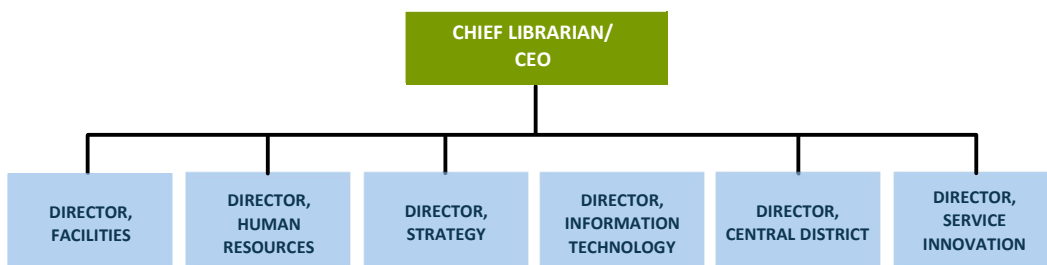### Risk Management / Continuous Improvement

- Internal Communications
- Library Access

OVERVIEW

Halifax Public Libraries (the Library) engages communities and the people who live in them – encouraging participation, facilitating connections, and providing solutions in an ever-changing world. Halifax Public Libraries provides equitable and open access to services to all residents of Halifax Regional Municipality (the municipality). Under the direction of the Halifax Regional Library Board, the Library provides learning, social, and engagement opportunities through a network of 14 branches, two community offices, a strong online presence, community engagement, borrow by mail, and home delivery services. Halifax Public Libraries exists to support collective growth in our community.

Halifax Public Libraries supports Regional Council and Administrative priorities through community building, offering equitable access to services, and supporting the economic growth of our community. Details on how the Library supports Regional Council priorities can be found in the Library's Strategic Plan and the municipality's Strategic Priorities Plan.

ORGANIZATION CHART

CHIEF LIBRARIAN/ CEO

DIRECTOR, FACILITIES

DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES

DIRECTOR, STRATEGY

DIRECTOR, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

DIRECTOR, CENTRAL DISTRICT

DIRECTOR, SERVICE INNOVATION

FULL TIME EQUIVALENT COUNTS

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Change Details		
Approved 2024/25 FTEs:		333.0
Net Positions:		
Position	Rationale	Count
Service Advisors	Operational Cost of Capital	4.0
Transferred Positions		
Net Transfer Positions		
Total Changes		4.0
Total Budgeted 2025/26 FTEs		**337.0**

Includes full, part-time, and permanent positions.
Some opening balances have been restated to be consistent with how an FTE is counted.

SUCCESSES

Successes from the 2024/25 fiscal year to date include:

- **Halifax Central Library Rick Hansen Gold Certification.** In August 2024 Halifax Central Library acheived "Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certified Gold", the top accessibility rating possible under the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program and the highest level of accessibility possible for the built environment. Halifax Central Library is one of only two libraries in Canada to receive the gold certification.
- **Upper Musquodoboit Community Wi-Fi.** Successfully introduced free public Wi-Fi at the Upper Musquodoboit Community Centre, improving connectivity for a community with limited access to Wi-Fi.
- **Food Distribution.** With a provincial government grant of $400,000, the Library successfully distributed food to help address food insecurity in our communities.
- **Keshen Goodman Reopening.** In July of 2024, Keshen Goodman Library reopened after an extensive renovation which expanded community space, improved accessibility, and offers a refreshed, modernized space for the community.
- **Celebrating Ten Years of Service.** December 2024 marked the ten year anniversary of Halifax Central Library opening its doors to the community, reflecting a decade of community impact, growth, and excellence in public services.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Initiative	Description	Priority & Outcome
Community-Focused Service Delivery	Halifax Public Libraries has a Community-Focused Service Delivery strategy to meet various customer needs and will include building literacy, community leadership, and civic engagement.	Involved Communities

Initiative	Description	Priority & Outcome
Public Safety	The Library will demonstrate and champion approaches to public safety that prioritize accessible public spaces and social inclusion, reduce isolation, build community, and respond to emergencies.	Safe Communities
Civic Engagement	The Library will encourage and provide opportunities for people to contribute to their communities and engage with issues that are important to them.	Involved Communities
Community Leadership	The Library will model excellence in community engagement, leveraging community partnership for public good.	Involved Communities
Building Literacy	The library will undertake initiatives to improve language literacy with a focus on youth and newcomers.	Involved Communities
Sustainable and Resilient Communities	The Library will work to help build sustainable and resilient communities.	Climate Resilience
Social Isolation	Understanding the negative health impacts of social isolation, the Library will build services and programs that engage community members with one another and reduce social isolation.	Inclusive Communities
Library Infrastructure	With major population growth and new neighborhood development within the municipality, the Library will identify locations for expansion of service.	Involved Communities

BUDGET

SERVICE AREA BUDGET OVERVIEW

Service Area	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Budget	2024/25 Projections	2025/26 Budget	Δ 24/25 Budget	Δ %
Administrative Services	(2,866,291)	(2,475,000)	(3,531,200)	(4,130,100)	(1,655,100)	66.9
Information Technology/Collecti	7,140,058	7,574,900	7,574,900	8,612,800	1,037,900	13.7
Branches/Public Services	19,184,652	19,757,400	20,013,600	23,789,700	4,032,300	20.4
Eng. Lang. Learning/Literacy		226,000	226,000	182,300	(43,700)	(19.3)
Library Restricted Funds	(159,948)				-	-
Capital Transactions	241,582				-	-
Net Total	**$ 23,540,053**	**$ 25,083,300**	**$24,283,300**	**$ 28,454,700**	**$ 3,371,400**	**13.4**

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE AND REVENUE

Expenditures	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Budget	2024/25 Projections	2025/26 Budget	Δ 24/25 Budget	Δ %
Compensation and Benefits	$ 20,383,340	$ 21,769,300	$ 20,969,300	$ 24,584,600	$ 2,815,300	12.9
Office	752,863	752,300	752,300	790,700	38,400	5.1
External Services	1,300,916	1,344,000	1,438,500	1,468,000	124,000	9.2
Supplies	55,131	88,600	88,600	88,600	-	-
Building Costs	1,583,240	1,524,800	1,672,500	1,526,600	1,800	0.1
Equipment & Communications	265,495	491,500	491,500	511,500	20,000	4.1
Vehicle Expense	38	-	-	-	-	-
Other Goods & Services	5,271,549	5,029,100	5,029,100	5,660,200	631,100	12.5
Interdepartmental	27,193	33,200	33,200	33,200	-	-
Other Fiscal	772,649	(2,400)	(2,400)	(2,400)	-	-
Total Expenditures	**30,412,414**	**31,030,400**	**30,472,600**	**34,661,000**	**3,630,600**	**11.7**

Revenues	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Budget	2024/25 Projections	2025/26 Budget	Δ 24/25 Budget	Δ %
Transfers from other Gov'ts	$ (5,691,900)	$ (5,274,300)	$ (5,530,500)	$ (5,530,500)	$ (256,200)	4.9
Fee Revenues	(389,827)	(368,300)	(354,300)	(405,300)	(37,000)	10.0
Other Revenue	(790,634)	(304,500)	(304,500)	(270,500)	34,000	(11.2)
Total Revenues	**(6,872,361)**	**(5,947,100)**	**(6,189,300)**	**(6,206,300)**	**(259,200)**	**4.4**
Net Total	**$ 23,540,053**	**$ 25,083,300**	**$ 24,283,300**	**$ 28,454,700**	**$ 3,371,400**	**13.4**

OPERATING – SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Change Description / Service Impact	Amount
Approved 2024/25 Budget	$ 25,083,300
Service Enhancements	
Library collections investment as per Halifax Regional Council direction	290,800
Inflation/Service Pressures	
Building maintenance increases	50,000
Security	10,000
Printing/copying service	20,000
Contractual Increases	
Collective Agreement & Compensation Changes	2,815,300
Janitorial	121,000
Facility Rentals (rental increases & space increase)	323,500
Revenue Changes	
Net Revenue changes	(3,000)
Anticipated provincial government bridge funding	(256,200)
Total Changes	$ 3,371,400
2025/26 Budget	**$ 28,454,700**

Service Enhancements

- **Library collections investment as per Halifax Regional Council direction.** Additional investment to improve library physical and digital materials as per Halifax Regional Council direction of December 12, 2023. The Halifax Public Libraries Collection Investment Staff Report is attached to the proposed budget and business plan recommendation report.

SERVICE AREA PLANS

ACCESS SERVICES

Access Services provides the infrastructure of materials and technology to facilitate the delivery of library service throughout the region. This includes deployment and support of public access computers and free public Wi-Fi, management of a specialized integrated library system – including a searchable database of all library materials, development of a high-quality collection of print and electronic materials, and the accompanying systems to support the circulation of these materials.

Services Delivered

Collection Management. This department is responsible for the selection and acquisition of quality materials for the Library collection in both physical and digital formats, and for providing easy access to that collection via the catalogue. This department is also responsible for movement of the collection among all branches, ensuring that the collection is accessible in a timely fashion for all residents of the municipality.

Information Technology. This service is responsible for implementing and supporting system-wide public use and staff computer hardware and software, managing the information technology infrastructure including the integrated Library system, and the provision of Wi-Fi in each of the Library's locations.

Service Delivery Performance Measures

Performance Measures	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual [1]	2024/25 Projected [1]	2025/26 Projected
Total annual wireless connections	6,979,600	6,459,720	5,887,824	6,005,580
Public use computer bookings	363,555	401,004	422,960	431,419
Annual non-electronic circulation [2]	3,035,121	2,789,859	2,752,412	2,697,363
Annual non-electronic circulation per capita	6.13	5.62	5.59	5.48
Annual electronic circulation [3]	1,607,096	1,950,400	2,157,058	2,157,058
Annual electronic circulation per capita	3.34	3.93	4.38	4.38
Annual dollar amount spent on electronic library materials per capita	$2.40	$3.74	$3.27	$3.27
Materials expenditures per capita	$5.19	$6.29	$6.26	$6.00

Notes:
1) Starting August 2023, Keshen Goodman library service was reduced due to long term renovations and reopened on July 26, 2024. Keshen Goodman is the second busiest branch in the library system.
2) Non-electronic circulation includes all print books, magazines, CDs, and DVDs.
3) Electronic circulation includes e-books and e-magazines. It does not include streaming services.

Performance Measures Analysis

The number of items borrowed from the Library (both electronic and physical) has remained consistent with previous years. In 2023/24, Keshen Goodman Library had reduced hours due to renovations for three months and all library locations were closed for four weeks due to a labour action.

Access to public computers and Wi-Fi continue to be strong with a 14% increase in use of public computers over three years. Free access to technology and the internet is a vital service to many. As more services and information move exclusively online, many individuals rely on Library technology for learning, training, social connection, entertainment, job and housing searches, access to government services, and much more.

To support additional community access to the internet, the Library has partnered with the Upper Musquodoboit Community Centre to offer free community Wi-Fi at the Centre. Internet connection in this area of the municipality is limited and many in the community need to drive to surrounding communities to access the internet or even to

pick up cell phone signals. Additionally, the cost of home internet service is exponentially higher in this community compared to urban areas of the municipality. Providing free Wi-Fi in this community increases access and allows the Library to bring service to an area where there is no physical library location. While the addition of this service will not impact the total number of Wi-Fi connections (as it is a very small population in the community), it is important to help address the digital divide that is affecting the rural areas of the municipality.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Administrative Services provides the Library's centralized infrastructure and support in the areas of Strategy & Business Intelligence, Finance & Facilities, People & Culture, Communications & Marketing, and Fund Development & Strategic Partnerships – functions that support the delivery of library service across the region.

Services Delivered

Facilities. This service provides facility planning and oversight. It ensures that facility design and maintenance are well-managed so that the spaces in which the Library operates meet the needs of the public. This unit also ensures all aspects of facility management are in place, including assessment of facility condition, risk and safety assessment, and identification of buildings in need of renovation or replacement.

Finance. This service ensures strong stewardship of financial resources. Key functional areas include financial planning, analysis and management of the annual operating budget, accounting, financial reporting and oversight, procurement, grant management and revenue and charitable receipting, asset management, risk analysis, financial modeling, and annual audit support. This unit provides direct support to the Finance Audit & Risk Committee of the Library Board.

Fund Development & Strategic Partnerships. As a registered charity, the Library builds strong relationships with private donors and foundations that provide additional resources for library activities and development. This service develops donor relations, grant applications, and required follow-up and reporting – securing important resources for the Library.

Marketing and Communications. This service is responsible for developing marketing and communications strategies that build awareness of services and programs provided by the Library, building website content and promotional campaigns to communicate library programs, and activities to the community.

Human Resources. This service provides human resource programs and services in all library employees. Key functional areas include: labour and employee relations including collective agreement negotiation, occupational health and safety, employee wellness, payroll, learning and development, recruitment and selection, organizational development, onboarding, compensation and benefits, and volunteer oversight.

Strategy. Supporting the Library Board, Chief Librarian & CEO, Service Excellence Team, and all managers across the Library system, this unit is responsible for record and document development, management, and maintenance of the staff Intranet site to assist in decision making and information sharing. It also supports the research and business intelligence that supports performance excellence and planning including business plan coordination, project planning, demographic and performance analysis, and data research.

Service Delivery Performance Measures

Performance Measures	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual [1]	2024/25 Projected	2025/26 Projected
Library Square Feet per capita [1]	0.67	0.65	0.65	0.63
Library Website Visits	2,962,991	4,159,529	4,589,145	4,497,362
Active Library Card Holders	171,093	194,270	212,149	214,270
Notes: 1) Target Library size range is 0.6 - 1.2 ft^2 per person.				

Performance Measures Analysis

To serve the Halifax community effectively, the Library's target is to have been 0.60 - 1.2 ft^2 of library space per capita. This ensures that there is sufficient physical space to house the library collection, offer programming to the community and have the space needed for community members to use. Currently the Library is at the lowest end of the required number of square feet to adequately serve the community. This means that in some locations services are restricted, libraries can be crowded, and community members may not be able to access the technology or the space they require. Additionally, there are some communities where there is no access to a library location.

The Library is working to maximize the current space for public use. This includes additional square footage added to Keshen Goodman Library, repurposing staff work areas for public use, and identifying where expansion or new library locations are required.

Creating and maintaining digital access to the Library helps to serve community members when a physical location is not available to them. The Library Marketing and Communications team develops online content that showcases library services and collection and provides access to the digital collection. Each year there are more than four million visits to the Library website.

The number of community members actively using the Library collection by checking out materials continues to grow. This year the number of active library card holders was up 9.2%.

2025/26 Key Deliverables		Priority & Outcome	Target (T) / Estimated Completion (EST)
Name	**Description**		
Sheet Harbour Library	The Library will work collaboratively with the municipality, Parks & Recreation and Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency to build a new library in Sheet Harbour that meets the community's needs.	Inclusive Communities	T – Q4 2026/27

2025/26 Key Deliverables		Priority & Outcome	Target (T) / Estimated Completion (EST)
Name	**Description**		
Indigenous Spaces	Through partnerships with Indigenous community members, the Library will work to find ways to welcome and represent Indigenous communities into our physical spaces.	Inclusive Communities	T – Q4 2025/26
Internal Communications	The Library will develop and enhance internal communication channels to support employee engagement, information sharing and connection.	Engaged & Skilled People	T – Q4 2026/27
Leadership Development	The Library will develop a leadership development plan to build future leaders of the organization.	Engaged & Skilled People	T – Q4 2026/27
Launch of Strategic Plan	The Library will launch the new strategic plan and build alignment towards achieving the identified goals.	Involved Communities	T – Q4 2025/26
Respectful Workplace Policy	The Library will launch the new Respectful Workplace Policy.	OP - Healthy & Safe Workplace	T – Q4 2026/27

PUBLIC SERVICES

The Library's Public Services team is committed to supporting Regional Council priorities through the provision of excellent public library service to residents of the municipality via 14 branches, two community offices, and a range of outreach activities including pop-up libraries in areas not near branches, along with other community engagement activities.

Services Delivered

Branch Services. Library programs and services are provided through 14 library branches, and two community offices. The Library circulates a wide variety of print and electronic library material. Library staff assist the public with information and leisure reading needs, provide access to local history and genealogy information, and assist people with building their digital literacy to support accessing the latest electronic materials and devices in collaborative and social spaces. Library services include lending services, programs for all ages, literacy and language programs, food and technology learning, and meeting room rentals.

The Library offers volunteer opportunities for community members to become more engaged with their communities. Volunteers provide tutoring support, build connections with newcomers, deliver library material, and

so much more. The Library's volunteer programs help support individuals and offer opportunities for the public to build meaningful connections with their community.

Community Engagement. Beyond the branches, the Library provides outreach services across the municipality's communities through pop-up programs, as well as community partnerships and engagement. Working with community members and partners, staff develop community-led library services that are delivered throughout the municipality, facilitating access to service. By providing opportunities to engage, Halifax Public Libraries works to improve community well-being and reduce social isolation. The Library also participates in interlibrary loan services with libraries across Canada and the province-wide Borrow Anywhere Return Anywhere program.

To support greater inclusion the Library offers home delivery and borrow by mail options for those who cannot easily visit library branches and provides adaptive technology and access to alternative formats for individuals with print disabilities.

Service Delivery Performance Measures

Performance Measures	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual [1]	2024/25 Projected [1]	2025/26 Projected
Annual Library uses [2]	20,824,731	19,759,970	20,147,266	20,147,266
Annual Library uses per capita	43.3	39.8	40.9	40.9
Annual Library visits	2,593,425	2,654,108	2,827,964	2,856,243
Annual Library visits per capita	5.39	5.34	5.74	5.80
Meeting room bookings	10,954	14,893	16,428	16,400
Program Attendance (in person)	158,327	211,872	250,944	253,453
Volunteer hours	24,823	31,312	32,535	32,500
Hours of in person Library service [3]	42,749	42,017	40,634 [4]	42,000

Notes:
1) Starting August 2023, Keshen Goodman library service was reduced due to long term renovations and reopened on July 26, 2024. Keshen Goodman is the second busiest branch in the library system.
2) Library uses include in-person visits, circulation (both electronic and digital), online activity, Wi-Fi connections, program attendance, and technology use. Calculated using the Canadian Urban Library Council definition of Library use.
3) Total hours of open hours to the public across all branches.
4) Lower number of hours for 2024/25 due to four-week closure in September 2024 due to labour action.

Performance Measures Analysis

As Halifax grows so too does library service. In response to the growing needs of our community, the Library has expanded digital and in-person offerings, supported civic engagement, brought individuals together to reduce social isolation, and helped community connect and thrive.

A major milestone this year was the reopening of Keshen Goodman Library. Keshen Goodman had operated at reduced service for over a year while renovations to the building were done to improve community access and safety. On the weekend July 26, 2024, thousands of community members came to Keshen Goodman to celebrate the return to full library service.

The reduced service at Keshen Goodman for the first quarter of 2024/25 and a four-week closure in September had an impact on the number of library hours of services. Despite these two major events, there was not a decline in use compared to the previous year. In 2024/25, there was an increase of 6.6% in library visits and 18.4% in program attendance.

2025/26 Key Deliverables		Priority & Outcome	Target (T) / Estimated Completion (EST)
Name	**Description**		
Community Dialogue	The Library will provide spaces, opportunities and facilitated discussions on important topics to our communities.	Inclusive Communities	T – Q4 2025/26
Access to Arts and Culture	The Library will provide free and open access to arts and culture experiences, including concerts, art exhibits, cultural programming, and more.	Inclusive Communities	T – Q4 2025/26
Affordability	The Library will work to build programming and supports that help community members navigate increasing costs.	Inclusive Communities	T – Q4 2025/26
Library Access	The Library will work to provide options for residents to access library services outside of normal branch hours.	Involved Communities	T – Q4 2025/26
Local and Family History Collections	Working with community members, the Library will make available new digital collections that focus on the African Nova Scotian community.	Inclusive Communities	T – Q4 2025/26
Community Programming	The Library will develop and launch a community programming strategy that identifies priorities to guide the development of Library programs.	Involved Communities	T – Q4 2026/27

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
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Item No 15.1.1.
Halifax Regional Council
December 12, 2023

TO:	Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council
SUBMITTED BY:	Original Signed
	_____
	Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE:	November 15, 2023
SUBJECT:	**Halifax Public Libraries Collection Investment**

ORIGIN

Feb 22, 2023 Halifax Regional Council (Item No. 15.3.2):

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Morse

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide a staff report to create a strategy to bring the Halifax Public Libraries collection to the national standard working with the Halifax Public Libraries Chief Executive Officer.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.
Not present: Councillor Outhit

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39 as amended

79 The Council shall adopt an operating budget and a capital budget for each fiscal year.

79A(1)Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if,
(a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality,
(b) the expenditure is in respect of an emergency under the Emergency Management Act; or
(c) the expenditure is legally required to be paid.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Regional Council direct staff to plan and budget for increases to the Library material spending budget, based on Option 2 scenario described in this staff report.

BACKGROUND

In three out of the last four budget cycles, Halifax Public Libraries (the Library) has requested and been approved for additional funding through the Balance Adjustment List to cover the rising costs of library materials. The increase in population and rising cost of electronic resources and books was not factored into the budget required to deliver service and has been considered as an additional service enhancement.

Traditionally the Library has spent at or below the national median on library materials (books, dvds, audiobooks, ebooks, etc) per capita compared to other urban library systems. In addition the Library has higher than average use of library material.

Over the last several years the Library has requested additional funds from council to support the purchase of library material. In addition during COVID-19 the Library redirected any savings from periods of closure into the collection budget.

	HPL Library Material Budget	HPL Library Material Actual Spending	HPL Library Material Budget per capita	HPL Actual Library Material Spending per capita[1]	NATIONAL COMPARISONS	
					CULC Median Library Material Spending per capita[2]	Median Ontario Library Material Spending per capita[3]
2017	2,075,500.00	2,143,167.00	4.92	5.08	5.74	5.57
2018	2,075,500.00	2,399,002.00	4.82	5.57	5.65	5.68
2019	1,946,500.00	2,344,716.00	4.42	5.32	5.7	5.74
2020	2,444,700.00	2,752,695.00	5.55	6.25	6.75	5.91
2021	2,296,500.00	3,327,376.00	5.12	7.42	6.19	6.15
2022	2,496,500.00	2,733,884.00	5.43	5.94	6.91	6.26
2023	2,796,500.00		5.82			

[1] Actual spending from operating budget. The Library redirects savings achieved in other areas to support purchasing additional materials for the collection.
[2] Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) median spending on library material per capita collected through the annual survey of membership.
[3] Median of Ontario Public Libraries material spending per capita. Only library systems serving populations greater than 100,000 are included in the median. From the annual survey of Ontario Public Libraries.

For example, in 2019 the Canadian Urban Library Council (CULC) library material spending per capita was 5.70 and Halifax Public Libraries' material spending per capita budget was 4.42. With additional investment from the Balance Adjustment List and some redirection of library operating funds, the Library's actual material spending per capita was 5.32 which was an improvement but still below the 5.7 CULC median for 2019.

The demand for e-books and e-audiobook loans has increased 110% over the past 5 years, and it is anticipated that demand will continue to grow. E-books and audiobooks currently comprise 32% of all items loaned from the Library, up from 21% in 2019. This is a compounded challenge, as it is substantially more expensive to procure e-resources compared to traditional books. In addition, the cost of e-resources can be multiple times more than the physical copy of the same book. For example, The Island of Missing Trees by Elif Shafak costs $21.46 for the physical copy, $80.46 for the e-book, and $183.03 for the audiobook.

While the cost of e-resources is more expensive it provides enhanced accessibility to many in our communities. E-books and digital resources are the core of our accessible collections. E-collections should expand not only to meet user interest and preferences, but also to extend collection access to rural residents, to visually impaired community members, those with dyslexia and other print disabilities, with cognitive or hearing disabilities, and who face other challenges in accessing print & physical library resources. The digital collections have features that print books do not: dyslexic-friendly fonts, screen reader compatibility, zoom features & adjustable text sizing, adjustable play back speed (so individuals can play audiobooks at a lower or higher speed), colour adjusting and dark mode, keyboard shortcuts, and

more.

DISCUSSION

Reaching the National Median

Option 1 – Reaching the National Median in one budget year.

A one-time base adjustment of $692,355 to the library materials budget in 2024/25 would bring the Library material spending to the 2022 CULC median in one year. This amount includes a one-time adjustment to reach 6.91 spending per capita, plus an adjustment assuming a 2% population increase, and a 3% increase in library material costs.

In order to maintain the national standard, each subsequent year the collection budget would need to be adjusted to account for estimated population growth and anticipated material costs. The table below illustrates the additional funds required based on 2% population growth and 3% inflation on library materials.

	Library Material Budget	Change from previous year	Δ%
2023	$ 2,796,500		
2024	$ 3,488,855	$ 692,355	25%
2025	$ 3,665,391	$ 176,536	5%
2026	$ 3,850,860	$ 185,469	5%
2027	$ 4,045,714	$ 194,854	5%
2028	$ 4,250,427	$ 204,713	5%

Option 2 – Reaching the National Median over five budget years.

Another option would be to spread reaching the 2022 CULC median spending on library material over five years. In this option an additional $290,785 per year in each of the five years would be required. The table below illustrates the funding requirements based on a 2% population increase and 3% inflation on library materials.

	Library Material Budget	Change from previous year	Δ%
2023	$ 2,796,500		
2024	$ 3,087,285	$ 290,785	10%
2025	$ 3,378,071	$ 290,785	9%
2026	$ 3,668,856	$ 290,785	9%
2027	$ 3,959,641	$ 290,785	8%
2028	$ 4,250,427	$ 290,785	7%

Option 3 - Maintaining current service levels

In order to maintain current service levels and ensure that library material spending does not fall further from the CULC median spending per capita the library materials budget must be adjusted to account for

population growth and anticipated inflationary costs. The following table illustrates the additional investment required to maintain current library spending per capita assuming a 2% population growth and a 3% inflation rate.

	Library Material Budget	Change from previous year	Δ%
2023	$ 2,796,500		
2024	$ 2,938,515	$ 142,015	5%
2025	$ 3,087,204	$ 148,689	5%
2026	$ 3,243,416	$ 156,213	5%
2027	$ 3,407,533	$ 164,117	5%
2028	$ 3,579,954	$ 172,421	5%

The recommended option is Option 2, reaching the 2022 CULC median spending per capita over 5 years. This option builds in adjustments for modest population increases and inflation costs. This option will allow the library to address customer demand and provide comparable service to other urban libraries in Canada. However, if population growth continues at higher than 2% and inflation costs are higher than the anticipated 3% the library may not be able to keep pace with community demand and reach the CULC median spending.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on Council approving option 2, the table below outlines a total budget increase of $1,453,925 over five years. This would result in an increase of $ 290,785 in each of next five years which would result in an estimated average residential bill increased of $1.02 in each fiscal year as outlined below.

Fiscal Year	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Material Budget	$3,087,285	$3,378,071	$3,668,856	$3,959,641	$4,250,427
Budget Increase	$290,785	$290,785	$290,785	$290,785	$290,785
Avg residential tax bill impact*	$1.02	$1.02	$1.02	$1.02	$1.02

*Future years average tax bill impact is based on 2023/24 rates.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risk considerations were identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council could choose to direct the CAO to adjust the Halifax Public Libraries budget based on Option 1 scenario as described in this staff report.
2. Regional Council could choose to direct the CAO to adjust the Halifax Public Libraries budget based on Option 3 scenario as described in this staff report.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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Feb 26, 2025

HALIFAX

HALIFAX PUBLIC LIBRARIES

2025/26 Budget & Business Plan

Mission

Reflecting our community, we are a resource for everyone and a launch point for growth.

Service Areas

- Administrative Services
- Public Services
- Access Services

Staff Counts

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Change Details		
Approved 2024/25 FTEs:		333.0
Net Positions:		
Position	Rationale	Count
Service Advisors	Operational Cost of Capital	4.0
Transferred Positions		
Net Transfer Positions		
Total Changes		4.0
Total Budgeted 2025/26 FTEs		**337.0**

Operating Budget Summary of Changes

Change Description / Service Impact	Amount
Approved 2024/25 Budget	$ 25,083,300
Service Enhancements	
Library collections investment as per Halifax Regional Council direction	290,800
Inflation/Service Pressures	
Building maintenance increases	50,000
Security	10,000
Printing/copying service	20,000
Contractual Increases	
Collective Agreement & Compensation Changes	2,815,300
Janitorial	121,000
Facility Rentals (rental increases & space increase)	323,500
Revenue Changes	
Net Revenue changes	(3,000)
Anticipated provincial government bridge funding	(256,200)
Total Changes	$ 3,371,400
2025/26 Budget	$ 28,454,700