

Georgetown branch to be open longer on weekends

Library board makes successful case for extended hours of operation

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**
Staff Writer

As expected, a debate ensued over additional operating hours at the new Georgetown library at Monday's 2013 operating budget meeting.

Last month, Councillor Bryan Lewis, who says he's not "anti-library", put the library board on notice that it should be prepared to defend its request for \$21,600 to pay for additional operating hours on Sundays and long weekend Saturdays when the newly-renovated Georgetown library and Cultural Centre unofficially opens at 9 Church St. tomorrow (Friday).

"My only point was funding," Lewis said. "I have lost track of how many times the Library Board has come before this council and stood with their hands out, saying 'we need more money for this, we need more money for that'. My point was find it within the budget you already have."

Previously the library was only open on Sundays (1-5 p.m.) from Oct. 13-May 13 and was closed on Saturdays of long weekends. The proposed new hours would see the branch extend Sunday openings from Sept. to June and open five Saturdays of long weekends.

The Library Board made its case for the additional dollars/hours through a PowerPoint presentation citing a number of factors. They include:

- More people are rediscovering the library. Acton's new library patronage jumped by more than 50 per cent after it opened and the same trend is expected at the new Georgetown library. Overall circulation of items has climbed 83 per cent in the last five years while the population has increased only 6%. About 80% of Halton Hills residents have a library card.

- Georgetown has become a commuter town (70%) with the majority of people preferring to use the facility on

the weekend.

- Local high school students rely on the resources found at the library, and prefer evening or weekend hours.

- Surprisingly, youth like to hang out at the library (the new library has dedicated areas for teens, tweens and younger readers)

- The library is a designated cooling centre in the summer.

- The library has become multi-purpose entertainment centre that includes reading books/ebooks, magazines and newspapers, playing games, attending lectures, finding a job, working on computers and other devices, researching local archives, playing DVDs/CDs and is a community group meeting spot.



BRYAN LEWIS

Library board vice-chair Frank Loreto told committee members, "The public library today is much more than just a warehouse for books."

Loreto said a fall survey of 462 library patrons showed that if hours were changed, most favoured year-round Sunday openings, followed by late Friday openings and Monday openings.

Loreto said the Board, which has given up on the repeatedly denied Monday openings, decided to pursue the reinstatement of the Saturday openings on long weekends (lost to a budget cut a few years ago) and extension of Sunday openings to 10 months of the year. The total cost is \$21,600.

Friends of the Library member Norm Elliott, who also spoke Monday, preferred year-round Sunday openings. He called the new library "a quantum leap in library services and light years ahead of other communities."

Councillor Moya Johnson, a member of the Library Board, said Elliott's suggestion could be discussed before library hours are finalized.

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