

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: October 17, 2022  
Author: Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian & CEO  
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Meeting Date: October 26, 2022

TO: Library Board  
FROM: Christina de Castell  
**SUBJECT: Board Composition and Size**

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### **SUMMARY**

The following report provides information to consider recommending a change to Council for Board size and governance relationships with the Vancouver Park Board and Vancouver School Board.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the Board direct the Chair to write to City Council requesting that:

- A. Council no longer appoint VPL Board members from Vancouver Park Board and Vancouver School Board;
- B. The VPL Board size be reduced from 13 to 11 members; and
- C. On a forward basis, the Vancouver Park Board and Vancouver School Board be offered a non-voting liaison role on the VPL Board to participate in regular public meetings.

### **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

The Committee considered the history of these liaison roles and concluded that the original rationale for this governance relationship in the 1970s had evolved into operational relationships among staff. They reached consensus on recommending a non-voting liaison role from each

organization that would be invited to attend meetings and present a report during the section of the agenda for partner organizations including the VPL Foundation, Friends of VPL and CUPE 391, and that the Board Chair would seek to establish a relationship with the chairs of each organization.

The Committee also considered Board size, recognizing that City Council has 11 members, Vancouver School Board has 9 members, and Vancouver Park Board has 7 members, and concluded that a smaller board of 11 members would provide greater opportunities for participation by members, and would be more aligned with other governance bodies.

## **POLICY**

The [Library Act](#) s.5(2) defines that municipal library boards must have between 5 and 13 trustees. It further defines that Council must appoint Library Board members who are residents or electors of the municipality, and requires that one board member is appointed from the municipal council. Guidelines on the Relationship Between Vancouver City Council and the Vancouver Public Library Board establishes VPL's relationship with the City, including that the Chief Librarian is part of the City Leadership Team, providing a senior management link between the Library and Parks & Recreation.

## **INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS**

The Library Board has identified that supporting the implementation of UNDRIP is a priority, and that the Library Board has an opportunity to ensure that Indigenous Peoples right to self-government can be exercised in the governance of VPL services.

Residents of Musqueam Indian Band reserve lands are eligible for appointment to the Board under existing agreements as electors of Vancouver, while residents of Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nation reserve lands are not eligible (although they are likely eligible to be trustees for other libraries). With the Board's direction, and in collaboration with the Vancouver Island Regional Library and Lillooet Area Librarian Association, the Chief Librarian and CEO has written to the Director of the Libraries Branch to ask the Province to consider these barriers as part of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan.

Staff will continue to work with the Nations to explore ways to build better relations that will contribute to the governance and planning of VPL services.

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

Vancouver Public Library is a significant public asset and the Library Board is responsible for public oversight and accountability. Appointments to the VPL Board are a critical consideration of City Council.

## **BACKGROUND**

VPL has a tradition, which began in 1971, of a trustee appointed by Council from each of the Vancouver School Board and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. At the time that this was established, the Britannia and West End joint facilities projects were beginning. The minutes of September 1971 note that the representatives helped to smooth relationships. At the request of the Chief Librarian, each of two boards has provided an appointee to Council annually over the past decades, who has then been appointed by Council as one of the resident/elector board members.

For many years, the VPL Board appointed a trustee as a liaison to the Britannia Community Services Centre Society, however, this transitioned to a staff role in the last decade as the needs had become operational. In the past five years, the last two joint VPL/VSB libraries, Britannia and Strathcona, became separate facilities. The original benefit from 1971, to smooth relationships, is now achieved through staff relationships at many levels, and VPL is represented at City meetings related to joint facilities and joint development projects.

Over the past ten years, it has become apparent that the competing demands of the roles for the elected representatives from the Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation and Vancouver School Board mean that it is difficult for these trustees to meet their attendance obligations, with the result that the VPL Board has difficulty meeting quorum. In addition, the elected representatives do not take on the full duties of the resident/elector trustees, as they do not serve on committees or maintain liaison roles with other elected representatives and library organizations.

## **DISCUSSION**

At the Governance Committee meeting in September, trustees discussed the relationships with the Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation. This discussion included changes in the expectations for elected officials, that interactions with the two organizations are now mostly operational, and that the current approach introduces challenges for the VPL Board to govern due to quorum issues. Trustees discussed the value and risks of changes in approach, and agreed that further discussion would be warranted at a future meeting. The discussion recognized the value of learning from these other organizations, and the opportunities for supporting each other's efforts, while also identifying that the current approach may no longer be the most appropriate to meet the Library's needs, and lacks a reciprocal appointment to either the Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation or Vancouver School Board.

Trustees also identified a possible interest in changing the number of trustees appointed to the Board from 13 to 11 members, which would provide more opportunities for meaningful participation by all members. The number of trustees is not defined in a municipal bylaw or in VPL Board policy, therefore, this change could be requested from City Council.

If VPL were to propose ending the existing appointment process, the Board could consider alternative approaches to maintain the benefits of existing relationships with these two organizations, such as:

- Establishing a regular annual or more frequent meeting between the Chairs of the organizations: this would maintain a vehicle for communication, while removing the obligation to attend the VPL Board meetings;
- Holding a joint meeting with one or both boards on an annual or as needed basis; and/or
- Requesting a non-voting liaison be appointed to the VPL Board by each of the Vancouver Park Board and Vancouver School Board, who is invited to Board meetings.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Vancouver City Council appoints trustees to the VPL Board, therefore, any changes to the composition or number will require their approval to proceed, after the new Council has taken office.

### **FINAL REMARKS**

The relationship between the Library, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and Vancouver School Board is important to the delivery of services to the public in Vancouver and the successful operation of joint facilities. Over the years since the tradition of appointing elected representatives to the VPL Board was established, productive working relationships have evolved among staff that provide an opportunity to reconsider these roles.