Community Connections: Why it needs to re-open

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Who am I?

- Retired Pediatric Endocrinologist, Epidemiologist and Professor at the University of Manitoba
- Founding Chair of the early childhood literacy committee at the Children's Hospital-HSC
  - Taught medical trainees how to integrate early childhood literacy in the Ambulatory clinic, at well-child visits (READ program)
- Chair of the City Centre Library Advisory Committee (LAC)
  - Participated in WPL Outreach sessions
  - The views presented are personal

Acknowledgement

- I wish to acknowledge significant increased funding from the City and the Province to the Winnipeg Public Library (WPL)
- This has resulted in more opening hours, programming and staff which is amazing
  - Winnipeggers are so deserving of these increased services
- However WPL is still under-resourced compared to comparable Canadian cities (e.g. Hamilton, Edmonton, Regina –Oct 2023 report presented to the City of Winnipeg)

Budget data from Oct. 2023 report to the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services

	Winnipeg	Edmonton	Hamilton	Regina
Population	749,607	1,010,899	569,353	226,404
% of WPG	na	135%	75.9%	30.2%
Amount budgeted for collections per capita	$3.71	**$6.70**	**$6.03**	**$12.37**
Number of budgeted FTE per 100k residents	35.6	**52.1**	**47.3**	**78.5**
Budget for the library per capita	$39.26 2021 data	**$62.42** 2022	**$57.43** 2022	**$104.97** 2022
				Toronto **$79.86** (2023)

Even with the projected 2025 budget- WPL budget $ 48.9 per capita and 35.3 FTE per 100k residents

Strongly support Community Connections

- It is a shame that Community Connections closed its doors on December 31, 2024
- Moving forward, this closure means that there is a cut of 4.2 FTE staffing plus 2 Community Safety Hosts at Winnipeg's flagship library, Millennium
- Millennium now has its hands tied trying to provide information for all Winnipeggers

Community Connections has been a huge success

- Approximately 100 individuals served daily
- It provided one-on-one library service to clients in an intimate low barrier (i.e. no security screening) and culturally safe manner
  - It was not a crisis or homeless centre; it provided core library services
  - It was designed as a hub model to provide a wide variety of information to all
- It serviced 45% of all customer inquiries at the Millennium Library (Oct 2023-Sept 2024)

NOTE: Community Connections provides 45% of all of the service desk requests at the Millennium Library

Table 9

MILLENNIUM LIBRARY
SERVICE DESK STATISTICS

2024 Monthly Breakdown	Oct-Dec 2023	Jan-Mar 2024	Apr-Jun 2024	Jul-Sep 2024	TOTAL	% total
Childrens	380	452	469	557	**1,858**	**3%**
Community Connections*	2,620	6,197	7,889	7,590	**24,296**	**45%**
Circulation	2,055	1,554	1,646	1,048	**6,303**	**12%**
ideaMILL	210	281	352	325	**1,168**	**2%**
Information Services	3,164	3,326	2,789	2,634	**11,913**	**22%**
Local History	405	471	438	472	**1,786**	**3%**
Readers' Services	1,646	1,422	1,357	1,149	**5,574**	**10%**
Special Services	474	306	111	208	**1,099**	**2%**
TOTAL	10,954	14,009	15,051	13,983	**53,997**	

* Note: Community Connections statistics include both referrals and other questions.

What kinds of services were provided?

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Table 8

Winnipeg Public Library Community Connections Space Referrals									
Agencies	October-December 2023 Total*	January-March 2024 Total	April-June 2024 Total**	Jul-24**	Aug-24**	Sept-24***	July-September 2024 Total	Reporting Period October 2023-September 2024 Total	Percentage change between July-September 2024 and April-June 2024
Addiction Supports	16	57	13	3	7	4	14	100	7%
Advocacy	43	61	45	8	6	7	21	166	-114%
Basic Needs - P/U mail	18	48	83	22	35	43	100	235	17%
Basic Needs - Phone	774	2113	2099	717	672	830	2219	6901	5%
Basic Needs - Print/Copy/Fax	342	578	1539	471	488	526	1485	3764	-4%
Bus ticket/transport	57	134	60	20	17	15	52	292	-15%
CFS	3	8	14	3	4	3	10	34	-40%
Clothing	44	51	54	10	8	9	27	172	-100%
Counselling - general	98	239	595	193	211	206	610	1474	2%
Domestic violence	10	8	10	4	3	1	8	36	-25%
Education	10	44	78	172	247	114	533	616	85%
Employment - general	68	159	175	63	73	74	210	594	17%
Employment - resume help	66	80	165	55	47	57	159	456	-4%
Food security	179	129	108	94	78	59	231	617	53%
Harm reduction	14	24	15	5	10	9	24	75	38%
Healthcare	63	92	109	24	33	46	103	352	-6%
Housing and Shelters	259	548	596	145	134	134	413	1774	-44%
Identification	66	164	138	17	24	26	67	427	-106%

Reported information Nov 28, 2024 to the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services

This is way too dense to understand what Community Connections actually did

What kinds of services were provided?

WPL: Community Connections Space Referrals: Consolidated for Oct 2023-Sept 2024

Agencies	Period reporting Oct 2023-Sept 2024	Percentage of total
CORE LIBRARY SERVICES Basic Needs (Technology)- print/copy/computer/fax/phone/mail 'Other library services' -obtain library card, resolve library account, access library collections, receive in-depth assistance	 10900 3242	 47.3% 14.1%
Housing and shelters	1774	7.8%
Employment- general and resume help, & income tax	1050 + 444=1494	6.5%
Counselling	1474	6.4%
Identification, education and newcomers	427 +616 + 224=1267	5.5%
Income and food security	617+ 499=1116	4.8%
Other services include healthcare, transportation, mental health, legal, advocacy, addictions support, harm reduction, senior, domestic violence, CFS		7.6%
Total	**23039**	**100%**

What kinds of services were provided?

- As you can see, Community Connections provided core library services
  - Across Canada and developed countries, libraries offer more than books
  - Librarians are trained to help provide a wide-range of information
- The space should not just be ‘leased out’ to non-profit groups and think that it will function in the same manner as in 2024. Community Connections is aimed at providing library services by trained library staff
  - However, these staff provided services with a bit more time and support

Importantly

- The already overworked staff at the Millennium Library cannot take over the work of Community Connections
- Millennium Library now has suffered a cut of 4.2 FTEs and 2 Community Safety Hosts

the new library in northwest Winnipeg Decrease in salaries and benefits ($359,000) and operating expenses ($255,000) related to the Community Connection Space in Millennium Library. Funding was provided for 2024 only.	(0.614)
Decrease in debt and finance charges	(0.035)

Death by a 1000 cuts: Millennium Library staff are being cut

- Millennium Library is now closed all day on Sundays and Monday evenings at 5pm
- And now Community Connections is closed
- Additionally, the annual provincial funding grant to the Winnipeg Public Library will also be reduced because of these cuts by the City of Winnipeg
  - This is based on the number of FTE
  - This is an additional cut to WPL

City budget page 246 does outline a ‘shuffle’ of positions from Millennium to the new NW library

Operating Budget (in millions of $)	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	2025 Preliminary Budget	E
Service revenue	0.455	0.270	0.284	
Provincial funding (service specific)	2.064	3.489	3.418	
Revenues	**2.519**	**3.758**	**3.702**	
Salaries and benefits	18.045	20.749	21.880	
Services	2.481	3.400	3.225	
Materials, parts, and supplies	0.341	0.292	0.314	
Assets and purchases	2.809	3.327	4.263	
Grants, transfers and other	8.948	9.355	9.512	
Recoveries	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.072)	
Operating expenses	**32.553**	**37.052**	**39.122**	
Transfer to Capital	0.075	-	-	
Debt and finance charges	1.193	1.278	1.243	
Total Expenses	**33.821**	**38.330**	**40.365**	
Mill Rate Support/(Contribution)	**31.303**	**34.572**	**36.663**	
Full-time Equivalent Positions	**256**	**274**	**284**	

Explanation of 2025 Change from 2024

Full-time Equivalent Positions

Increase of 10 FTEs due to annualizing the 2024 increase in library hours (11 FTEs), opening the new northwest library (3 FTEs); offset by a decrease related to the Millennium Library Community Connection Space (4 FTEs).

246

2025 Preli

What about the cost?

- Serving one client at Community Connections was equivalent to the operating cost the City pays for one swimmer in their indoor pools
  - Some folks need recreational opportunities and others need access to information through different municipal portals

What about the cost?

- I am a strong believer in primary prevention
  - Prevention is typically less expensive than reacting to a problem that could have been avoided
- Millennium Library already spends almost $1 Million dollars a year on security
- There is widespread consensus that Community Connections addressed the needs of Winnipeggers and reduced potential tensions
- Please do not cut Millennium Library's staffing
- Re-institute funding for Community Connections