

Belfountain library to close

The Caledon Public Library Board approved the closure of its branch at Belfountain Public School at its Sept. 12 meeting. As per the terms of the Joint Use Agreement with the Peel District School Board, the branch will close in June 2017. The Board also approved the reallocation of existing branch staff in support of expanded hours of operation at the Alton, Inglewood and/or Caledon village locations.

Given the long history of library support within Belfountain, the Board backed a recommendation that services to the community continue through the availability of remote holds lockers within the newly renovated Belfountain Community Centre. Available space within the facility has been confirmed and a related Capital Project request is reflected within the Library's 2017 Draft Budget. This decision follows a year-long review of branch's performance and community use.

In July 2015, the Library Board approved a pilot project, reducing the hours of operation at the Belfountain Branch to encourage a more concentrated and timely use of the facility while reducing related staff costs. As highlighted in the initial recommendation, the Belfountain Branch accounted for only 2.7 per cent of the items borrowed across the library system during the first six months of 2015 and the staffing cost of lending one item at the branch was more than double the average cost for the full system during the same period.

One year later, the number of items borrowed from the branch accounted for less than 2.5 per cent of all materials borrowed throughout the system and has declined from 2.46 per cent for the period from January to July 2015 to 2.28 per cent in the same period in 2016. Participation in programs has also dropped, with children's programs regularly cancelled due to lack of registrants. The branch's long history of disappointing community use is the result of a combination of factors including:

- ? The very nature of a joint facility within a public school, which limits available hours of operation to evening and weekend hours and hinders the ability to offer an after-hours book drop.
- ? Though the school meets accessibility requirements, the library itself is not fully accessible with a significant step at the entrance, hindering access by those with strollers, in wheelchairs or with limited mobility.
- ? The facility is not able to meet current expectations of library services, offer no dedicated space for programming or quiet study, and does not offer a welcoming environment where visitors may wish to spend any significant amount of time.