

Residents getting money's worth with King's libraries

By Mark Pavilonis Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It's sometimes difficult to put a dollar value on some intangible services provided by King Township. But a new tool, developed by Ontario Library Services, has done just that. And King residents are getting a bang for their buck with local services. Adele Reid, CEO of King's Public Library, noted with municipal funding of roughly \$2-million per year, residents are getting a 269% return on investment where the library is concerned. The Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit (VOLT) analyzes and calculates the Social Return on Investment (SROI) to help local libraries measure and demonstrate their value and impact on their communities. It also assigns a dollar value to the services, which are typically free to use. Using King's library usage statistics from 2023, the VOLT came up with a host of community benefits, including education, culture, inclusion and well being, entertainment, civic engagement and usable space. The huge bottom line is that King's library system delivers \$5.6 million worth of services. This translates to a value of \$205 per resident or \$641 per household. The CEO pointed out the library is efficient with tax dollars, leveraging provincial sharing, using its non-profit status and consortium pricing. Keeping up in the digital age has meant a shift, but the library has adapted, and its wi-fi services were used 17,167 times in 2023. Visitors used it for everything from school projects and virtual meetings, to online exams and job searches. The library, last year, held 985 in-person programs with 10,413 participants. Another 13 virtual programs were offered with 152 people taking part. The sheer volume of library users is interesting. In 2023, there were 80,254 visitors to local branches, and Reid said the King City branch saw roughly 300 visitors per day. In all, 53,688 books were borrowed and another 78,801 digital items lent out. The modern King City facility is "outstanding," according to Mayor Steve Pellegrini. He said he's extremely proud of the facility and library staff. "We need more people to see what's available," he added.