

Safety and Security - Update

Date: October 25, 2022

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the Toronto Public Library Board with an update on progress in implementing the short-term actions identified the [Alternate Approaches to Safety and Security at Toronto Public Library](#) report to the Board on the meeting May 24, 2022, as well as other related initiatives.

The identified short-term actions came as a result of the Alternate Approaches to Safety and Security Discussion Table that was created to explore alternate approaches for advancing a welcoming and supportive environment while addressing safety and security issues, and to provide support to all library users and staff, including those from vulnerable communities and equity deserving groups. The Discussion Table identified eight opportunity areas. Out of these, eleven specific short-term actions were identified by the City Librarian and endorsed by the Board.

While substantive progress has been made in a number of areas, much work remains to be done in addressing the other important action items identified in the opportunity areas. This work will continue into 2023 and beyond and updates will be provided to the Board.

As a part of TPL's 2023 operating budget submission, which is a separate report at this Board meeting, additional funding has been identified to: enhance security guard services; provide additional staff training; add eight positions to develop and

implement a trauma informed and harm reduction approach to addressing safety and security; and address facility related issues.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

For the action plan initiatives that impact 2022, including the new Incident Management System, these are funded by the approved operating and capital budgets. Funding for the new interdisciplinary social service support teams was provided by the TPL Foundation.

Additional funding has been requested in TPL's 2023 budget submission to fund the action plan initiatives identified to date for 2023 implementation including:

- a net increase of \$0.259 million (2024 annualized cost of \$1.034 million), including 8 positions to help support TPL's alternative approach to security;
- increased security guard service costs totalling \$2.500 million net, to support safety and compliance with the Rules of Conduct in the branches; and
- \$0.500 million for the Social Service Teams, which is fully funded by grants from the TPL Foundation in 2023.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

By providing a safe space for all customers and staff, while maintaining a welcoming and inclusive space for all, TPL can achieve its strategic priority of opening up our spaces so that all Torontonians, including those from equity deserving populations, are able to access, use and benefit from TPL's services, programs and technology. Many of the opportunities identified by the Discussion Table also align with the strategic priority of investing in staff and an innovative service culture.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

TPL's Safety & Security Action Plan identifies and reinforces TPL's obligation to provide a safe space for all customers and staff, and at the same time ensuring that spaces provided are welcoming and inclusive for all, especially for equity-deserving communities such as newcomers, low-income residents, seniors, people experiencing homelessness or precariously housed, people living with mental health issues, and others.

DECISION HISTORY

At the meeting on June 22, 2021, the Board considered [Security Guard Service – Increase to the Value of the Contract and Purchase Order](#) and staff was directed to produce a report for the Board with more information on the role of security guard services and the impact they have on Library services.

In response to this Board direction, the Board was provided with a report on [Use of Security Guards at Toronto Public Library](#) at its meeting on October 25, 2021. At that meeting, the Library Board adopted a [motion](#) directing the City Librarian to convene a discussion table to explore alternate safety and security strategies. The discussion table should include representatives from TPL Staff, the Library Board, CUPE Local 4948, and community organizations with expertise in providing services to socially excluded groups.

At its meeting on April 25, 2022, as a part of the [Provincial Election: Advocacy Opportunity](#), the Board identified an advocacy opportunity in support of improving safety and security issues faced by library staff in their interactions with customers. In addition to two opportunities identified by FOPL and OLA, the Board approved advocacy efforts related to requesting increased investments in mental health and addiction crisis intervention services available to the community to address the urgent needs of urban public libraries in addressing safety and security issues.

At its meeting on May 24, 2022, the Board considered [Alternate Approaches to Safety and Security at Toronto Public Library](#), which contains the findings of the Discussion Table, and endorsed eleven specific short-term actions.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

TPL is committed to providing welcoming and supportive spaces for the public and staff across its 100-branch network. Providing a welcoming and supportive environment, providing access to public space, and ensuring everyone feels welcome and has equal opportunity to use and benefit from its spaces and services is embedded in TPL's mission and strategic priorities. At the same time, TPL has an obligation to provide a safe space for all customers and staff, while providing a welcoming and inclusive space for all. All this needs to happen in the context of what has turned into a multi-year pandemic and an increasingly complex and diverse urban setting.

Toronto is a densely populated, complex urban environment where inequalities are growing; these inequalities have been amplified through the pandemic. TPL's role in

addressing critical social issues has been increasing because other social services and programs are either unavailable or already overextended. Many local and community organizations offering these services shut down during the pandemic and have not returned. Vulnerable people experiencing challenges such as mental health issues, addictions and homelessness turn to the library, as they are welcome but also because they have nowhere else to meet their basic needs including safety, shelter, and washroom access.

Challenges in libraries have increased with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the number of safety and security incidents, relative to the number of library users, are increasing, as are the severity of these incidents. The different ways that people use the space in libraries can create hotspots for tension, unsafe practices, and behaviours that negatively impact others. Unpredictability, extreme behaviours, and violence are the most difficult to manage and highest risk to customer and staff safety. A wide range of TPL customers become involved in incidents, including (but not limited to) people with special needs, mental health and addiction issues, and those who are inadequately housed.

The impacts of incidents on staff and other customers can be extremely difficult. They deal with verbal abuse, harassment, threats, violence, overdoses, and theft on a regular basis. In the face of these challenges, many staff go above and beyond when trying to manage incidents in a way that respects the individuals involved, de-escalates tensions, and keeps people safe. However, these interactions can be very taxing on staff.

There are policies, programs, and procedures in place at TPL to keep the library safe and at the same time protect and support staff prior to, during, and after incidents. Discussion Table members agreed that TPL has an important opportunity to consider alternative approaches to safety and security as part of their continued efforts to learn and strengthen supports provided to both customers and staff.

In 2022, the number and severity of violent incidents in TPL branches has continued to increase, with 163 violent incidents from January 1 to August 30, 2022, as compared to 132 incidents in all of 2020 and 116 in all of 2021. On a per visit basis, the 2022 number of violent incidents is approximately double pre-pandemic levels, at 2.8 incidents per 100,000 visits in 2022 year-to-date.

COMMENTS

The report from the Discussion Table, [Alternate Approaches to Safety and Security at Toronto Public Library](#), identified eight opportunity areas for the City Librarian's consideration:

- 1) Focus on welcoming all
- 2) Strengthen training
- 3) Strengthen communications between TPL staff & management
- 4) Increase investment in service development
- 5) Expand and strengthen connections to community resources
- 6) Accelerate improvements to physical spaces
- 7) Strengthen documentation, evaluation & ongoing learning
- 8) Use security guard services intentionally as part of a broader suite of resources and tools that support the prevention and resolution of incidents

Within each of these opportunity areas, the Discussion Table identified specific actions for the City Librarian's consideration. One of the overarching considerations suggested by the Discussion Table was to view the opportunities through a trauma informed and harm reduction lens. This is a wrap around service approach for dealing with individuals in crisis which covers a spectrum of supports and services the library would provide and turn to in dealing with the safety and security of staff and customers. In order to support this approach, funding has been identified in the 2023 budget, including for eight new positions. Staff are currently in the process of conducting an environmental scan of libraries and other social service organizations to inform the staffing model to support a trauma informed approach. Additional funding has also been identified in the 2023 budget to provide supports for staff training, enhanced security guard services and facility related solutions.

Based on the opportunity areas suggested in the report, TPL identified eleven short-term actions to sustain the momentum of the work done by the Discussion Table, and to ensure that there are timely results in response to the findings of the report. To this end, the Safety & Security Enhancements Project was created in order to oversee, track and report on this work. The project has been assigned a project manager, and is being led by Brian Daly, Director, Human Resources and Moe Hosseini-Ara, Director, Branch Operations and Customer Experience as the project sponsors. There are also workgroups who have convened to work on the various action items.

The following are the eleven short-term actions as endorsed by the Library Board on May 24, 2022. For each action, an update has been provided on work underway and completed in past five months, as well as work that is planned in the near-term. In some areas, additional actions have been included in the update below.

Short Term Actions

a. Action

- Position TPL as a safe and welcoming environment for all through branch signage and other communications.

Status

- New signage introduced in branches to clearly position TPL as a welcoming environment for all, while also clearly communicating that discrimination, harassment, and violent or disruptive behaviour will not be tolerated.
- As an additional step to foster a welcoming and safe environment for all, risk assessments are being conducted at branches with high rates of incident. As of the end of September 2022, 16 of 22 such risk assessments have been completed, in partnership with the union and Joint Health and Safety Committee representatives, and recommendations are being prioritized for implementation.
- As a further initiative to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all, TPL has completed a review of security camera equipment inside TPL branches, with new and upgraded cameras being installed where appropriate.

b. Action

- Begin to introduce a harm reduction and trauma-informed mindset in staff training, and when assessing and implementing safety and security measures in branches, getting select trainers certified in trauma-informed approach to dealing with incidents.

Status

- New harm-reduction and trauma-informed training under review, with input from TPL's Social Worker.
- Also exploring trauma-informed models used in other public libraries to help guide TPL's approach.

c. Action

- Participate in the SafeTO's Toronto Community Crisis pilot, a service which provides an alternative to police enforcement, creating a community-based, client-centred, trauma-informed response to non-emergency crisis calls and wellness checks.

Status

- Pilot project started with SafeTO at 35 branches, covering downtown east, downtown west, north east and north west.
- Plans established to explore in 2023 paid peer support worker models used in other public libraries.
- Continue to explore further collaboration opportunities with SafeTO including sharing of best practices and training. Meeting scheduled with SafeTO's City staff in October to develop shared protocol for TPL.
- Over the long term, plan to facilitate stronger relationships between TPL branches and police response units (PRU's) to support direct service requests.

d. Action

Enhance staff training to build staff skills in crisis prevention and intervention, harassment, mental health and related areas, starting with branches with high numbers of incidents. Ensure that staff training is completed and tracked, with a focus on evaluating staff competence and confidence post-training.

Status

- Work underway to develop a comprehensive Safety and Security Learning and Development Framework, outlining required knowledge, skills and abilities, and formulating a standardized core curriculum and learning pathways by role, including refresher training cycles for Rules of Conduct and other topics.
- Work underway to review existing training programs, and to introduce new programs where appropriate, to address key opportunity areas such as de-escalation training, mental health and opioid response.
- Dealing with Difficult Behaviours (de-escalation) training currently underway, starting with branches with high numbers of incidents in 2022.
- Work underway to develop an evaluation framework and key metrics to assess staff confidence and competence following training, and to report on progress over time.

e. Action

- Convene a special joint meeting annually of union leadership and senior TPL management to discuss ways to further enhance union/management collaboration processes on health and safety matters.

Status

- Discussions between union leadership and management commenced at the August 18 Labour Relations Steering Committee meeting. Further discussions planned in Q4, 2022.

f. Action

- Listen to and engage frontline branch staff on safety and security, through staff town halls, branch meetings, and the upcoming staff survey.

Status

- Staff provided with a status update at a staff town hall on September 29, 2022. Further updates planned at future town halls.
- Safety and security related responses from the 2022 TPL staff survey have been compiled and are under review.
- Staff listening sessions have commenced at branches with high numbers of incidents. Plans are being developed to schedule a series of mini-town-halls in branches over the next twelve months, dedicated to fostering an open dialogue on safety and security concerns at a branch-by-branch level.

g. Action

- Implement pilot programs to assess the value and service model for interdisciplinary social service support teams to provide direct support to TPL customers and staff.

Status

- Funding for a one-year pilot has been confirmed. Negotiations with community agency service providers are underway, including development of an expert-informed service delivery model and integration with existing community-based services.
- The goal is to provide vulnerable populations in target library branches with direct one-on-one service and group programs as well as information, access and referral to community-based services.

h. Action

- Enhance incident debriefing by training supervisory staff in debriefing, as well as and ensuring involvement of, and support for, frontline staff and guards involved in incidents, ensuring that this is embedded in TPL procedures and protocols.

Status

- Training and support documentation are in progress for incident debriefing. Plan is to introduce as a new e-learning module for all staff in early 2023.

i. Action

- Implement the new Incident Reporting Management System (IRMS) to identify, track and analyze incident trends, and share findings with staff.

Status

- IRMS go-live occurred on September 27, 2022.
- Staff now have live access to incident reports and related incidents as they occur. The system generates up-to-date reports on incident trends which will be regularly shared with staff, the union and Joint Health and Safety committees.

j. Action

- Review and evaluate training and onboarding of guards, and ensure the role of guards is communicated to staff and customers.

Status

- A review of the level of guards that are in place at each branch, based on incident history and an assessment of risk factors, was completed in September 2022.
- As a result of this review, adjustments are underway to the level of guards on a branch-by-branch level. In some locations, this has resulted in upgrading to higher level guards to provide greater levels of service and security. In other branches with few or no incidents, guard services are being reduced or reconsidered.
- Staff are also in consultation with TPL's security guard vendor to enhance the training and onboarding of guards who work at TPL locations.
- In addition, TPL has begun exploring alternatives to the use of security guards in some situations. Work is underway to explore potential models including the possible use of other safety and security resources as an alternative and/or supplement to the use of guards at some locations.

k. Action

- Work to develop and enhance relationships with City and community services, including SafeTO, TPS Neighbourhood Community Officers, cluster groups established by SDFA, FOCUS and SPIDER tables, and community agencies in each area of the city.

Status

- Planning is underway to reinstate community outreach which was paused during the pandemic. Work is underway to identify cluster groups, FOCUS and SPIDER tables and other community resources.

- A dedicated working group is planned to commence in early 2023 to review TPL's community outreach procedures and update branch-centered community outreach & engagement guidelines, best practices, resources and training for staff at all levels of the organization, under the guiding principle that engaged communities are safer communities.

CONCLUSION

While substantive progress has been made in a number of areas, much work remains to be done in addressing the other important action items identified in the opportunity areas provided in the Discussion Table report. This work will continue well into 2023 and staff will update the Board on the progress of this work as appropriate.

Fundamentally, this work is driven by the commitment to foster a welcoming, safe and secure environment for both staff and customers. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with TPL staff, union and other stakeholders as we work toward this overarching goal.

CONTACT

Moe Hosseini-Ara; Director, Branch Operations and Customer Experience; Tel: 416-397-5944. Email: mhoss@tpl.ca

Pam Ryan; Director, Service Development and Innovation; Tel: 416-393-7133. Email: pryan@tpl.ca

Brian Daly; Director, Human Resources; Tel: 416-395-5850. Email: bdaly@tpl.ca

Alyssa van Graft; Director, Transformational Projects; Tel: 416-395-5541. Email: avangraft@tpl.ca

SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

safety & security update

Toronto Public Library Board Meeting

October 25, 2022

opportunity areas from discussion table that action plans built from

1. Focus on welcoming all
2. Strengthen TPL staff training
3. Strengthen collaboration between TPL staff and TPL management
4. Increase investment in service development
5. Expand and strengthen connections to community resources
6. Accelerate improvements to physical spaces
7. Strengthen documentation, evaluation, and ongoing learning
8. Use security guard services intentionally as part of a broader suite of resources and tools that support the prevention and resolution of incidents.

***overarching consideration to view all opportunities and action items through a trauma-informed and harm reduction lens**

trauma informed approach for improving safety & security

Some principles:

- **Safe Environment** - ensuring physical and emotional safety – common areas are welcoming and privacy is respected
- **Collaboration** – ensuring partnerships and partnership agreements have a trauma informed lens
- **Policies and Procedures** – are written and implemented in a way that is trauma informed
- **Training & Orientation** – incorporate trauma informed approaches and practices
- **Impact of the Work** - increase staff awareness of how to prevent & manage secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue while also creating staff supports

budget implications for current year and 2023

2022 budget

- All action items that are currently underway are fully funded within existing operating and capital budget

2023 budget

- \$0.259 million (2024 annualized cost of \$1.034 million), for 8 positions to help support TPL's trauma informed approach
- \$2.500 million for enhanced security guard service to support branch safety and compliance with Rules of Conduct
- \$0.500 million (fully funded by grants from the TPL Foundation) to introduce Social Service Team initiative

action items status on activities and plans

Reinforce & Communicate that TPL will not tolerate violent behaviour

- New signage reinforcing message
- Risk assessments at high-incident branches
- Security camera assessments and upgrades

Introduce trauma-informed and harm reduction mindset

- Exploring different library models for staffing and training

Convene a joint meeting annually of union and TPL leaders

- Discussions underway with union leadership

action items status on activities and plans

Participate in the SafeTO's Toronto Community Crisis pilot

- Pilot started at 35 branches (downtown east, downtown west, north east, north west)

Develop & enhance relationships with City & community services

- Planning underway to reinstate community outreach

Implement interdisciplinary social service support teams pilots

- Negotiations underway with potential service providers
- To provide vulnerable populations with direct service + information, access and referral to community-based services

action items

status on activities and plans

Expand staff training to build staff confidence & competence

- Work underway on several programs:
 - Violence Response Program and associated training
 - Learning pathways, retraining cycle and evaluation framework
 - De-escalation training (Dealing with Difficult Behaviours)
- To be launched – Mental health and opioid response training

action items status on activities and plans

Engage staff via town halls, branch meetings, staff survey, etc.

- Ongoing updates at town halls
- Meetings at high incident locations
- Review underway by managers of staff engagement survey results on safety and security data

action items status on activities and plans

Enhance incident debriefing

- Work underway on procedures + associated e-learning module

Implement the new Incident Reporting Management System

- New system has launched
- More functionality to be rolled out in coming weeks

action items status on activities and plans

Review & evaluate training of guards; communicate role of guards

- Upgrading to high profile guards
- Strengthening onboarding of guards with expanded responsibilities
- Exploring alternative models of security supports



Questions?