

COVID-19 Emergency Response – Update

Date:	September 21, 2020
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update the Library Board on Toronto Public Library's (TPL's) implementation of the reopening plans a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, to provide an outline of TPL's resurgence plans in the event of a significant increase in COVID-19 cases, and to provide information on staffing.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

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

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

Reopening branches and reinstating services as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic directly addresses TPL's Strategic Plan priorities, particularly opening up our public space and addressing digital literacy and inclusion.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Reopening closed library branches and reinstating services responds to population growth, poverty, changing patterns of work, study, education and leisure in Toronto, and drives strategic outcomes such as greater digital inclusion opportunities through increased access to the internet, WiFi and computers, and reduced barriers to access for equity seeking groups, seniors and youth.

DECISION HISTORY

At a Special Meeting on August 21, 2020, the Library Board approved a plan to support Toronto school boards' use of library facilities:

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/aug21/06-potential-use-of-tpl-facilities-by-tsb-combined.pdf>

At its meeting on June 22, 2020, the Library Board received an update on the TPL's reopening plans and staffing:

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/jun22/16-covid-19-emergency-response-update.pdf>

At its meeting on May 25, 2020, 2020, the Library Board approved TPL's reopening framework and phased reopening plan, and authorized the City Librarian to execute the phased reopening plan, adjusting it as needed based on the changing conditions and circumstances in the city and elsewhere:

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/may25/11-covid-19-emergency-response-plans-for-reopening-revised-combined.pdf>

At its meeting on April 27, 2020, the Library Board received a report on TPL's operations, services and responses to the COVID-19 public health emergency, its integration with City of Toronto's Incident Management System, and details of TPL's pandemic plan:

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/apr27/14-covid-19-emergency-response-combined.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Based on recommendations from Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, the City of Toronto cancelled most programming and closed a number of facilities, including recreation and community centres, city-run daycares, museums and art galleries in response to the evolving COVID-19 situation. This came into effect at the end of day March 13, 2020, and as a result, all TPL branches were closed at the same time.

Effective March 23, 2020, the Mayor declared a state of emergency in Toronto. On Tuesday, March 31, the Mayor announced that City of Toronto facilities would continue to be closed until further notice, and that City-operated programs would also remain suspended. The Mayor also announced that all City-led major mass participation events, festivals, conferences and cultural programs would be cancelled through June 30, as would all City permits for these types of events.

On May 14, 2020, the Premier announced stage one reopening of services effective May 19, 2020, including libraries for pick up and deliveries. On June 8, 2020, the Premier announced a regional approach to stage two reopening of services. Toronto entered stage two on June 24, 2020. The stage two [announcement](#) indicated that some limited library services can be reinstated as part of this stage: *All libraries can reopen with limited on-site services, such as computer access and contactless book pickup and drop-off.*

On July 13, 2020, the Premier announced a regional approach to stage three reopening of services. On July 31, 2020, Toronto entered into stage three. The stage three [announcement](#) indicated that: *In addition to the services resumed in Stage 2, libraries may reopen for all on-site services, as long as materials that are circulated, returned or accessed within the library are disinfected or quarantined before being recirculated.*

COMMENTS

Implementation of TPL's Reopening Plans

When TPL's 100 branches closed in March, a large number of services continued to be delivered immediately online, and staff have been able to increase online programs and services over the last six months. During this time, there was a significant increase in use of digital services. For example, more than 4.6 million ebooks, audiobooks, movies and newspapers were borrowed, an increase of over 40 percent over the same time last year.

At this time, the suspension of fines was introduced and customers' library cards were automatically renewed until January 2021 to ensure their access to TPL's digital services was not interrupted. Increased access to TPL's digital collections was achieved for people without library cards by introducing an Instant Digital Card for Overdrive ebooks and audiobooks with 31,000 people registering to date.

As part of the Province's stage one reopening, 67 branches were open for scheduled customer pick-up of holds and 70 branches had drop-boxes open for the return of library materials. In stage two, 72 branches opened with regular Monday to Saturday service, and provided limited access to in-branch services, including scheduled use of computers and scheduled holds pick-up inside the branch; 58 of the 72 branches provided additional service in the form of scheduled in-branch computer access (including printing, scanning and photocopying), use of washrooms and in-branch phone service.

TPL is in the midst of reopening as part of stage three with most library services being reinstated and modified to align with provincial and public health directives. Prioritization is being given to critical in-person services while ensuring their safe delivery, such as access to computers and WiFi, browsing and borrowing collections, access to study and work space, self-checkouts of holds and other library materials, quick reference services, library card registration, washroom and cooling centre access. A total of 72 branches have opened in stage three with these services and regular schedules of Monday-Saturday open hours.

The rollout of additional stage three services and locations is planned. Bookmobile and Home Library Services were re-introduced earlier this month and five additional branches will be open by the end of September.

The following schedule outlines the planned reinstatement of services for September through December 2020. It is important to note that the requirement to quarantine returned library materials for 96 hours and the additional space required to provide safe physical distancing for both customers and staff, impacts the availability of space for activities such as programming and room rentals.

September

- Additional five branches reopen
- Bookmobile Service
- Home Library Service
- Digital Innovation Hub equipment lending and access to 3D printers
- Library Settlement Partnership
- Remote Outreach including remote school & high school outreach
- Special Collections Service Points with reduced service hours at the Toronto Reference Library Marilyn and Charles Baillie Special Collections Centre to mirror the service hours at the Osborne and Merrill Collections located at the Lillian H. Smith branch
- Youth Hubs (existing locations)
- Research appointments at TRL, NYCL and Special Collections

October

- Community Librarians (on-site and off-site meetings for staff who are dedicated to outreach where health and safety measures meet TPL requirements)
- English as a Second Language (ESL) Partnership programs where possible
- In-person outreach (limited): on-site and off-site meetings for staff doing outreach where health and safety measures meet TPL requirements
- In-person services including Adult Literacy Service, Leading to Reading and Volunteer Services
- Let's Learn Tech in-person sessions
- Museum & Arts Pass distribution

- Youth Hubs (new 2020 locations)
- Online membership registration for access to all digital collections
- Additional branches reopen
- 2021 recruitment of Sunday staff starts

November

- Piloting resumption of select in-branch programming such as User Education
- Youth Hubs (new 2020 locations)
- Additional branches reopen.

Services not available in 2020 include room and venue rentals, in-branch programming initiated by branch staff, in-person outreach, pop-up learning labs, and Sunday service. With 77 branches open by the end of September and two not able to reopen because of renovations, plans are underway to get as many of the remaining 21 branches open as possible by the end of the year, (see Attachment 1: Branches Planned for Reopening).

Staffing

Staff have been working extremely hard to respond and adjust to the changing service and operational requirements as TPL works through the various provincial stages of reopening.

Currently over 1,500 staff (70 percent) are working on site with approximately 350 (20 percent) working remotely. The majority of staff who were on emergency leave/layoff have returned to work. There are approximately 250 vacant positions in branch operations either because staff have been approved for family or medical accommodation, or the incumbent has left the position. This is a significant number and work is underway to mitigate the impact of these vacancies on branch operations and services through strategies such as accelerated recruitment.

Toronto School Boards

At a Special Meeting on August 21, 2020, the Library Board approved a plan to support Toronto school boards' use of library facilities. The City presented both the TDSB and TCDSB with City and TPL spaces for classroom use. Discussions with the two school boards continue with nothing confirmed as of the writing of this report.

TPL's Resurgence Plans

Detailed plans are being developed for scaling back services in the event the Province or City declare a COVID-19 resurgence. Based on all of the work that has been done to establish health and safety protocols, expand digital services, set-up strong relations with partners and provide staff with the tools they need for remote work, TPL is in a good position to respond to changing circumstances resulting from a resurgence in

COVID-19 cases. Communications with the public, stakeholders and staff will continue to be essential as TPL moves to implement its resurgence plans.

Service Assumptions and Considerations

- First and foremost, TPL's plans have to be aligned with any restrictions imposed by Province or the City.
- Weather will limit the ability to deliver curbside services so TPL will move to contactless pick-up inside the branches. Weather will also increase demand on in-branch services, in particular by vulnerable populations.
- Students returning to school, whether in the classroom or remotely, will result in increased demand for digital services.
- The availability of staff resources will impact TPL's service capabilities.

Key Strategies

- Keep branches open as long as possible with a particular focus on keeping them open in areas with the highest needs. With so much more known now about maintaining services safely, this strategy is key.
- In scaling back, reduce high contact service first.
- Respond to surges in demand, pivoting between digital and in-person services as needed.
- Rapidly deploy additional digital services and built digital capabilities while maintaining phone services to promote equity.
- Add community-based services (e.g. food bank distribution) as needed.

The following services are planned to continue:

- Answerline email & phone services
- All online services
 - online membership registration (new) and membership renewal
 - additional online school supports
- Branches remain open with staged reduction of service
 - eliminate browsing & study
 - move to more restricted scheduled computer use
 - move to contactless holds pick-up inside the branch
- Bookmobile & home library services.

In terms of services delivered through partnerships, the plan is to maintain or expand existing partnerships, entering into new partnerships as possible. The following are examples of what is planned:

- Expand or accelerate partnerships, with a focus on supports for vulnerable populations such as maintaining washroom and cold weather access, access to community and social service referral information, and access to TPL services in the City shelter system. This would include activities such as continuing with book

donations to shelters, and online community librarian support (helping to access remote community services, find jobs, find housing).

- Continue digital inclusion supports such as Internet Connectivity Kits, WiFi hotspot lending, mobile WiFi (bookmobile), and branch WiFi (external access). In addition, this could include having select TPL vehicles equipped with WiFi and placed in specific places across the city (parks, high needs areas).
- Continue with seniors' wellness checks. Staff has phoned over 2,000 seniors over the age of 80 to date to check in on them and see if they require assistance and to direct them to required services.
- Operationalize food bank distribution as required (in addition to existing).
- Engage in additional online school outreach. Staff reached 107 TDSB summer classes providing learning resources and online class visits.
- Continue to work with the City's Poverty Reduction office to distribute PRESTO cards to people who are vulnerable as required.
- Possibly arrange for use of library spaces and technology to support students and vulnerable populations, or partner with city or community agencies to provide minimal supports (like care kits, pre-packaged food, etc.) within health guidelines.

Staff/Operational Assumptions and Considerations

- Staff have the tools they need to work remotely and/or in a hybrid mode.
- Network capability has increased with VPN licensing.
- Remote working guidelines are established and distributed.
- Support is available for prolonged remote working by deploying tools/devices as required.
- New Learning Management System has been deployed, so remote training can be further enhanced.
- Adjustments to branch furnishings, lay-out, and the installation of acrylic shields and other protective measures are all in place.
- Health and safety protocols and procedures are well-established; staff are trained.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) is in place.

Key Strategies

- Operationalize existing procedures and protocols to add/subtract service, maintaining as many branches open as possible with access to browsing and borrowing of collections. When customers cannot browse and borrow from collections themselves, contactless pick-up of holds is launched. The result is a huge increase in holds volume with customers having to wait longer for their materials as staff do all of the retrieval, check-out and processing for contactless pickup. Requiring customers to schedule times for holds pick up would be eliminated to make it easier for customers to pick up holds.
- Move staff to remote work quickly (fully or hybrid) to support and/or deliver digital services.

- Maintain drop box service to avoid large numbers of returned materials coming back once service is reinstated. At the time of closure in March, there were approximately one million items on loan. The logistics of collecting, quarantining, processing returns was extensive once drop boxes were reopened in June. Having drop boxes remain open requires staff to be in the branches to receive returns, place in quarantine and process.

CONCLUSION

TPL is gradually reinstating library services that were suspended with the COVID-19 public health emergency, responding to residents' needs with new programs and partnerships. In the event that a resurgence in COVID-19 occurs, TPL is in a good position to respond to changing circumstances with plans in place that are flexible and scalable.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Branches Planned for Reopening

Branches Planned for Reopening

Branch	Comments
Albert Campbell Pop-Up	Branch closed for renovation; limited space capacity in pop-up
Alderwood	Joint facility
Armour Heights	Joint facility
Black Creek	Mall location
Bridlewood	Mall location
Burrows Hall	Joint facility
City Hall	All of City Hall is closed to the public
Davenport	Limited space capacity
Eglinton Square	Mall location
Gerrard/Ashdale	Limited space capacity
Humber Bay	Limited space capacity
Humberwood	Joint facility
Maryvale	Mall location
Mount Pleasant	Limited space capacity
Perth/Dupont	Limited space capacity
Port Union	Joint facility
Queen/Saulter	Limited space capacity
Rexdale	Limited space capacity
Spadina	Limited space capacity
St. Clair/Silverthorn	Limited space capacity
Swansea Memorial	Limited space capacity
Todmorden Room	Limited space capacity

Notes:

1. Mall locations could only open as part of stage 3. Reopening these locations is planned.
2. Joint facilities are being reopened in collaboration with others in the facility.
3. Smaller branches have limited people/computer/study capacity given physical distancing requirements.
4. St. James Town and Wychwood are closed for renovations.



Toronto Public Library resurgence planning

TPL Board Meeting

September 21, 2021





1. Current State

- Available services
- Staffing and operations
- Partnerships and community supports

2. Resurgence scenarios



current state

available services

phased reinstatement of services

100 branches closed

always available

- ✓ Access to over 650,000 digital items to borrow – books, movies, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers
- ✓ Access to online learning resources – e.g. Lynda.com, Brainfuse
- ✓ Wifi access outside at all library branches
- + Live and on-demand online programming for all ages
- + Instant Digital Card for Overdrive access
- + Answerline email & social media service

phased reinstatement of services

Stage 1

100 branches closed

*70 branches drop-box
67 branches pick-up*

always available

May

- ✓ Access to over 650,000 digital items to borrow – books, movies, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers
- ✓ Access to online learning resources – e.g. Lynda.com, Brainfuse
- ✓ Wifi access outside at all library branches
- + Live and on-demand online programming for all ages
- + Instant Digital Card for Overdrive access
- + Answerline email & social media service

Curbside Drop-off & Pick-up of materials

- ✓ Drop box returns
- ✓ Scheduled holds pick-up



phased reinstatement of services

	Stage 1	Stage 2
<i>100 branches closed</i>	<i>70 branches drop-box 67 branches pick-up</i>	<i>72 branches open regular hours, no Sunday service</i>
always available	May	June - July
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Access to over 650,000 digital items to borrow – books, movies, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers✓ Access to online learning resources – e.g. Lynda.com, Brainfuse✓ Wifi access outside at all library branches+ Live and on-demand online programming for all ages+ Instant Digital Card for Overdrive access+ Answerline email & social media service	<p>Curbside Drop-off & Pick-up of materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Drop box returns✓ Scheduled holds pick-up	<p>Limited in-branch services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Scheduled in-branch holds pick-up✓ Scheduled in-branch computer access✓ Print, scan & photocopy✓ Use of washrooms✓ Answerline and in-branch phone service

phased reinstatement of services

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	
<i>100 branches closed</i>	<i>70 branches drop-box 67 branches pick-up</i>	<i>72 branches open regular hours, no Sunday service</i>	<i>72 branches open regular hours (100 by end of year), no Sunday service</i>	
always available	May	June - July	August	Sept - Dec
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Access to over 650,000 digital items to borrow – books, movies, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers ✓ Access to online learning resources – e.g. Lynda.com, Brainfuse ✓ Wifi access outside at all library branches + Live and on-demand online programming for all ages + Instant Digital Card for Overdrive access + Answerline email & social media service 	<p>Curbside Drop-off & Pick-up of materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Drop box returns ✓ Scheduled holds pick-up 	<p>Limited in-branch services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Scheduled in-branch holds pick-up ✓ Scheduled in-branch computer access ✓ Print, scan & photocopy ✓ Use of washrooms ✓ Answerline and in-branch phone service 	<p>Additional in-branch services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Self-checkout of holds ✓ Library card registration ✓ More DIH computer time ✓ Browse and borrow items ✓ Connect and use Wi-Fi ✓ Work or study (with limited seating) ✓ Access quick reference services 	<p>Additional in-branch services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Leading to Reading ✓ Adult Literacy ✓ Library Settlement Partnership ✓ Digital Innovation Hub & Fabrication Studio <li style="text-align: center;">+ ✓ Bookmobile ✓ Home Library Service <li style="text-align: center;">+ ✓ Open remaining branches ✓ Open all youth hubs (including new ones)



current state



staffing & operations

workforce readiness: staff working status



Health Status

March to August, 2020

0 Confirmed Positive with COVID-19

13 Have had contact with someone confirmed COVID-19 Positive March-August

79 Staff Calls To EAP

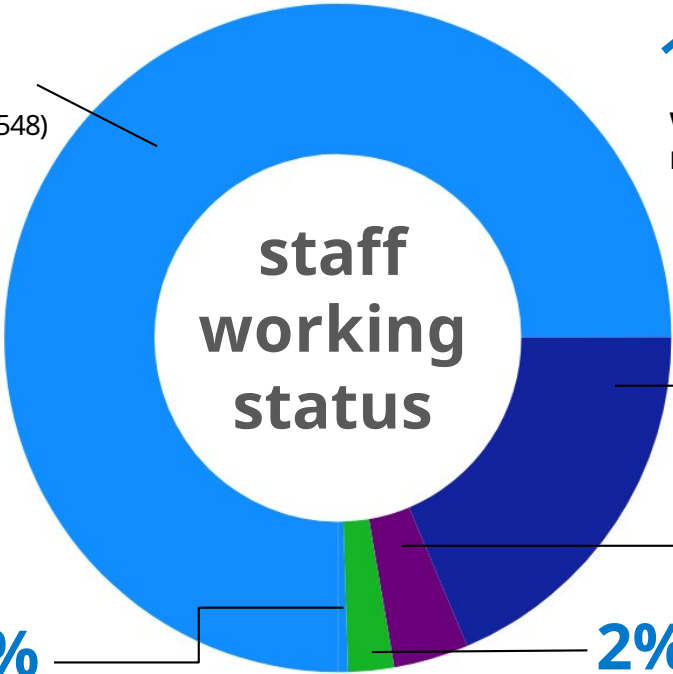
75% working onsite (1548)

19% working remotely (386)

4% available: redeployed (75)

0.05% self-isolating (10)

2% emergency leave/ voluntary layoff (46)





current state

partnerships & community supports

partnerships & community supports

- Food Security

- ~ Food banks in library branches
(over 35,250 individuals to date)

- Literacy & Learning

- ~ Free books with food hampers
(over 4,000 for children and teens)
- ~ Free books to City shelters
- ~ Online Adult Literacy service
- ~ Online school outreach

- Digital Access & Inclusion

- ~ Internet Connectivity Kits
- ~ WiFi Hotspot Lending
- ~ WiFi on Wheels
- ~ Branch WiFi

- Social Inclusion & Engagement

- ~ Seniors wellness checks
- ~ Bloom Cam
- ~ PRESTO card distribution
- ~ TORR Art Installations
- ~ StrollTO



resurgence planning

resurgence: service assumptions

services

- ✓ Answerline email & phone services continue
- ✓ All online services continue
 - + online card registration available
 - + additional online school supports
- ✓ 100 branches remain open
 - ✗ with staged reduction of service
 - eliminate browsing & study
 - move to scheduled holds pick-up & computer use
 - Move to contactless holds pick-up inside the branch
- ✓ Bookmobile & home library services continue

- Focus on keeping buildings open to those in the community with the highest needs
- Respond to surges in demand and pivot between digital and in-person services as needed
- As we need to scale back, we'll reduce high contact service first
- Continue to add digital services and community-based services

resurgence: **operational assumptions**

staffing & operations

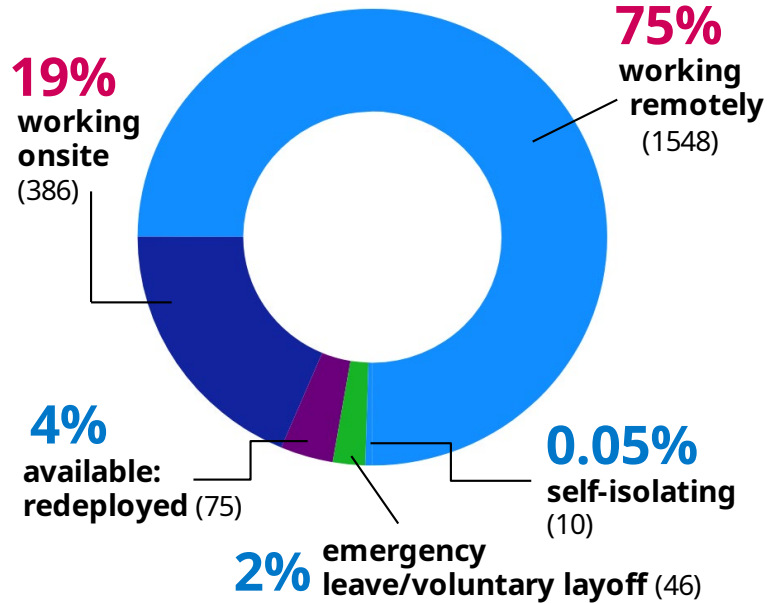
- ✓ Able to move staff to remote work quickly
- ✓ Operational procedures and protocols in place so can add/subtract service relatively easily
- ✓ Health and safety procedures in place
- ✓ PPE in place
- ✓ Redeploy staff to support/deliver online services

- Staff have the tools needed to work remotely and/or in a hybrid mode
- Network capability increased (VPN)
- Remote working guidelines established
- New Learning Management System (LMS) deployed, so remote training can support service transitions

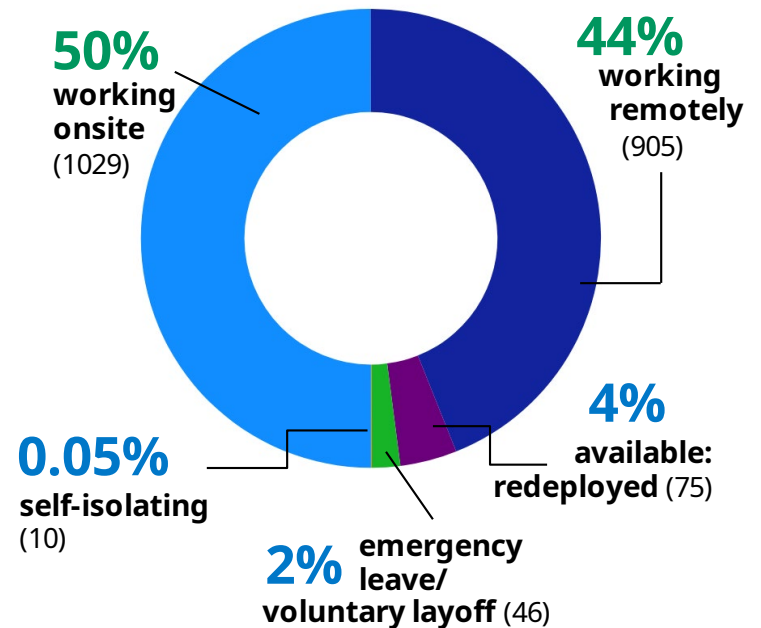
resurgence: staffing & operations

workforce readiness: staff working status

Branches closed, book drops only



Branches closed, contactless holds pick-up



total = 2066

resurgence: **partnerships & community supports**

partnerships & community supports

- ✓ Internet Connectivity Kits
- ✓ WiFi Hotspot lending
- ✓ Mobile WiFi (bookmobile)
- ✓ Branch WiFi – external access
- ✓ Seniors wellness checks
- ✓ Food banks (in addition to existing)
- ✓ Online School Outreach
- ✓ PRESTO card distribution

Possible additions

- ✓ Use of library spaces and technology to support students and vulnerable populations

- Existing partnerships/initiatives to be maintained
- Expand or accelerate partnerships, with a focus on supports for vulnerable populations:
 - ~ Maintain washroom access and out of the cold/shelter extension
 - ~ Expand digital access & inclusion supports
 - ~ Expand access to community and social service referral information
 - ~ Increasing access to TPL services in the City Shelter system
- TPL Foundation continues to prioritize highest need initiatives



thank you

collections (march – july)



E-Circulation

(OverDrive, Hoopla, RB Digital, Kanopy)

4,508,759

total checkouts +
circulation + plays

69,487

new users



E-Learning

(Lynda, BrainFuse, Mango Languages, Gale Courses)

362,912

sessions



E-Newspapers

(PressReader, NYTimes, Toronto Star archive, Globe & Mail archive)

130,900

click-throughs



Digital Archives + Other Web databases

(Ancestry, Consumer Reports, JSTOR, Academic OneFile)

1,488,651

pageviews

318,393

sessions

379,653

searches

library card registrations (march – july)



630 city of toronto
employee registrations

29,000 Instant digital card
(Overdrive) registrations

online programming (may – july)



312 programs
delivered

24,141 attendees /
views

Community Support



March

1 location converted to food bank

April & May

total of 12 locations converted to food banks

June

1 food bank location closed, 11 remain open

July

9 food bank locations closed, 2 remain open

TPL Pop-Up Food Bank Statistics

● Hampers Distributed ● Individuals Served ● Total Books Distributed ● Hampers Created

