

St. Lawrence Branch Relocation – Update

Date: December 1, 2025

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the acquisition of 339 Queen St. East to establish a new district branch for the community, replacing the existing and much smaller St. Lawrence branch which is currently classified as a neighbourhood branch.

Toronto Public Library (TPL) worked with CreateTO and the City's Corporate Real Estate division (CREM) to identify, negotiate and acquire 339 Queen Street East as the new site for the St. Lawrence branch. The property transaction closed on November 21, 2025.

This location will provide a much-needed larger district library while also offering additional benefits by relocating TPL's Information Technology Services (ITS) department from 120 Martin Ross Avenue, allowing that property to be transferred to the City for use in supporting broader City priorities.

The building at 339 Queen Street East is a recently renovated three-story heritage building with approximately 40,000 square feet of space comprised of 30,000 square feet above grade and 10,000 square feet in the lower level. The three floors above grade are ideal for a district branch and the lower level will serve as the future site of TPL's Information Technology Service offices and data centre.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The total cost to acquire the property was a base purchase price of \$26.2 million plus ancillary costs offset by development agreements with the vendor, resulting in a net cost of \$25.664 million. The acquisition of the property was negotiated in collaboration with the Corporate Real Estate Management Division and was approved by City Council. The property transaction closed on November 21, 2025.

Funding to acquire the Property and the disbursement of all anticipated costs associated with the acquisition and the upcoming renovations to deliver a modern and multi-functional district branch is included in the 2025-2034 Capital Budget and Plan for the Toronto Public Library, within the *St. Lawrence Relocation and Expansion* project budget (Cost Centres: CLB232-01 and CLB232-02) with a total project cost of \$43.1 million.

Now that the property has been acquired, the renovation scope and schedule will be determined and the project cash flows will be adjusted as required. The scope, schedule, and cost of relocating the IT department from 120 Martin Ross Avenue to the lower level of 339 Queen Street East will also be determined. The scope, schedule, and cost of relocating the IT department from 120 Martin Ross Avenue to 339 Queen St. East is not included within the project budget but will be accounted for in the multi-branch capital program within TPL's 2026-2035 Capital Budget and Plan submission.

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

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The relocation and significant expansion of the St. Lawrence branch helps to achieve various strategic plan priorities and goals including:

- Enhancing physical spaces to provide welcoming, safe, inclusive, and sustainable multi-use environments;
- Establishing spaces that build resilience and belonging in every neighbourhood;
- Creating in-branch environments that connect neighbourhoods and communities, offering opportunities for partnerships, civic engagement and resident participation.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The relocation and significant expansion of the St. Lawrence branch will improve the ability of the Library to provide existing and new services to equity-deserving groups within the catchment of this branch.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on July 23 and 24, 2025, City Council considered report [GG23.25 - Acquisition of Future Toronto Public Library Site – St. Lawrence Branch](#), which authorized the City to acquire 339 Queen St. East based on the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

At its closed meeting on December 2, 2024, the Board considered a confidential report titled *St. Lawrence Branch Relocation* and approved the relocation of the St. Lawrence branch to 339 Queen Street East (at Parliament Street) subject to successful negotiation for the purchase of the property.

At its meeting on March 28, 2022, the Board considered [St. Lawrence Branch – Relocation](#) and approved the relocation of the St. Lawrence branch to City-owned land at 125 The Esplanade, replacing previous plans for the branch on the First Parliament site at 271 Front Street East. This new site was identified by the City of Toronto and the relocation was necessary due to the uncertainties around the First Parliament site, which was expropriated by the Province. The relocation of the St. Lawrence branch to 125 The Esplanade was reviewed and

approved at the City's Strategic Program Management Committee (SPMC) meeting on December 3, 2021.

At the City Council meeting on November 9, 10 and 12, 2021 and as a part of the [First Parliament Site and Expropriation of City-owned Lands by Metrolinx for Transit Purposes](#), Council adopted the approach for negotiating compensation and settlement for the expropriation of the First Parliament site. This included requesting compensation for any costs related to TPL setting up and operating a temporary location as well as the request for the site to house a 25,000-30,000 square foot library.

On November 19, 2012, TPL presented a report to the City of Toronto Budget Committee, [Toronto Public Library – Location of St. Lawrence Branch at the First Parliament Site](#), requesting City Council to approve the relocation of the St. Lawrence Branch to the site of the First Parliament at 271 Front Street East. At the City Council meeting on February 20 and 21, 2013, Council approved the relocation of the St. Lawrence Branch to the First Parliament site at 271 Front Street East with construction slated to begin in 2016.

At its meeting on July 11, 12 and 13, 2012, Council considered the [Acquisition of the First Parliament Site, 271 Front Street East and 25 Berkeley Street](#) report and adopted a number of recommendations that allowed the City to gain ownership of the First Parliament of Canada Site through an exchange of lands at 48A Parliament Street and 281 Front Street East. 281 Front Street East was owned by the Library Board and it contained the Library's processing centre, facilities operations and delivery vehicles. The Council approval included funding for the relocation of the Library Processing Centre to City-owned land at 1076 Ellesmere Road. TPL also had future plans to relocate the St. Lawrence branch to 281 Front Street and those plans were revised as a result of this acquisition.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

TPL currently operates the St. Lawrence branch at 171 Front Street East, which is a City-owned/Toronto Community Housing Commission (TCHC) site. The branch is 4,833 square feet and is both significantly undersized and has substantial state of good repair issues due to the overall condition of the facility

and ongoing building maintenance issues resulting from the residential housing located above the branch.

The relocation of St. Lawrence branch has been part of TPL's capital plan since 2008, recognizing the requirement for a larger branch to meet the needs of this underserved community. Three locations have been previously considered: 281 Front Street East (the former site of the Library processing centre); 271 Front Street East (the site of the former First Parliament of Canada); and 125 The Esplanade.

Due to the fact that 271 Front Street East was expropriated by the Province and that the future of a library being built on this site was uncertain, staff investigated other options. At the City Council meeting on June 15, 2022, Council considered [Reviewing City-Building Options for the New St. Lawrence Library Site at 125 The Esplanade](#) and passed a motion for CreateTO and TPL to explore options for the 125 The Esplanade site to include other City and community uses, including affordable housing to be co-located with the library.

Through the feasibility review process, several issues were identified with the 125 The Esplanade site, including potentially contaminated soil, archaeological considerations, the constrained nature of the site, and the impact of potentially constructing residential units above the branch, which would have compromised the layout of the branch and resulted in increased costs, extensive delays associated with assessments and residential rezoning and protracted construction timelines.

TPL, working with CreateTO and CREM, collectively identified 339 Queen Street East (at Parliament) as the ideal site for the new St. Lawrence branch, meeting TPL's space and service requirements as identified in its Service Delivery Model.

This location will provide a much-needed larger district library while also relocating TPL's Information Technology Services (ITS) department from 120 Martin Ross Avenue, allowing that property to be transferred to the City for use in supporting broader City priorities. TPL staff are currently working with CreateTO to determine if the Facilities North Shop which currently operates out of 120 Martin Ross, can remain in its current space. If it becomes necessary to

relocate Facilities North staff to another location, this would most likely not occur until at least 2027.

COMMENTS

The building at 339 Queen Street East is a recently renovated three-story heritage building with approximately 40,000 square feet of space comprised of 30,000 square feet above grade and 10,000 square feet in the lower level. The three floors above grade are ideal for a district branch and the lower level will serve as the future site of TPL's ITS offices and data centre. This new location for the St. Lawrence branch delivers a much needed larger library in a substantially shorter timeframe and at lower cost than any of the previously considered locations.

Under the City's centralized authority for real estate transactions, City Council approval was required to purchase the property at 339 Queen Street East. The property title will be registered to the City of Toronto, with TPL having jurisdictional ownership for operating a district library and its IT services centre.

The property transaction closed November 21, 2025, as a result the details of this transaction may now be made public.

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SIGNATURE

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