



## STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

### Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Summary and Internal Consultation Phase One Results

**Date:** April 15, 2024  
**To:** Strategic Planning Steering Committee  
**From:** City Librarian

#### SUMMARY

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At its [January 29, 2024 meeting](#), the Toronto Public Library Board approved the focus areas for the environmental scan and the consultation plan for the new 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the environmental scan findings and the results from the first phase of the internal staff consultations that began in February.

Library staff have completed an environmental scan to gather information on external influences that may impact the library over the next five years. The environmental scan provides context for the overall strategic planning process, situates the Library in the broader environment and identifies important themes to consider in the development of the Library's priorities for the next five years.

From February to March, Toronto Public Library (TPL) hosted six Strategic Plan Staff Consultation Forums. The purpose of these forums was to gather ideas and input from library staff that will help shape TPL's next Strategic Plan. Over 400 staff members from across the organization attended these forums.

The results from the environmental scan and internal consultation will be considered along with the results of the phase one public consultation, which are currently being analyzed and will be reported to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in May. Together, these inputs from the phase one consultation will be used to inform the strategy session with the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in May. During this session, the Committee members will consider and provide feedback on the themes and plan for the second phase of consultation.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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This report has 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**

The findings from the environmental scan and consultation results will enable TPL to develop an impactful Strategic Plan that continues to fulfill its legislated mandate of providing a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the unique needs of the community.

## **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The environmental scan and the consultation plan for the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan have been developed considering TPL's Equity Statement and the City's Equity Lens. This ensures ongoing integration of access and the removal of barriers for equity-deserving groups in the City of Toronto. Accessibility and engagement of equity-deserving groups will be key components of the consultation and engagement process for the development of the Strategic

Plan, ensuring that the broadest range of voices are heard through the process, and that the Strategic Plan reflects the perspectives and needs of equity-deserving groups. The approach strives to achieve equitable outcomes for all.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting on December 4, 2023, the Board approved [Creating a New Strategic Plan: 2025-2029](#), including the terms of reference for the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Roadmap for development of the next Strategic Plan.

At its meeting on January 11, 2024, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee considered the [Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Focus Areas and Consultation Plan report](#) and recommended that the Board receive the areas of focus for the environmental scan for information and approve the consultation plan and implementation.

At its meeting on January 29, 2024, the Board received the areas of focus for the environmental scan as outlined in the [Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Focus Areas and Consultation Plan report](#) and approved the consultation plan and implementation.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

TPL's vision is to be recognized as the world's leading library by informing and inspiring Toronto and its communities, making Torontonians more resilient, more knowledgeable, more connected and more successful. As the city continues to grow and evolve, the Library plays an increasingly important role in providing the vital ingredients that Torontonians need to thrive.

To advance its vision, the Library is developing a new five-year strategic plan that will guide and shape its work. The plan will be informed by a comprehensive environmental scan, ongoing engagement, and consultation with staff, the public, and stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan describes the value and outcomes that the Library will deliver to Toronto's residents and communities. It is developed based on the following strategic planning principles:

1. Grounded in TPL's vision, mission, values, Statements and brand;
2. Responsive to City and community needs;
3. Integrated with the community; and
4. Outcome-focused, actionable and drives continuous improvement.

In December 2023, the TPL Board approved the Roadmap for developing the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. The first consultation phase included Staff Consultation Forums and a public survey and idea exchange. These consultations will help identify draft themes and were completed in March 2024. The second consultation phase begins in June and will refine and validate these themes.

## COMMENTS

### **Environmental Scan Summary (Attachment 1)**

Library staff completed an environmental scan to gather information on external influences that may impact the library over the next five years. The environmental scan provides context for the overall strategic planning process, situates the Library in the broader environment and identifies important themes to consider in the development of the Library's priorities for the next five years. It also provides input for subsequent strategic analyses, such as scenario planning and SWOT analysis.

The environmental scan is organized around PESTLE-type analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental) and aligned with the City. The scan focuses on 13 areas:

1. Arts and Culture
2. Democracy, Government and Civic Engagement
3. Economy and Work
4. Education and Training
5. Environment and Sustainability
6. Housing

7. Mental Health and Well-being
8. Non-profits
9. Public Safety
10. Reconciliation with Indigenous Communities
11. Social Development
  - a. Poverty and Homelessness
  - b. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights
  - c. Children and Youth
  - d. Newcomers (Immigration and Settlement)
  - e. Seniors and Caregivers
12. Technology
13. Transportation

While the primary focus was Toronto and Ontario, staff also looked at national and global trends. Library staff identified the top three-to-five trends in each area and assessed them with a library-specific perspective. Staff consulted secondary sources for information and conducted internal consultations with subject matter experts as needed to inform the scans in specific areas.

The summary for each focus area includes TPL initiatives and Urban Libraries Council (ULC) Innovations Initiatives as examples of how TPL and other libraries have supported these focus areas. Please note that these initiatives are just a sample and not an exhaustive list. The summary also includes an overview of Toronto's population and demographic forecast as context, as well as a scan of related industry trends and library strategic plans from other jurisdictions.

### **Internal Consultation Phase One Results**

From February to March, TPL hosted six Strategic Plan Staff Consultation Forums. The purpose of these forums was to gather ideas and input from library staff that will help shape TPL's next Strategic Plan and the priorities for the next five years.

Over 400 staff members from across the organization attended these forums, which were designed to be interactive and collaborative. Through fun activities and conversations with their colleagues, staff were able to brainstorm new ideas and provide valuable input. These forums also provided an opportunity to

recognize the accomplishments of the current Strategic Plan and reflect on the successes and resilience of the past five years.

The comments provided by the staff in all six forums were analyzed using qualitative data analysis tools. Eight themes were identified as important areas that staff identified TPL should focus on over the next five years. The themes are indicated below, and more information about the Staff Consultation Forums results are in Attachment 2.

**1. Addressing the digital divide**

Comments focused on technology access, such as printing, Wi-Fi hotspots, and laptop lending, as well as developing digital literacy skills, especially for seniors and other equity-deserving groups.

**2. Providing welcoming spaces**

Comments focused on the importance of libraries as safe “third spaces” that are welcoming for all and are multi-purpose, including quiet spaces for study and work.

**3. Supporting vulnerable persons**

Comments focused on expanding access to social services by partnering with the City and community agencies to support vulnerable populations, including those with mental health challenges, addictions, and those experiencing homelessness.

**4. Developing skills to address cost of living crisis**

Comments focused on how the library can support financial literacy, life skills, food security, housing affordability, and individuals seeking to enter the workforce or searching for new jobs as the cost of living increases.

**5. Creating community connections**

Comments focused on how the library can foster social connections and build strong communities, responding to the epidemic of loneliness and isolation.

**6. Fostering literacy and lifelong learning**

Comments focused on the importance of the library in developing a love for reading, enhancing information and media literacy, and supporting lifelong

learning for personal and professional development.

**7. Building staff capacity**

Staff are adapting to changing needs and increasing demands. Comments focused on investing in staff tools, learning, well-being, and professional development, ensuring the right staffing resources and fostering a collaborative environment for knowledge-sharing.

**8. Improving public safety**

Comments focused on improving safety for staff and customers including hiring more specialized roles like Library Safety Specialists, and de-escalation and conflict resolution training.

**Next Steps**

The environmental scan summary and internal consultation results will be considered along with the phase one public consultation results, which are currently being analysed and will be reported to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in May. Together, these inputs from the phase one consultation will be used to inform the strategy session with the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in May. During this session, the Committee members will consider and recommend the themes and plan for the second consultation phase to the Library Board at the May 27 Board meeting.

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## **SIGNATURE**

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City Librarian

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Summary  
Attachment 2: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Summary and  
Internal Consultation Phase One Results Presentation

## Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Summary

### Introduction

Library staff completed an environmental scan to gather information on external influences that may impact the library over the next five years. The environmental scan provides context for the overall strategic planning process, situates the Library in the broader environment and identifies important themes to consider in the development of the Library's priorities for the next five years. It also provides input for subsequent strategic analyses, such as scenario planning and SWOT analysis.

The environmental scan is organized around PESTLE-type analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental) and aligned with the City. Thirteen focus areas were identified. While the primary focus was Toronto and Ontario, staff also looked at national and global trends. Library staff identified the top 3-5 trends in each area and assessed them with a library-specific perspective. Staff consulted secondary sources for information and conducted internal consultations with subject matter experts as needed to inform the scans in specific areas.

The summary for each focus area includes TPL initiatives and Urban Libraries Council (ULC) Innovations Initiatives as examples of how TPL and other libraries have supported these focus areas. Please note that these initiatives are just a sample and not an exhaustive list. The summary also includes an overview of Toronto's population and demographic forecast as context, as well as a scan of related industry trends and library strategic plans from other jurisdictions.

### Contents

#### Toronto's Population - Context

#### 13 environmental scan areas

1. Arts and Culture
2. Democracy, Government and Civic Engagement
3. Economy and Work
4. Education and Training
5. Environment and Sustainability

6. Housing
7. Mental Health and Well-being
8. Non-profits
9. Public Safety
10. Reconciliation with Indigenous Communities
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  - a. Poverty and Homelessness
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## **Related Industries**

## **Summary of Library Strategic Plans from other Jurisdictions**

### **Toronto's Population - Context**

For overall context to the 13 scan areas, below are the current demographic trends for Toronto and projected demographic changes.

#### **Growing population**

- The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) population is expected to increase by 46% by 2046.<sup>1</sup>
- Toronto is increasingly diverse and immigration levels remain high.<sup>2</sup>

#### **More diverse**

- In 2021, 57% of the residents of the metropolitan area belonged to a visible minority group, compared with 51% in 2016, and 14% in 1981.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Aging population**

- The median and average population of Toronto is 40. While the 65+ group has doubled since 2001, the 0-14 group has remained stagnant.<sup>4</sup>
- Toronto's population is aging at a rapid pace.<sup>5</sup>

## **1. Arts and Culture**

### **Arts contributes to better health and academic outcomes**

- Participation in arts, culture, and heritage activities is associated with better self-reported health and mental well-being.<sup>6 7</sup>
- Incorporating arts and culture in education improves academic outcomes, particularly for low-income students.<sup>8</sup>
- 80% of Ontarians believe art is important for their quality of life.<sup>9</sup>

### **Builds community and cultural understanding**

- Art fosters a sense of community and promotes cultural and social inclusion.<sup>10 11</sup>
- 89% of Torontonians believe that art makes the city a better place to live.<sup>12</sup>
- 71% of Torontonians are interested in art that explores social and political issues.<sup>13</sup>

### **Digital transformation and emerging technologies**

- Digital art expands access, but some organizations need technical support and effective online community-building and engagement strategies.<sup>14</sup>
- Artists are leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, and virtual reality to generate ideas and streamline productivity.<sup>15</sup> But the use of Generative AI also creates challenges for artists related to copyright and potential job losses.<sup>16</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- [Toronto Arts Council](#) is the City's funding body for artists and arts organization. Its annual funding supports exhibitions, performances, readings, and workshops that reach over five million people.
- [Toronto's Culture Sector \(2024-2034\) Action Plan](#) is in development to guide cultural services, policy, and programming over the next ten years. It prioritizes equity and ensures that residents can engage with the arts.
- [Indigenous Arts & Culture Partnerships Fund](#) supports partnerships and collaborations that create new opportunities and visibility for Indigenous-led arts and culture.
- [Toronto Public Art Strategy \(2020-2030\)](#) sets out a 10-year plan to enhance the City's commitment to public art.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- [tpl:map Program](#) provides free admission to Toronto's arts, cultural experiences, and attractions.

- [Artists in the Library](#) program creates new collaborative opportunities for Toronto artists and increases art access in underserved communities.
- [Art Exhibit Space](#) – TPL offers art display space at many library branches.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiative examples**

- [Miami-Dade Public Library System’s Climate of Art: Reimagine the Environment](#) – Designed the Climate of Art (COA) program to inspire library patrons to create artwork reflecting the impact of human populations on the earth.
- [Detroit Public Library’s Black Bottom Street View Exhibit](#) - Curator Emily Kutil used photographs from the Library Historical Collection that documented Detroit’s former Black Bottom neighborhood before it was razed for urban renewal and development in the 1950s.

## **2. Democracy, Government and Civic Engagement**

### **Toronto elected new mayor, Olivia Chow**

- Olivia Chow campaigned on a platform that promoted affordable housing, renters' rights and improvements to public transportation. She promised to make Toronto "more caring, affordable, and safer for everyone."<sup>17</sup>
- Some of her proposed initiatives include expanding the Toronto Community Crisis Service city-wide, creating an Emergency Response Transformation Team to address long 911 wait times, extending library hours and ensuring that every TPL branch is open seven days a week, and increasing property taxes to finance essential services.<sup>18</sup>

### **Budget pressures**

- The City is facing a budget pressure of \$1.776 billion due to increased demand for refugee claimant support, shelter spaces, and decreased transit revenues. To address significant budget pressures, the City has implemented a long-term financial plan (LTFP), leveraged multi-year bridging actions, and advocated for support from provincial and federal governments.<sup>19</sup>

### **Age and voter turnout**

- Canadians aged 18-30 are less likely to vote at the federal, provincial and municipal elections, compared to older age groups.<sup>20</sup>

- Young people and racialized Canadians are more likely to participate in non-electoral activities such as protests/demonstrations, signing petitions and participating in cultural/hobby organizations.<sup>21</sup>

### **Socioeconomic status and civic literacy**

- Level of education plays a significant role on voting in Canada and worldwide. People with higher levels of education are more likely to vote.<sup>22</sup>
- 54% of youth who belong to population groups designed as visible minorities reported they were likely to vote in the next Canadian federal election, which was significantly lower than the 77% among non-visible minorities.<sup>23</sup>

### **Intellectual freedom and censorship**

- In recent years, there has been an uptick in book challenges and removal of books written by or about marginalized and equity-deserving communities, from libraries, globally.<sup>24</sup>
- Canadian Federation of Library Associations' (CFLA) 2022 book challenges report shows that, in Canada, the top five most challenged books involve gender identity, sexuality and growth, and accusations of racism against minority groups. 2022 was also the first year that the survey recorded a significant number of incidents of vandalism against displays.<sup>25</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- [City of Toronto Official Plan](#) is intended to ensure that the City of Toronto evolves, improves and realises its full potential in areas such as transit, land use development, and the environment.
- [City of Toronto Corporate Strategic Plan](#) sets out Toronto's highest priorities and creates a common understanding of the work the City will focus on. [Long-Term Financial Plan](#) provides a framework for longer-term financial decision-making, including strategies and key actions to facilitate multi-year, integrated, strategic decision-making.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- [Intellectual Freedom Statement](#) demonstrates TPL's commitment to promoting Intellectual Freedom.
- [The Book Sanctuary Collection](#) represents books that have been challenged, censored or removed from a public library or school in North America.

- [What's at Stake program series](#) explores what's at stake when intellectual freedom is threatened.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Prince George's County Memorial Library System's "Rock Banned" Intellectual Freedom Campaign](#) - The PGCMLS Communication and Outreach Division developed a public awareness campaign called "Rock Banned" to inform customers about intellectual freedom and draw attention to the increase in book challenges nationally.
- [Salt Lake County Library's Let's Be Neighbors: Connecting to Civic Engagement](#) - A virtual series focused on timely and relevant areas of public concern, presented by local experts.

## **3. Economy and Work**

### **High and increasing cost of living**

- The Consumer Price index rose 3.9% in 2023, the highest since 1991, following a 40 year high increase in 2022 of 6.8%.<sup>26</sup>
- Food and housing prices in particular have continued to increase.<sup>27</sup>

### **Unemployment disproportionately higher among equity-deserving groups**

- Visible minorities experience higher unemployment rates than non-visible minorities.<sup>28</sup>
- According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, the employment rate is lower among people with disabilities. Only 62% of working-age adults (25-64 years of age) with disabilities were employed, compared to 78% without disabilities.<sup>29</sup>

### **Skills gap and labour shortage**

- Toronto labour market is expanding – and grew by 3.4% in 2023.<sup>30</sup> However, there is a significant labour shortage in certain sectors such as the service and food industries.<sup>31</sup>
- Digital and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) skills are the biggest category of skills lacking in the Canadian workforce.<sup>32</sup>
- General office skills including the use of Microsoft Office Suite saw an increase in demand, with over 20% of job postings mentioning these skills.<sup>33</sup>
- Construction has been impacted by a skilled trades shortage with not enough younger workers to fill the gap.<sup>34</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- [Toronto's Economy Action Plan](#) is in development to guide economic development policies, programming and decision making for the next 10 years.
- [CreateTO](#) is a City agency launched in 2018 to lead a new City-wide real estate service delivery model.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- [Virtual Interview Rooms](#) are quiet, welcoming library spaces that job seekers can book to participate in virtual job interviews.
- [Career Coaches in Residence Program](#) offers career and job search help for younger adults.
- [Let's Learn Tech Online](#) provides free, interactive, and self-paced online courses from Cisco Networking Academy that introduce important technology concepts and help develop the skills necessary to participate in the modern workforce.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Los Angeles Public Library's Be a Successful Street Vendor](#) – A mobile program for street vendors to learn business, digital and English-language skills to be successful business owners.
- [Prince George's County Memorial Library System's Creating a Workforce Development Ecosystem](#) - During the pandemic, PGCMLS formed a workforce team to bridge employability gaps focused on the digital divide by providing innovative virtual programming, training and community partnerships.

## **4. Education and Training**

### **Violence in Ontario schools**

- Ontario is investing \$1.8 million in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to work with community organizations to address incidents of school violence by supporting inclusion and engagement in schools.<sup>35</sup>

### **Changes to curriculum to support literacy learning**

- Students suffered deep learning setbacks in reading and math during the pandemic. Math and reading scores of Canadian students continue to decline steeply.<sup>36</sup>

- Starting in September 2025, Ontario will implement the "Back to Basics" curriculum initiative, which aims to strengthen literacy and math skills among young learners.<sup>37</sup>

### **Student mental health and social services needs**

- Loneliness has doubled among TDSB secondary students, with 44% reporting frequent loneliness in 2021. This trend is consistent with the global rise of high school student loneliness, which has been increasing even before the pandemic.<sup>38</sup>
- For the 2023-2024 school year, the Ontario government has increased funding for student mental health in schools to a historic \$114 million.<sup>39</sup>

### **Digital literacy and use of Artificial Intelligence**

- The use of AI in elementary and high schools raises ethical concerns among educators, but also presents an opportunity to encourage critical thinking.<sup>40</sup>
- The Language and English curriculum in Ontario includes Digital Media Literacy as a separate discipline, reflecting the impact of emerging technologies on communication.<sup>41</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- [Children's Services Plan](#) guides the planning and delivery of early learning and child care services.
- [Toronto Youth Equity Strategy](#) identifies 28 key issues faced by youth most vulnerable to involvement in violence and crime that the City and its partners must address.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- [Ready for Reading](#) is a research-based set of free programs that supports early childhood development.
- [After School Clubs](#) is a place for kids ages 6-12 to learn new things, meet other kids and have fun.
- [Youth Hubs](#) are a welcoming place for teens after school and in the summer, where helpful staff are always available to provide school support and connect teens with community resources.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Queens Public Library's The World of Work for Teens](#) - A collaboration with Touro University and corporate partners to offer a selective, six-week course

for students in grades 10-12 to prepare for careers and college and learn financial literacy and civic leadership skills.

- [Toledo Lucas County Public Library's Never Too Early: Reading in the NICU](#) - The library's Ready to Read program gives children in the NICU and their families a precious avenue for bonding and growth as the reading specialists work with families in-person and virtually.

## 5. Environment and Sustainability

### Climate change and UN's Sustainable Development Goals

- Global average temperature in 2023 was the highest ever recorded and the 10 warmest years on record have occurred in the past decade.<sup>42</sup> Ontario is heating up faster than the global average.<sup>43</sup>
- Climate change will significantly impact the environment and communities in the coming years. Toronto is experiencing weather, health, and immigration effects of climate change.<sup>44</sup>
- Greenhouse gas emissions are causing global temperatures to rise and are expected to increase by more than 3 degrees Celsius by 2100, even with current global emission reduction policies in place.<sup>45</sup>
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are increasingly recognized as a blueprint to achieve better, more inclusive and sustainable future for all. The Government of Canada has identified concrete actions on the 17 SDGs including reducing poverty, building sustainable economic growth, supporting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, advancing gender equality and taking action on climate change and clean energy.<sup>46</sup>

### Resource consumption putting pressure on natural environment

- Globally, human consumption and resource use are exerting pressure on the natural environment. People have significantly altered 75% of land and 66% of oceans. Additionally, 85% of wetlands, which filter and clean water, have been lost.<sup>47</sup>
- Businesses, industry and institutions produce over half of Ontario's municipal solid waste.<sup>48</sup>

### Environmental inequity

- Environmental inequity has a long history in Canada with decades of research repeatedly showing that environmental harms (e.g. air pollution, toxic waste) disproportionately affect neighbourhoods with greater

percentages of low-income, Indigenous, Black and/or other racialized communities.<sup>49</sup>

- Vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected.<sup>50</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- [TransformTO Net Zero Strategy](#) triggers new and accelerated implementation actions to drive down community-wide emissions, particularly in the short term, and establishes the trajectory needed to reach net zero by 2040.
- [Electric Vehicle Strategy](#) supports increased electric vehicle adoption in a way that is equitable and realizes the co-benefits through improved air quality and economic opportunities achieved by shifting to zero-carbon energy transportation.
- [Resilience Strategy](#) sets out a vision, goals, and actions to help Toronto survive, adapt and thrive in the face of any challenge, particularly climate change and growing inequities.
- The [Sustainable City of Toronto Fleets Plan](#) provides an overview of the City Fleets' objectives in addressing climate mitigation and adaptation with strategies for transitioning City Fleets to sustainable, climate-resilient and low-carbon operations.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- [Environmentalist in Residence Program](#) invites industry experts to lead conservation and sustainability programs, workshops, and community consultations.
- The [reconstruction and expansion of the Centennial branch](#) will be TPL's first Net Zero branch.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Arlington Public Library's Energy Lending Library](#) - Arlington launched the nation's first Energy Lending Library, offering take-home tools to spot energy opportunities at home.
- [Salt Lake City Public Library's The Plot Community Garden and Seed Library](#) - During the pandemic, staff gardeners took over the Community Garden and donated fresh produce worth over \$100 every week to a women's homeless shelter. They also mailed over 700 assorted seed envelopes to patrons who

ordered online from the Seed Library.

## 6. Housing

### **Lack of affordability and increase in homelessness**

- Rental affordability is set to decline in the next few years, as demand is outstripping supply.<sup>51</sup> In 2024, the rental market will become more competitive, putting significant pressure on rent because there are fewer options available.<sup>52</sup>
- The cost of housing is increasing much faster than incomes. 42% of Toronto tenants spend more than 30% of their income on shelter.<sup>53</sup>
- Homelessness is increasingly affecting more people in Ontario and Toronto with people younger than 40 becoming the main demographic.<sup>54</sup>
- Over 35% of young adults aged 20 to 34 still live with their parents due to unaffordable housing.<sup>55</sup>

### **Population outpace housing growth**

- New homes in Canada lagged population growth in 2022. Toronto is expected to see a 100k shortage of housing units by 2031, as growth exceeds development.<sup>56</sup>

### **Newcomers lack suitable housing**

- More than half of newcomers in tenant households lack suitable housing. Newcomers also experience 11 times as much discrimination when looking for rental housing as non-newcomers.<sup>57</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- [HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan](#) proposes a number of actions to address critical needs across the housing spectrum including emergency shelters and transitional housing, social and supportive housing, market and affordable rental housing and homeownership.
- [Tenants First](#) implements improvements to Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC).
- [George Street Revitalization](#) transforms Seaton House men's shelter into a world-class facility providing specialized care for vulnerable populations.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- TPL's partnership with Access to Housing helps people with their Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing application and MyAccessHousingTO platform.

- In partnership with Gerstein Crisis Center, TPL began hosting Crisis Workers as part of a pilot to extend [Toronto Community Crisis Service](#) into communities; the pilot is at four branches from July 2023 to December 2024, with support from the city starting in 2025.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [King County Library System's Find Financial Assistance](#) - Patrons can email or call the library to describe their need, ranging from small business loans to unemployment claims to assistance with rent, food or tuition. A Financial Assistance Navigator will respond with a customized list of relevant community resources and programs.
- [Hartford Public Library's Immigrant Career Pathways Initiative](#) - Career Pathways offers free training for immigrants to work in food, tourism and hospitality industries by providing classes and certifications in food preparation and services, job readiness and internships in kitchens for on-the-job training.

## **7. Mental Health and Well-being**

### **Declining mental health and underfunding of social services**

- Mental health and well-being issues were on the rise among Canadians. The pandemic exacerbated this trend, which continues as a result of high-inflation and interest rates.<sup>58</sup>
- Housing affordability and poverty are stress factors that contribute to an individual's physical and mental health and well-being.<sup>59</sup>
- Consistent underfunding of mental health services and insufficient community supports have placed libraries at the frontlines in dealing with people in crisis.<sup>60</sup>
- Toronto is experiencing a heightened number of non-fatal and fatal opioid overdoses within the overall community, as well as within the shelter system. This is primarily due to the increasing toxicity and unpredictability of the unregulated drug supply.<sup>61</sup>

### **Equity-deserving and vulnerable groups have worse health**

- Social determinants of health such as income and race drive health inequity.<sup>62</sup>
- Mental illness affects people of all ages, education, income levels, and cultures; however, systemic inequalities such as racism, poverty,

homelessness, discrimination, colonial and gender-based violence, among others, can worsen mental health.<sup>63</sup>

- Canadian youth (15 to 29) reported worse mental health than any age group both before and during the pandemic.<sup>64</sup>

### **Stress on health system**

- Mental illness costs Canada an estimated \$50 billion a year in health care costs, lost productivity, and reductions in health-related quality of life.<sup>65</sup>
- Canadians looking for mental health services face long wait times and a limited number of affordable options, which can act like barriers.<sup>66</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- [Our Health, Our City: A mental health, substance use, harm-reduction and treatment strategy for Toronto](#) is a comprehensive strategy to reduce substance use related harms and promote mental health, well-being, and safety for all Torontonians.
- [Toronto Public Health's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan](#) is in development. A [presentation](#) was delivered to the Board of Health outlining the project so far.
- [Toronto Community Crisis Service](#) provides non-police-led, community-based, client centred, and trauma-informed response to mental health crisis calls and wellness checks.
- [SafeTO: Toronto's Ten-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#) addresses the systemic issues in society that contribute to unsafe living situations.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- In partnership with Gerstein Crisis Center, TPL began hosting Crisis Workers as part of a pilot to extend [Toronto Community Crisis Service](#) into communities; the pilot is at four branches from July 2023 to December 2024, with support from the city starting in 2025.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Santa Clara County Library District's Lending Mindfulness: A Mental Health App Pilot](#) - The first and only public library to partner with Headspace, a service offering 1,000+ hours of virtual meditation classes for all ages.
- [Edmonton Public Library's Taking Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn to Families](#) - A highly successful early literacy program offered in partnership with health

professionals since 2005 to enhance communication and social connection in young children.

## 8. Non-profits

### Financial crunch due to economic crisis

- 83% of organizations saw an increase in their costs compared to only 64% in 2021.<sup>67</sup>
- Almost two-thirds of non-profits reported an increase in demand for programs and services. At the same time, half reported pandemic-related losses in revenue.<sup>68</sup>

### More demand for non-profit services

- 74% of organizations reported an increase in demand for services in 2022, a significant jump from 2021 (63%) and 2020 (47%). The increase is across all subsectors (e.g., social services, health, environment).<sup>69</sup>

### Volunteering is down as civic engagement declines

- Since the pandemic, Toronto residents interact with each other and volunteer less than before. People are less likely to volunteer and donate to social services when civic engagement is down.<sup>70</sup>

### Related City initiatives

- The [DonateTO](#) program partners with individuals, associations, and businesses to support the community.

### Related TPL initiatives examples

- [Friends of the Library](#) is a volunteer organization that supports the programs and services of TPL through fundraising and volunteering.
- TPL has a number of [volunteer programs](#) including Adult Literacy Services, Leading to Reading, Seniors eConnect, and Teen Councils.

### Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples

- [Sonoma County Library's Virtual Adult Literacy Tutor Training](#) - Adult Literacy staff created a six-module virtual tutor training program to streamline content delivery and provide an avenue for recruiting and training new volunteer tutors during the pandemic.
- [Queens Public Library's Food Justice for Queens](#) - Created by the Volunteer Services team, "Food Justice for Queens" is a program that reduces barriers

to reliable resources and information about nutrition and healthy eating.

## 9. Public Safety

### Increase in violent crimes

- Toronto witnessed a 15% increase in its Violent Crime Severity Index in 2022. The city also saw notable rises in auto theft, break-ins, and assaults in 2023.<sup>71</sup>
- Violent crimes by teenagers have increased due to pandemic isolation and social media influence.<sup>72</sup>

### Rising safety concerns in public spaces

- There were 1,068 violent incidents reported in 2022 on the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), a steep increase from 734 incidents in 2021 and 679 incidents in 2018.<sup>73</sup>
- In 2023, 77% of elementary school teachers in Ontario said they have personally experienced violence or witnessed violence against another staff.<sup>74</sup>
- Safety concerns are on the rise in North American public libraries, reporting more frequent and intense violent incidents overall, including bomb threats and homicides.<sup>75 76 77</sup>

### Racism and hate crimes trends often correlate with global events

- Canada witnessed a concerning surge in hate crimes amid the pandemic. Anti-Asian racist incidents soared by 47%, with violent attacks up 42%, predominantly against women.<sup>78</sup>
- Hate crimes increased by 7% in 2022, mainly targeting Jewish, LGBTQ, and Black communities.<sup>79</sup>
- In 2023, Toronto saw a 42% surge in hate crimes, with Jewish and Muslim communities being the primary targets due to the Israel– Hamas war.<sup>80</sup>

### Overrepresentation of visible minorities in enforcement actions

- Disparities in police interactions and custody admissions persist with overrepresentation of Black, Indigenous and Middle Eastern individuals in enforcement actions.<sup>81</sup>

## **Related City initiatives**

- [Toronto Community Crisis Service](#) provides non-police-led, community-based, client centred, and trauma-informed response to mental health crisis calls and wellness checks.
- [SafeTO: Toronto's Ten-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#) addresses the systemic issues in society that contribute to unsafe living situations.

## **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- In 2022, TPL held a Discussion Table on Alternate Approaches to Safety and Security, leading to the development of a comprehensive, multi-year Safety and Security Action Plan. Substantial progress has been made in a range of areas, as summarized in an [update to the Library Board in January 2024](#).
- TPL has added a new staff role of Library Safety Specialists (LSS) and hired six new staff into these positions in 2023 as a pilot program. LSS roles work under the leadership and direction of the Manager, Welcoming Spaces to create a safe and welcoming environment for everyone at TPL.
- TPL also added the role of Manager, Public Spaces to provide oversight of all security programs and systems. In 2023, TPL completed a comprehensive review of physical site security including CCTV cameras, site access and related systems and processes.
- TPL implemented a new Incident Reporting Management System to identify, track and analyze incident trends, and share findings with staff.

## **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [San Antonio Public Library's Enhanced Library Card](#) - The library worked with local advocacy organizations to develop the Enhanced Library Card (ELC). It is a San Antonio Public Library Card that has a person's name, picture and other personal information printed on it. The San Antonio Police Department, for example, accepts the ELC as a form of photo identification for purposes of public safety.
- [Cambridge Public Library's Crisis Planning for Libraries Attached to Schools](#) - Recent events at schools caused the library to review their policies on crisis situations and the role the library plays in rapid response to security threats.

## 10. Reconciliation with Indigenous Communities

### Addressing colonialism and cultural genocide

- Legacy of colonial practices, like residential schools, still impact Indigenous communities and have resulted in ongoing inter-generational trauma.<sup>82</sup>

### Health and safety challenges

- Indigenous communities grapple with poverty, food insecurity, and limited healthcare access.<sup>83</sup>
- There's a pressing issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ persons with homicide rate six times higher than other groups.<sup>84</sup>
- Mental health and addiction challenges, especially among Indigenous youth, are widespread.<sup>85</sup>

### Socioeconomic disparities

- Substandard housing conditions are prevalent within Indigenous communities. 23% of Indigenous people in Toronto experience homelessness.<sup>86</sup>
- Indigenous individuals, especially women and youth, face a disproportionate impact on employment and economic security, which increased during the pandemic.<sup>87</sup>
- Indigenous people are incarcerated at younger ages, denied bail more often, and overrepresented in segregation, remand custody and as high-risk offenders. The rate of incarceration for Indigenous women is a 15.4 times higher than non-Indigenous women.<sup>88</sup>

### Cultural revitalization and land rights

- Preserving Indigenous languages and cultures is vital, with clear mental health benefits from active use and learning.<sup>89</sup>

### Related City initiatives

- [2022-2032 Reconciliation Action Plan](#) is the City's Reconciliation Action Plan. It has 10 Guiding Principles of Truth and Reconciliation and 28 actionable items outlined.
- The [City of Toronto Indigenous Affairs Office](#) (IAO) supports City divisions in their work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and all urban Indigenous communities.

- [Toronto Indigenous Health Strategy](#) informs the way Toronto Public health and Ontario Health Toronto Region work toward improving Indigenous health outcomes in the city.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- TPL's [Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives](#) fosters culturally safe spaces, and educates the public on Truth and Reconciliation, residential schools, and treaty relationships.
- [TPL Reconciliation Statement](#) articulates 6 goals for reconciliation: improve relationships, remove barriers, amplify voices, indigenize spaces, celebrate culture, and boost staff learning opportunities.
- [Ethenonnhawahstihnen'](#) is TPL's first branch with an Indigenous name. Ethenonnhawahstihnen' means "where they had a good and beautiful life" in Wendat.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Spokane Public Library's Winter IndigiQueer Event](#) - Hosted in partnership with Spectrum Center Spokane, the Winter IndigiQueer Celebration was created to amplify and celebrate queer and indigenous voices in the Spokane community.
- [Milton Public Library's Indigenization of Beaty Branch](#) - An Indigenous garden was planted in spring 2022 at Beaty Branch with a view to centre Indigenous ways of knowing about the land, plants and medicines.

## **11. Social Development**

### **Poverty and Homelessness**

#### **Poverty and homelessness remain high in large Canadian cities**

- Toronto is ranked #3 in poverty in Canada (10%). This is mostly due to surging cost of shelter, but is affected by the cost of living crisis overall.<sup>90</sup>
- Immigrants and refugees are also more likely to end up homeless, even if they were not homeless prior to arriving in Toronto, due to cost of housing.<sup>91</sup>

#### **Toronto is experiencing a cost of living crisis**

- According to the Ontario Living Wage Network, people in the GTA need a \$25.05/hour wage to be earning a living wage, but the minimum wage in Ontario is currently \$16.55/hour.<sup>92</sup>

- Cost of food increased by 10% in 2022 and again in 2023. High cost of food is one of biggest drivers of the high living wage requirement.<sup>93</sup>

### **Poverty is systemic**

- In 2020, child poverty in Canada decreased by about half, due to an increase in government child benefits and pandemic relief benefits.<sup>94</sup>

## **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights**

### **Racism and discrimination**

- 61% of racialized Torontonians who experience discrimination, say they are discriminated against because of their ethnicity or race.<sup>95</sup>
- A number of factors negatively affect health of Indigenous, Black and other racialized people in Canada, including: psychological stress of living in a racist environment, unequal economic opportunities, poor housing, lack of food security, inequitable access to education and other social resources. These negative outcomes compound each other and are reflective of the systemic nature of racism in Canadian society.<sup>96</sup>

### **Anti-Black racism**

- 76% of Black Torontonians experience discrimination. Among the largest racial identity groups in the city, Black Torontonians have the most frequent experiences of discrimination.<sup>97</sup>
- Anti-Black racism in the education system leads to the over-disciplining and criminalization of Black youth, bringing them disproportionately into contact with police. Black people are overrepresented in prisons and the criminal justice system.<sup>98</sup>

### **2SLGBTQ+ communities**

- 2SLGBTQ+ people face significant challenges in adverse socioeconomic outcomes, including lower education achievements, increased unemployment rates and inadequate access to housing, health care and financial services.<sup>99</sup>
- 2SLGBTQ+ youth are especially vulnerable to mental health concerns and face increased risk of physical and sexual exploitation, substance use and suicide.<sup>100</sup>
- Queer and trans youth face higher rates of homelessness due to being kicked out of their homes or feeling unsafe in shelters. In Canada, 25-40% of

homeless youth identify as 2SLGBTQ+. In Toronto, 21% of youth in shelters identify as 2SLGBTQ+ (2SLGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population but underrepresented in shelters).<sup>101</sup>

## **Women**

- Gender-based and intimate partner violence epidemic was declared in Toronto in July 2023. Women, girls and gender diverse people living with disabilities, precarious immigration status, Indigenous women and girls, racialized and newcomer women and girls, as well as trans and non-binary people, face increased levels of violence and are at greater risk of intimate partner violence.<sup>102</sup>
- Racialized women are disproportionately represented in low-paying sectors and earn less than non-racialized women in several industries.<sup>103</sup>

## **Individuals with Disabilities**

- In 2022, 27% of Canadians aged 15 years or older, or 8 million people, have one or more disabilities. This is a 5% increase from 2017.<sup>104</sup>
- Nearly half of Canadians with disabilities faced financial challenges due to the pandemic.<sup>105</sup>
- 6 in 10 persons with disabilities experienced barriers related to accessing indoor and outdoor public spaces.<sup>106</sup>
- Mental health-related disabilities saw a significant increase in 2022, rising from 33% in 2017 to 39%. Women are more likely to experience severe disabilities than men, with 43% of women and 39% of men affected.<sup>107</sup>

## **Forcibly displaced individuals**

- In 2023, Canada processed the highest count of applications from asylum seekers looking to take refuge in over a decade, with the growing number of global conflicts and crises.<sup>108</sup>
- Most recently in Toronto, asylum seekers turned away by local shelters had no choice but to sleep on city streets due to lack of supports.<sup>109</sup>

## **Children and Youth**

### **Social isolation and loneliness**

- Lack of in-person connection for children and youth during different lockdowns and public health restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic led to downstream impacts on child well-being.<sup>110</sup>

### **Worsening mental health**

- COVID-19 public health measures had negative impacts on Toronto's children and youth in areas of mental health, substance use, nutrition and physical activity.<sup>111</sup>

### **Increased screen time and physical inactivity**

- The COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact on the physical activity and screen time of youth, in particular among girls.<sup>112</sup>

### **Digital media literacy**

- Young Canadians report learning how to find and verify information online primarily from their parents or guardians and teachers. 4 in 10 report wanting to learn more about both of these activities.<sup>113</sup>
- Parents and digital mentors require digital media literacy supports that promote a balanced approach to digital health and well-being.<sup>114</sup>

### **Newcomers (Immigration and Settlement)**

#### **Higher unemployment**

- Racialized minorities and immigrants experienced greater unemployment and underemployment collectively.<sup>115</sup>
- If passed, the Ontario government will soon introduce legislation that would make it the first province in Canada to ban the use of Canadian work experience as a requirement for job applications to help internationally trained immigrants.<sup>116</sup>

#### **Lack of access to social capital and diverse networks**

- Lack of professional connections, directly linked to a person's social capital, is the greatest barrier to accessing employment.<sup>117</sup>

#### **Supports needed for good health**

- Newcomers commonly undergo feelings of loneliness, depression and social isolation upon arriving in Canada, especially when leaving family and friends behind. Emotional and psychological distress can be caused by unfair treatment, especially in the labour market.<sup>118</sup>

#### **Lack of government support**

- Newcomers with high level of English language skills, education and experience, still experience career-related hurdles.<sup>119</sup>
- Immigrants with lack of financial supports generally live in overcrowded accommodations; have difficulty accessing technology and quality

infrastructure.<sup>120</sup>

## **Seniors and Caregivers**

### **Aging population**

- Toronto's senior population is large and forecasted to grow, driven by increased life expectancy and aging baby boomers.<sup>121</sup>
- For the first time in history, there are now more Torontonians over the age of 65 than children aged 15 and under.<sup>122</sup>

### **Aging in place**

- 96% of Canadians aged 65 years and older, report that as they get older, "they will do everything they can to avoid moving into an LTC home."<sup>123</sup>
- Recent Canadian studies suggest that 11-22% of older adults who had recently transitioned into nursing home care could have stayed in home or community-based care with the appropriate supports in place.<sup>124</sup>

### **Declining mental health and social isolation**

- According to the International Federation on aging, "the number one emerging issue facing seniors in Canada is keeping older people socially connected and active. An estimated 30% of Canadian seniors are at risk of becoming socially isolated."<sup>125</sup>

### **Economic hardship**

- Nearly 70,000 seniors in Toronto have low incomes.<sup>126</sup> Half of Toronto's seniors have individual incomes that are in the \$10K to \$30K range and remain economically vulnerable, especially in the case of a significant health issue, loss of a partner, and continually rising costs of living.<sup>127</sup>
- Health and income are strongly linked, in that those with poor health are also much more likely to have low incomes.<sup>128</sup>

### **Technology and growing digital divide**

- The expansion of health related technology can greatly improve the health and well-being of seniors.<sup>129</sup>
- Lack of access to technology and the skills required to navigate it prevents seniors from gaining access to information about important programs and services, contributes to social isolation and decreases their autonomy. It also puts them at greater risk for falling victim to online scams and cybersecurity incidents.<sup>130</sup>

## Related City initiatives

- [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) focuses on housing stability, services access, transit equity, food access, the quality of jobs and income, and systemic change.
- [Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#) responds to the priorities identified by Toronto's diverse Black communities.
- [Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#) identifies, removes and prevents accessibility barriers across the organization by committing to specific initiatives and outcomes.
- [Toronto Newcomer Strategy](#) guides the City to ensure that their programs and services are accessible to newcomers and help to improve their lives.
- [Toronto Seniors Strategy](#) commits to all seniors having equitable access to City services and programs.
- [Toronto Youth Equity Strategy](#) identifies 28 key issues faced by youth most vulnerable to involvement in serious violence and crime that the City and its partners must address.
- [Equity Lens Tool](#) is an online, user-friendly, tool that allows City staff to identify and address barriers by equity-deserving groups.
- [Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy \(TSNS\)](#) identifies the 31 neighbourhoods that are considered Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs).
- [Gender Equity Strategy](#) advances an intersectional gender-based lens into City programs and services, and internal workforce initiatives, along with the establishment of a Gender Equity Unit to lead the development and ongoing sustainment of the strategy.

## Related TPL initiatives examples

- All TPL staff are required to complete mandatory equity and inclusion training, including Anti-Black Racism, Positive Spaces, Indigenous Cultural Competency, and Accessibility 101. Additional training is available including Creating Accessible Digital Documents and Access TO: Undocumented Torontonians.
- The Rainbow Presence Project increases 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and visibility in all TPL spaces including Intersex Progress Pride Flag decals displayed at all library entrances and distributing optional pronoun pins for staff to wear on lanyards.

- [TPL's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2021-2024](#) serves as the Library's long-term accessibility road map, outlining TPL's vision, outcomes and actions that will guide the journey over the life of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan to remove and prevent barriers for staff and customers with disabilities.
- [Leading to Reading](#) is a free service for children who are reading and writing below their grade level.
- [Library Settlement Program](#) provides services to help newcomers get started in Toronto and Canada.
- [Home Library Service](#) provides library services to Toronto residents who are homebound for three months or longer due to age, illness or disability.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Dallas Public Library's Budgeting for Equity](#) - The tool is a rubric of probing questions that assist a department to self-evaluate their commitment to and action toward racial equity in Dallas.
- [Nashville Public Library's Telehealth for Older Adults](#) - The library partnered with Comcast and senior service providers to provide devices, broadband and skill training through a mix of remote, live and one-on-one training focused on helping seniors develop basic digital skills and learning how to access patient portals and Telehealth services.

## **12. Technology**

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence**

- The impact of AI -particularly generative AI- is expected to be profound and varied, influencing virtually every aspect of life today. Making generative AI widely accessible within organizations can assist with the automation of various tasks, thus increasing productivity, cutting costs, and creating new growth avenues.<sup>131</sup>
- However, according to the Ontario Nonprofit Network, "Without a carefully constructed ethical and legal framework guiding AI, the use of AI can cause more inequities, uncertainties and harm than the efficiencies and effectiveness it promises to bring."<sup>132</sup>

### **Sustainable technology**

- Sustainable technology includes more environmentally friendly ways of doing things we already do – such as the electric cars, bikes and public transport that will continue to increase their market share in 2024.<sup>133</sup>

- Sustainable technology will remain a focal point as nations and companies strive to achieve their net-zero goals. Meanwhile, people will increasingly utilize technology to reduce their own environmental footprint.<sup>134</sup>

### **Privacy, data protection, and security**

- The proportion of Canadians who experienced cyber security incidents increased from 58% in 2020 to 70% in 2022.<sup>135</sup>
- Cybersecurity also affects businesses and public sector organizations. In 2023, the cost to a Canadian organization when they have of a data breach is \$7 million which is the third highest in the world.<sup>136</sup>

### **Technology access, digital divide, and digital literacy**

- Many Canadians struggle to afford pricey high-speed home internet in urban areas.<sup>137</sup>
- 61% of Ontario Bridge respondents reported that the public library was their only source of access to technology, including Internet.<sup>138</sup>
- All transit riders in Toronto’s downtown core now have cell phone service.<sup>139</sup>
- Although the pandemic accelerated digital adoption, many Torontonians, especially those from equity-deserving groups, continue to experience the digital divide and lack the digital literacy skills needed to navigate the digital world safely.<sup>140</sup>
- Canadians need support in digital media literacy, including responsible and ethical digital citizenship practices in work, learning, and daily life.<sup>141</sup>

### **Immersive technologies and realities**

- Toronto is a centre of leading-edge discovery in the Immersive industry, which includes Artificial Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Extended Reality (XR), immersive experiences, Web3, the metaverse, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and a range of other platforms and technologies.<sup>142</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- [ConnectTO](#) is a collaborative program that leverages municipal resources and assets to deliver on the City’s goals of equity and connectivity.
- The [Digital Canopy Project](#) helps extend free internet to low-income neighbourhoods.
- [Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework \(DISF\)](#) provides guiding direction for digital infrastructure initiatives at the City.

- The [Digital Exclusion](#) initiative works with Higher Education Institutions to research and better understand the digital divide.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- TPL is the primary provider for those without access to Internet in Toronto.
- The [Bridge Toolkit](#) enables libraries to collect and analyze data to measure outcomes of their technology services.
- TPL's [Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending service](#) provides Wi-Fi Hotspots to customers who do not have Internet access at home.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Milton Public Library's Connecting Seniors Through Virtual Reality](#) - One of the first libraries in Canada to utilize virtual reality to help offset further decline into Alzheimer's/dementia.
- [Las Vegas-Clark County Library District's Cell Phone Lending Program](#) - In April 2022, the library launched a Cell Phone Lending Program, which provided 435 smart phones to low-income residents, and adults and teens experiencing homelessness.

## **13. Transportation**

### **Affordability**

- Toronto is the most expensive city for transit in Canada. Residents spend 3.7% of their monthly net income on a monthly pass.<sup>143</sup>

### **Consistent underfunding**

- The TTC is the least subsidized public transit system in North America. The Operating Budget is heavily reliant on fare revenue, which is vulnerable to ridership downturns. Raising fares too high means losing passengers.<sup>144</sup>

### **Safety and security**

- TTC hired outreach workers, new transit special constables, and community safety ambassadors, and implemented other initiatives to address increasing incidents of violence, mental health and substance use, and homelessness.<sup>145</sup>

### **Reliability and equity of service**

- Data shows that groups most reliant on public transit are women, particularly racialized and immigrant women, people with disabilities,

younger adults, racialized communities, recent immigrants, and lower income households.<sup>146</sup>

### **Cycling continues to increase**

- A Nanos study on cycling in the City of Toronto, found the percentage of reported cyclists continues to increase. In 2019, seven in ten Toronto residents (70%) reported cycling, compared to 54% in 2009 and 48% in 1999.<sup>147</sup>
- Toronto residents who reported being utilitarian cyclists (meaning they either cycle to work, school, to go shopping or visit friends) has increased from 29% in 2009 to 44% in 2019.<sup>148</sup>

### **Related City initiatives**

- As part of the [Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy](#), in 2016, City Council [established](#) the [Fair Pass: Transit Fare Equity Program for Low-Income Torontonians](#).
- The [Sustainable City of Toronto Fleets Plan](#) provides an overview of the City Fleets' objectives in addressing climate mitigation and adaptation with strategies for transitioning City Fleets to sustainable, climate-resilient and low-carbon operations.

### **Related TPL initiatives examples**

- TPL participates in the [Complimentary PRESTO Card Initiative](#), distributing free Presto cards that customers can load with fares.

### **Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples**

- [Las Vegas-Clark County Library District's Bringing the Library to Transit Riders](#) - Transit riders in the Las Vegas metropolitan area can now access free movies, e-books, e-audiobooks and magazines, thanks to a new partnership with the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC).
- [Anythink Libraries' Bicycle Lending Library](#) - To promote bicycle accessibility and equity, Anythink launched a bike-lending program at its Commerce City location.

## Related Industries

### **Growing demand and challenges for audiobooks and eBooks**

- Demand for eAudiobooks is skyrocketing, but major multinational publishers aren't making several best-selling titles—including some prominent Canadian and Indigenous works—available to Canadian public libraries.<sup>149</sup>
- Libraries face excessively high prices and restrictive purchasing models for eAudiobooks and eBooks. Libraries are being charged up to ten times the price of a physical book for an e-copy.<sup>150</sup>

### **Return of independent bookstores**

- The More Canada paper estimates that independent stores account for roughly 20% of the sales of Canadian-authored books. Independent bookstores are a crucial channel by which Canadian publishers find readers for their books.<sup>151</sup>

### **Self-publishing numbers keep climbing**

- The number of new self-published titles that have both ISBNs and BISAC codes was 2,298,004 in 2021, a decline from the two previous years, but still well above the 1,551,391 titles registered with Bowker in 2018.<sup>152</sup>
- The increasing number of inexpensive and high-quality publishing and distribution services make it easy to produce a book in a variety of formats.<sup>153</sup>

### **Digital presence of GLAMs (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums)**

- GLAM professionals have expended an extraordinary amount of time and effort to increase and improve digital offerings during the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>154</sup>
- Physical spaces and collections will continue to be important to GLAMs' future success, but focusing on integration with digital presence and solutions, as well as digital marketing, will become vital.<sup>155</sup>

### **Streaming music and video continue to rise**

- Both streaming music and streaming video have quickly established themselves among the most popular online activities for Canadians.<sup>156</sup>
- Netflix is the most popular among these subscription streaming video services, with a total of 76% of Canadians viewing the service as of 2023.<sup>157</sup>

### Related TPL initiatives examples

- [#eContentForLibraries coalition](#) raises awareness of the high prices that multinational publishers charge public libraries for eBooks.
- The library subscribes to several services customers can use to stream or download music, movies, concerts, plays and TV shows. This includes Hoopla, Kanopy Streaming Video, and BBC Literary Adaptations in Video.
- [BiblioBoard](#) provides online access to local and indie books from self-published authors.

### Related ULC Innovations Initiatives examples

- [Stark County District Library's Enriching and Educating with the Orchestra](#) - Through an innovative partnership with the Canton Symphony Orchestra, people of all ages were exposed to orchestral music at the highest artistic level through Library offerings.
- [San José Public Library's East Side Dreams: Untold Stories of East San José](#) - The library collaborated with community members to showcase their histories, photos, and artifacts for the East Side Dreams speaker series and exhibit.

### Summary of Library Strategic Plans from other Jurisdictions

A large selection of systems was scanned, and those with a recent Strategic Plan (developed since 2019) are represented in the list below. Common themes include:

- Responding to community needs
- Building community and increasing community engagement
- Fostering lifelong learning
- Providing shared spaces
- Increasing awareness of library services and reach
- Developing and investing in staff
- Championing equity and inclusion

Canadian Libraries	
Library	Strategic Priorities
<a href="#">Brantford Public Library</a> (2023-2027)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Create positive, individualized customer experiences</li><li>2. Increase our community's engagement with the Library</li></ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Expand Library services and resources to meet community needs now and in the future</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Burlington Public Library</a> (2021-2025)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhance community well-being</li> <li>2. Inspire discovery with diverse collections, services, and spaces</li> <li>3. Create a workforce culture driven by our organizational values</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Calgary Public Library</a> (2023-2026)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create Purpose Together</li> <li>2. Champion a Sense of Belonging</li> <li>3. Energize Lifelong Learning</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Edmonton Public Library</a> (2019-2023)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. EPL is the best place to learn.</li> <li>2. EPL is the best place to create.</li> <li>3. EPL is the best place to be.</li> <li>4. EPL is the best place to work.</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Hamilton Public Library</a> (2023-2026)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connecting to Community</li> <li>2. Relevant and Responsive</li> <li>3. Learning Organization</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Innisfil Public Library</a> (2022-)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Speak up for diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>2. Open up opportunities to strengthen connection and engagement with our community.</li> <li>3. Build up our reputation as a trusted community asset.</li> <li>4. Raise up the Library's identity as an innovative hub.</li> <li>5. Light up pathways to personal and professional growth.</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Kitchener Public Library</a> (2022-2024)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We create shared spaces</li> <li>2. We learn together</li> <li>3. We reflect the community</li> <li>4. We remove barriers</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Markham Public Library</a> (2021-2025)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reading to transform</li> <li>2. Limitless learning</li> <li>3. Community social cohesion</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Oakville Public Library</a> (2022-2024)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expanding our reach</li> <li>2. Promoting digital discovery</li> <li>3. Investing in staff to deliver exceptional customer experiences</li> <li>4. Enriching lives and building healthy communities</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Richmond Hill Public Library</a>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inspiring In-person Experiences</li> <li>2. Accelerated Digital Experiences</li> </ol>

(2021-2025)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Customer and Mission-Focused Content</li> <li>4. Expanded and Deeper Engagement</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Surrey Public Library</a> (2019-2023)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Literacy and Learning</li> <li>2. Connections</li> <li>3. Welcoming and Inclusive Spaces</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Thunder Bay Public Library</a> (2024-2028)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Facility Revitalization</li> <li>2. Innovative Service Culture</li> <li>3. Knowledge Sharing</li> <li>4. Indigenous Collaboration</li> <li>5. Cultivate Library Membership</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Vancouver Island Regional Library</a> (2021-2024)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Equity</li> <li>2. Connections</li> <li>3. Partnerships</li> <li>4. Organizational Culture</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Vaughan Public Library</a> (2021-2025)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enrich People</li> <li>2. Inspire Opportunities</li> <li>3. Transform Community</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Canadian Federation of Library Associations</a> (2023-2027)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amplify the voice of Canadian libraries</li> <li>2. Represent Canadian libraries in the national policy agenda</li> <li>3. Grow CFLA as a sustainable organization</li> </ol>

<b>US/International Libraries</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Strategic Priorities</b>
<a href="#">Barcelona Public Library</a> (2024-2030)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Right of access to information and the generation of knowledge</li> <li>2. Right to reading, writing and oral expression</li> <li>3. Right to education, continuous training and cultural literacy. Right to artistic participation.</li> <li>4. Right to equity in access to culture and knowledge and in cultural participation.</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Brooklyn Public Library</a> (2022-2024)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community Connections</li> <li>2. Digital Inclusion</li> <li>3. Anti-oppression</li> <li>4. Staff Supports</li> </ol>
<a href="#">Chicago Public Library</a> (2020-2024)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We provide free and open access to information and experiences that reflect and engage Chicago's</li> </ol>

	<p>diverse neighborhoods and people equitably and inclusively.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. We develop collections, design programs and enable staff to encourage exploration and nurture learning.</li><li>3. We create respectful, safe and welcoming spaces that invite personal growth and create stronger, more connected communities.</li><li>4. We share pride and purpose to improve the lives of Chicagoans and strengthen communities.</li><li>5. We value creativity and resourcefulness in serving patrons effectively and responsively.</li><li>6. We broaden the perception of what a library can be.</li></ol>
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# strategic plan 2025-2029 environmental scan summary & internal consultation phase one results

**Strategic Planning Steering Committee**

April 15, 2024

# agenda

- Environmental scan summary
- Internal consultation phase one results
- Next steps

# steering committee 2024 milestones

chair elected,  
environmental scan focus  
areas & consultation plan  
january

phase one external  
consultation results &  
draft themes (workshop)  
may

finalize strategic plan,  
execution roadmap  
implementation &  
communication plans  
november

environmental scan &  
phase one internal  
consultation results  
april

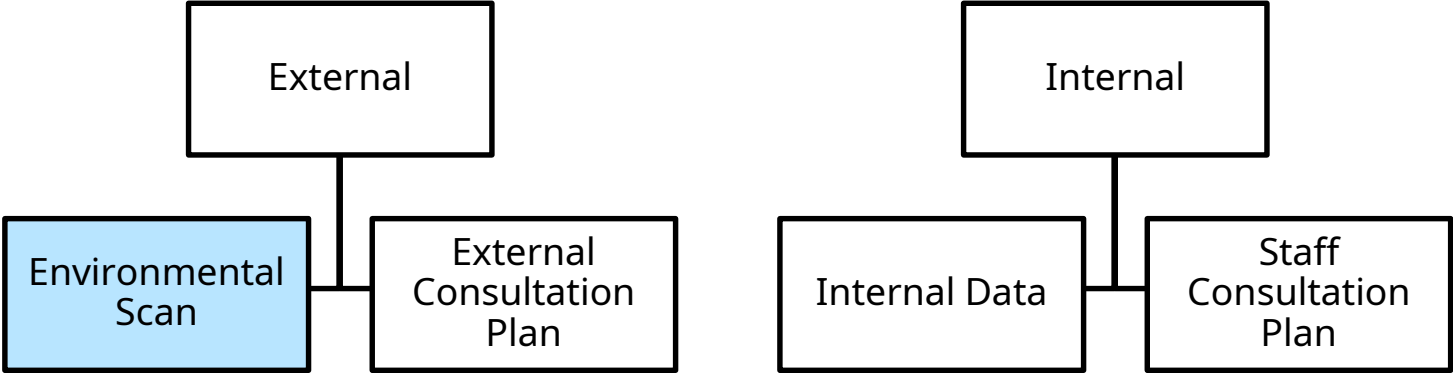
phase two consultation  
results, third-party survey  
results, draft strategic plan,  
execution roadmap,  
implementation &  
communication plans  
october



# environmental scan summary

# environmental scan process overview

TPL's strategic planning process draws on a number of internal and external inputs.





# environmental scan opportunities

- Provides context for the overall strategic planning process and situates the Library in the boarder environment
- Identifies important themes
- Informs consultation and engagement plan
- Provides input for subsequent strategic analyses, such as scenario planning and SWOT analysis



# environmental scan scope

- Focus areas organized around PESTLE-type analysis and aligned with the City
- Main focus is Toronto and Ontario, but also looked nationally and globally
- Top 3-5 trends in each area, conducted with library specific lens
- Mostly limited to secondary sources, and internal consultations with subject matter experts as needed

# environmental scan summary

## contents

1. Arts and Culture
2. Democracy, Government & Civic Engagement
3. Economy and work
4. Education and Training
5. Environment and Sustainability
6. Housing
7. Mental Health and Well-being
8. Non-profits
9. Public Safety
10. Reconciliation with Indigenous communities
11. Social Development
  - Poverty & Homelessness
  - Diversity, Inclusion, Equity & Human Rights
  - Children & Youth
  - Newcomers
  - Seniors & Caregivers
12. Technology
13. Transportation
  - + Toronto's population
  - + Related industries
  - + Strategic plans from other jurisdictions

**13**

Focus Areas

**300+**

Sources

# Toronto's population demographic forecast

## Growing and more diverse population

- The GTA population is expected to increase by 46% by 2046.



- In 2021, 57% of the residents of the metropolitan area belonged to a visible minority group, compared with 51% in 2016, and 14% in 1981.

## Aging population

- The median and average population of Toronto is 40. While the 65+ group has doubled since 2001, the 0-14 group has remained stagnant.

# arts and culture

## Art contributes to better health and academic outcomes

- Participation in arts, culture, and heritage activities is associated with better self-reported health and mental well-being.



## Builds community and cultural understanding

- Art fosters a sense of community and promotes cultural and social inclusion.
- 89% of Torontonians believe that art makes the city a better place to live.

# democracy and government

## Toronto elected new mayor, Olivia Chow

- Olivia Chow campaigned on a platform that promoted affordable housing, renters' rights and improvements to public transportation.

## Socioeconomic status and civic literacy

- Level of education plays a significant role on voting in Canada and worldwide.

## Intellectual freedom and censorship

- Uptick in book challenges and removal of books written by or about marginalized and equity-deserving communities.



# economy and work

## High and increasing cost of living

- The Consumer Price Index rose 3.9% in 2023, the highest since 1991, following a 40 year high increase in 2022 of 6.8%.

## Unemployment higher among equity-deserving groups

- Visible minorities experience higher unemployment rates than non-visible minorities.

## Skills gap and labour shortage

- Toronto labour market is expanding – and grew by 3.4% in 2023.
- However, there is a significant labour shortage in certain sectors such as the service and food industries, as well as skilled trades.



# education and training

## Changes to curriculum to support literacy learning

- Students suffered deep learning setbacks in reading and math during the pandemic.



## Student mental health and social services needs

- Loneliness has doubled among TDSB secondary students, with 44% reporting frequent loneliness in 2021.

## Digital literacy and use of Artificial Intelligence

- Use of AI application by students is raising ethical concerns, but also opportunity to work with the tool to encourage critical thinking.

# environment and sustainability

## Climate change and UN's sustainable development goals

- Global average temperature in 2023 was the highest ever recorded and the 10 warmest years on record have occurred in the past decade.



## Resource consumption putting pressure on natural environment

- People have significantly altered 75% of land and 66% of oceans.

## Environmental inequality

- Vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected.

# housing

## Lack of affordability and increase in homelessness

- 42% of Toronto tenants spend more than 30% of their income on shelter.
- Homelessness is increasingly affecting more people in Ontario and Toronto.



## Newcomers lack suitable housing

- More than half of newcomers in tenant households lack suitable housing. Newcomers also experience 11 times as much discrimination when looking for rental housing as non-newcomers.

# mental health and well-being

## Declining mental health and underfunding of social services

- Consistent underfunding of mental health services have placed libraries at the frontlines in dealing with people in crisis.
  - Toronto is experiencing a heightened number of non-fatal and fatal opioid overdoses.
- Equity-deserving and vulnerable groups have worse health
- Social determinants of health such as income and race drive health inequity.



## Financial crunch due to economic crisis

- Almost two-thirds of nonprofits reported an increase in demand for programs and services. Half reported pandemic-related losses in revenue.

## Volunteering is down as civic engagement declines

- Since the pandemic, Toronto residents interact with each other and volunteer less than before. People are less likely to volunteer and donate to social services when civic engagement is down.



# public safety

## Increase in violent crimes

- Toronto witnessed a 15% increase in its Violent Crime Severity Index in 2022.

## Rising safety concerns in public spaces

- 1,068 violent incidents reported in 2022 on the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC).
- Safety concerns are on the rise in North American public libraries.

## Racism and hate crimes trends often correlate with global events

- Canada witnessed a concerning surge in hate crimes amid the pandemic.



# reconciliation

## Addressing colonialism and cultural genocide

- Legacy of colonial practices, like residential schools, still impact Indigenous communities and have resulted in ongoing inter-generational trauma.

## Health and safety challenges

- Indigenous communities grapple with poverty, food insecurity, and limited healthcare access.

## Socioeconomic disparities

- Indigenous individuals face a disproportionate impact on employment and economic security.



# social development

## Racism and discrimination

- 61% of racialized Torontonians who experience discrimination say they are discriminated against because of their ethnicity or race.



## Equity-deserving groups and vulnerable populations continue to experience significant collective barriers

- Lack of in-person connection for kids and youth led to downstream impacts on well-being.
- Racialized minorities and immigrants experienced greater unemployment.
- An estimated 30% of Canadian seniors are at risk of becoming socially isolated.

## Use of Artificial Intelligence

- “A carefully constructed ethical and legal framework guiding AI is needed.”  
- Ontario Nonprofit Network



## Privacy, data protection & security

- The proportion of Canadians who experienced cybersecurity incidents increased from 58% in 2020 to 70% in 2022.

## Technology access, digital divide & digital literacy

- 61% of Ontario Bridge respondents reported that the public library was their only source of access to technology, including Internet.

# transportation

## Consistent underfunding

- The TTC is the least subsidized public transit system in North America.



## Reliability and equity of service

- Data shows that groups most reliant on public transit are women, people with disabilities, younger adults, racialized communities, recent immigrants, and lower income households.

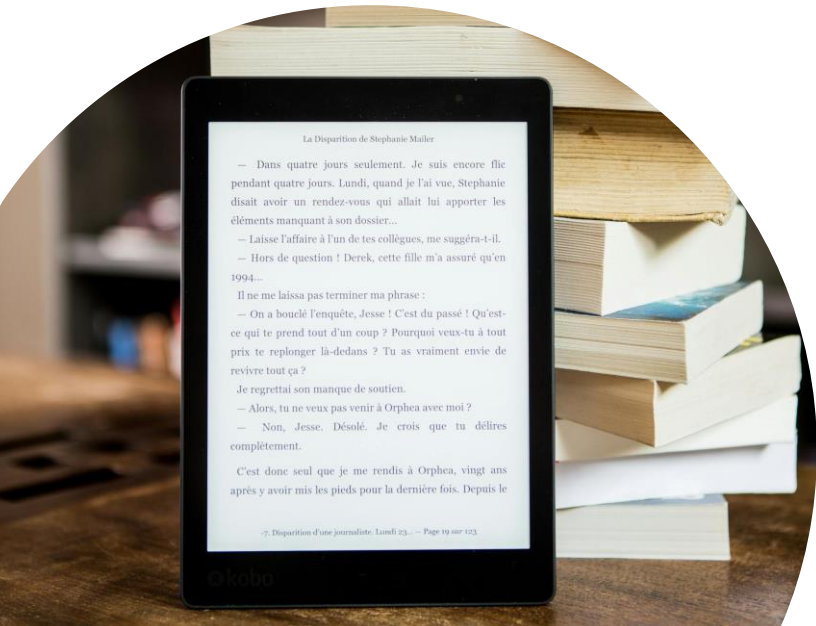
## Cycling continues to increase

- Cyclists in the City of Toronto has continually increased over the past 20 years.

# related industries

## Growing demand and challenges for audiobooks and eBooks

- Libraries face limited access and excessively high prices and restrictive purchasing models.



## Self-publishing numbers keep climbing

- Increasing number of inexpensive and high-quality publishing and distribution services.

## Streaming music and video continue to rise

- Streaming music and streaming video are among the most popular online activities for Canadians.

# related ULC Innovations Initiatives

## sample list 1/2

- Miami-Dade Public Library System's Climate of Art: Reimagine the Environment ([Arts and Culture](#))
- Prince George's County Memorial Library System's "Rock Banned" Intellectual Freedom Campaign ([Democracy, Government and Civic Engagement](#))
- Los Angeles Public Library's Be a Successful Street Vendor ([Economy & Work](#))
- Queens Public Library's The World of Work for Teens ([Education and Training](#))
- Arlington Public Library's Energy Lending Library ([Environment & Sustainability](#))
- King County Library System's Find Financial Assistance ([Housing](#))

# related ULC Innovations Initiatives

## sample list 2/2

- Santa Clara County Library District's Lending Mindfulness: A Mental Health App Pilot ([Mental Health and Well-being](#))
- Sonoma County Library's Virtual Adult Literacy Tutor Training ([Non-profits](#))
- San Antonio Public Library's Enhanced Library Card ([Public Safety](#))
- Spokane Public Library's Winter IndigiQueer Event ([Reconciliation](#))
- Dallas Public Library's Budgeting for Equity ([Social Development](#))
- Milton Public Library's Connecting Seniors Through Virtual Reality ([Technology](#))
- Las Vegas-Clark County Library District's Bringing the Library to Transit Riders ([Transportation](#))

# city key strategies 2020-2024 plan

TPL strategic priorities		public space	digital inclusion & literacy	workforce development	a democratic society	public service excellence
City of Toronto Key Strategies	City of Toronto Corporate Strategic Plan	☑		☑		☑
	Raising the Village	☑	☑			
	Smart CityTO	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
	TOcore	☑				
	Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism	☑		☑		☑
	Toronto Civic Engagement Strategy	☑			☑	
	Toronto Newcomer Strategy	☑	☑	☑	☑	
	Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy	☑	☑	☑	☑	
	Toronto Resilience Strategy	☑			☑	
	Toronto Seniors Strategy	☑	☑			
	Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy	☑	☑	☑	☑	
	Toronto Youth Equity Strategy	☑	☑	☑		
	Toronto's Recovery and Rebuild Strategy	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
	Transform TO	☑				

## Long-term city impact

- Reduce poverty
- Improve community safety
- Contribute to low-carbon city
- Increase equity
- Increase democratic participation
- Grow Toronto's economy

# key new city strategies

- Community Crisis Service
- ConnectTO
- CreateTO

- Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector
- Action Plan for Toronto's Economy
- Gender Equity Strategy
- Our Health, Our City Strategy
- Multi-year Accessibility Plan
- Official Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- SafeTO
- Toronto Seniors Strategy





# environmental scan discussion questions

- Is there anything that stood out or surprised you?
- Does this align with your understanding of the challenges that the city is currently facing?
- Is there anything you would like to know more about?



# internal consultation phase one results

# staff consultation forums overview

- Six Staff Consultation Forums between February to March
- 461 staff members attended, organized into 68 groups

**461**

Staff Members

**68**

Facilitated Tables

**6**

Forums

- Public service, support service and management staff attended
- Three roundtable discussion questions were asked
- 88% of staff surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with the forums



# qualitative analysis methodology

- We analyzed over 2,000 staff comments from all six sessions and sorted them by table to identify the most commonly discussed themes.
- We used qualitative data analysis tools to code and analyze data.
- Example:
  - Theme = 47/68 (69%)
  - Out of 68 tables, 47 tables had at least one mention of the theme.
- Same methodology used in 2019 to develop current plan.

# roundtable question 1

Based on your experience living and/or working in the city, what is the most important thing TPL can do for people living in Toronto over the next five years?

discuss

Based on the analysis, **eight themes** were identified by staff as important areas TPL should focus on over the next five years.

Theme	Tables	% of Tables
Addressing the digital divide	61/68	90%
Providing welcoming spaces	60/68	88%
Supporting vulnerable persons	50/68	74%
<b>Developing skills to address cost of living crisis</b>	47/68	69%
<b>Creating community connections</b>	46/68	68%
<b>Fostering literacy and lifelong learning</b>	45/68	66%
Building staff capacity	39/68	57%
Improving public safety	36/68	53%

# 1. addressing the digital divide

## 90% of tables

Comments focused on technology access, such as printing, Wi-Fi hotspots, and laptop lending, as well as develop digital literacy skills, especially for seniors and other equity-deserving groups.

Sub-theme	Sample staff comments
Digital literacy skills (60%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Ensure staff are knowledgeable and are trained to assist customers with their digital needs."</li><li>• "Continue to provide access and education for digital literacy."</li></ul>
Access to and use of new technology (26%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Increase access to cutting edge technology."</li><li>• "Expand Digital Innovation Hubs."</li><li>• "Leverage digital advancements to increase literacy rates."</li></ul>
Basic technology access (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Continue providing access to public workstations."</li><li>• "Expand technology lending, e.g. cell phones, wi-fi hotspots"</li><li>• "Free printing and provide colour printing."</li></ul>
Focus on seniors (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Provide more digital learning programs for seniors."</li><li>• "Teaching families about IoT devices/services to help older adults especially with dementia."</li></ul>

## 2. providing welcoming spaces

### 88% of tables

Comments focused on the importance of libraries as safe “third spaces” that are welcoming for all and are multi-purpose, including quiet spaces for study and work.

Sub-theme	Sample staff comments
Welcoming and inclusive spaces (60%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Continue to provide a welcoming space to all demographics.”</li><li>• “Provide a welcoming and calm haven for people to ‘just be’ and/or to be vibrant and grow.”</li><li>• “Cost of living ties in well with the library as a third space. And not having money actually keeps you at home.”</li><li>• “Extending open hours for more access to services and opening up TPL branches. This is what the community is asking for.”</li></ul>
Quiet spaces for study and work (28%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Study space for groups and private areas for meetings.”</li><li>• “More demand for closed spaces since the pandemic.”</li></ul>
Community space (28%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Provide space for building community and social spaces.”</li><li>• “Somewhere to hang out and meet within the community.”</li></ul>

# 3. supporting vulnerable persons

74% of tables

Comments focused on expanding access to social services by partnering with the City and community agencies to support vulnerable populations, including those with mental health challenges, addictions, and those experiencing homelessness.

Sub-theme	Sample staff comments
Mental health supports (35%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Provide supports for mental health crisis (among teens, seniors, other vulnerable populations)."</li><li>• "Advocate for folks who are experiencing substance reliance."</li><li>• "Provide mental health supports for staff."</li></ul>
External partnerships (29%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "New, more, and deepen existing collaborations."</li><li>• "Partnership with settlement services."</li><li>• "Reduce bureaucracy to collaborate with other social services."</li><li>• "Housing agencies should be stationed at high needs branches."</li><li>• "Work more closely with food banks."</li></ul>
Increase programs and services (28%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "More diverse programs and services for those most vulnerable."</li></ul>

# 4. skills to address cost of living crisis

## 69% of tables

Comments focused on how the library can support financial literacy, life skills, food security, housing affordability, and individuals seeking to enter the workforce or searching for new jobs as the cost of living increases.

Sub-theme	Sample staff comments
Skills development (41%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Help Torontonians with food literacy.”</li><li>• “Teach customers how to be more self-sufficient.”</li><li>• “More financial literacy, budgeting, money management programs.”</li></ul>
Job search skills (28%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Provide certification to help customers find meaningful employment.”</li><li>• “Job fairs that specialize in youth.”</li><li>• “Help build connections that help with job searching or offer networking opportunities.”</li><li>• “Expand Virtual Interview Rooms to more branches.”</li><li>• “Newcomer programs, job search, career help, resume help - more services for newcomers related to employment.”</li></ul>

## 5. creating community connections

68% of tables

Comments focused on how the library can foster social connections and build strong communities, responding to the epidemic of loneliness and isolation.

Sub-theme	Sample staff comments
Social isolation (48%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Build opportunities to reduce isolation and build connection.”</li><li>• “Be a leader in humanizing the city.”</li></ul>
New programs and initiatives (32%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “The social groups that used to meet at my branch were broken up. How do we get people together? Can we have a shuttle bus or connect to a community service that offers transport?”</li><li>• “Monthly call to check-in on seniors.”</li><li>• “Intergenerational and cross-cultural programming.”</li></ul>
Focus on seniors (22%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Connect people to more social opportunities, especially seniors who may not know how to use Eventbrite.”</li><li>• “Bond people together – seniors and youth; older generation of newcomers helping younger generation.”</li></ul>

## 6. fostering literacy and lifelong learning

66% of tables

Comments focused on the importance of the library in developing a love for reading, enhancing information and media literacy, and supporting lifelong learning for personal and professional development.

Sub-theme	Sample staff comments
Increase programs and services (35%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Expand literacy services like Leading to Reading program.”</li><li>• “Huge demand for ESL classes.”</li></ul>
Reading literacy (33%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Help with early literacy and need to build love and enjoyment of reading.”</li><li>• “Continue to support children who experienced learning loss during the pandemic.”</li></ul>
Information literacy (26%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Teach people how they can search properly on the Internet.”</li><li>• “Develop digital media literacy skills in an AI world.”</li><li>• “Verifiable information is going to become a greater commodity and the library should be at the forefront of that.”</li></ul>

# 7. building staff capacity

## 57% of tables

Staff are adapting to changing needs and increasing demands. Comments focused on investing in staff tools, learning, well-being, and professional development, ensuring the right staffing resources, and fostering a collaborative environment for knowledge-sharing.

Sub-theme	Sample staff comments
Staff learning and development (42%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Increase Branch Experience. Developing staff existing knowledge to build consistent service.”</li><li>• “Staff need to be trained up to provide better customer service.”</li><li>• “More job shadowing and mentoring opportunities.”</li><li>• “American Sign Language training and multi-cultural learning.”</li></ul>
Staffing levels (29%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Ensure there are adequate staff to serve Torontonians.”</li><li>• “More specialized roles to help with mental health crisis and more outreach staff.”</li><li>• “We have to close service points due to staffing constraints.”</li></ul>

## 8. improving public safety

53% of tables

Comments focused on improving safety for staff and customers including hiring more specialized roles like Library Safety Specialists, and de-escalation and conflict resolution training.

Sub-theme	Sample staff comments
Staffing and supports (26%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Expand the Library Safety Specialists program to more branches.”</li><li>• “Better equip the staff in the branches who need to deal with incidents to help support them in their roles. Focus on a great team dynamic to de-escalate.”</li></ul>

# unique ideas

- “Digitization = long view. Supporting the longer term efforts helps provide sustainable futures.”
- “Repair cafes.”
- “Support more green spaces, especially with renovations, hydroponics systems, use library green spaces to grow food to address insecurity.”
- “Transportation is an issue, so having our own transportation services that shuttle services our customers or provides free parking where parking is a barrier.”
- “Perhaps a seed library so that we can do more to act to combat climate change.”
- “More programming for autistic and neurodiverse children.”
- “Involve teens to develop intergenerational programs (led by teens or seniors).”
- “In 5 years, I would like to see the library create an AI hub for more learning.”
- “Diverse staff representing a diverse city population.”

# roundtable question 2

Which of our current strategic priorities should we continue to focus on in the next five years?

- Which are the most important for us to continue to prioritize?
- How should we change or improve in these areas for the next five years?
- Which ones are no longer relevant?

discuss

# important to prioritize

- Priority 1 (spaces) and Priority 5 (staff) were identified as the most important for us to continue to prioritize.
- All priorities were represented, and 16% of the tables said that they are all still important.

Priority	Tables	% of Tables
1. Opening up our public space	45/68	66%
5. Investing in staff and an innovative service culture	43/68	63%
2. Broadening Toronto's digital access and inclusion	35/68	51%
4. Providing the vital ingredients for a democratic society	32/68	47%
3. Building pathways for workforce development	29/68	43%
All are important	11/68	16%

# roundtable question 3

Tell us about a time when you helped improve a customer or colleague's day.

- How does it relate to the trends impacting the City or our current strategic priorities?

discuss

## staff stories

"I was working on an art display that caught the attention of a teacher and their class. The young student pointed at the flowers, people and animals in my drawing and I asked them what they thought they could be. **Seeing these children light up, be curious and engaged...made my day.**"

"...I had the chance to speak to one family who got an [Internet Connectivity] kit – a mom with three kids who had to do online learning (school) at home. She was so thankful – so appreciative too...the kit provided her with so much relief – **she didn't have to choose between groceries and internet access that month and for the next 2 years.**"

"A customer phoned for help with OverDrive. Their question wasn't overly complicated and we got their app functioning the way it should. The customer shared that their partner had just died and they used to help with all the tech-related questions at home. She also shared, **"I'm glad there's a place I can call for help and no one thinks my questions are silly."**

"I found a woman crying in the stacks. I asked her if there was anything I could help with and we talked about how her dad was ill. She came in off and on over the next few months. When her dad passed away, she brought in a photo of him and said **our conversations helped her through the hardest time of her life.**"



# staff consultation forums

## discussion questions

- Is there anything that stood out or surprised you?
- Is there anything you would like to know more about?



**next steps**

**tpl:**

## next steps

Prepare for the May 3 in-person Steering Committee meeting.

Agenda includes:

- Results of the first phase of the external consultation
- Further discussion on the results of the first phase of consultations and findings from environmental scan
- Draft themes for phase two consultations



**thank you**  
questions?

**tpl:**