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STAFF REPORT
INFORMATION ONLY

COVID-19 Emergency Response – Update

Date:	September 27, 2021
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update the Toronto Public Library Board on Toronto Public Library's (TPL's) reopening plans as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and to provide information on staffing including hybrid work and the mandatory vaccination policy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

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

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

Reopening branches and reinstating services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic directly addresses TPL's Strategic Plan priorities, particularly opening up our public space and addressing digital literacy and inclusion. With ongoing emergency measures, new services continue to be developed and offered in branches, online and in the community.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Reinstating services and developing new services responds to population growth, poverty, changing patterns of work, study, education and leisure in Toronto, and drives strategic outcomes such as greater digital inclusion opportunities through increased

access to the internet, Wi-Fi and computers, and reduced barriers to access for equity deserving groups, including seniors and youth. New services such as internet connectivity kits and seniors' wellness checks are offered in response to community need.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on April 27, 2020, the Library Board received a report on TPL's operations, services and responses to the COVID-19 public health emergency, its integration with City of Toronto's Incident Management System, and details of TPL's pandemic plan: https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/apr27/14-covid-19-emergency-response-combined.pdf

At its meeting on May 25, 2020, the Library Board approved TPL's reopening framework and phased reopening plan, and authorized the City Librarian to execute the phased reopening plan, adjusting it as needed based on the changing conditions and circumstances in the city and elsewhere: https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/may25/11-covid-19-emergency-response-plans-for-reopening-revised-combined.pdf

At its meeting on June 22, 2020, the Library Board received an update on TPL's reopening plans and staffing: https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/jun22/16-covid-19-emergency-response-update.pdf

At a Special Meeting on August 21, 2020, the Library Board approved a plan to support Toronto school boards' use of library facilities: https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/aug21/06-potential-use-of-tpl-facilities-by-tsb-combined.pdf

At its meeting on September 21, 2020, the Library Board received a report on the implementation of TPL's reopening plans a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, an outline of TPL's resurgence plans in the event of a significant increase in COVID-19 cases, and information on staffing: https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2020/sep21/21-covid-19-emergency-response-update-combined.pdf

At its meeting on January 25, 2021, the Library Board received a report on the implementation of the reopening and resurgence plans as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and information on staffing: https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2021/jan25/21-covid-19-emergency-response-update.pdf

At its meeting on March 22, 2021, the Library Board received a report on the implementation of the reopening and resurgence plans as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and information on staffing: https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2021/mar22/13-covid-19-emergency-response-update.pdf

At its meeting on June 22, 2021, the Library Board received a report on the implementation of the reopening plans as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and information on staffing: https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2021/jun22/14-covid-19-emergency-update.pdf

At its September 2, 2021 meeting, the City's Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee, adopted the following motion that impacts TPL:
City Council request the Toronto Public Library Board to make any public printers at libraries available at no cost to residents to print their provincial vaccine receipts to ensure equitable access.

This report will be before City Council for consideration at its October 1/October 4 meeting.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

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

The Premier proclaimed a state of emergency effective March 17, 2020. TPL has been at various stages of reopening since the Premier announced stage one reopening of services effective May 19, 2020.

With the onset of a COVID-19 resurgence, Toronto entered a grey lockdown period effective November 23, 2020 resulting in the scaling back of high contact services.

Further restrictions were imposed when the Premier announced Ontario would go into a full lockdown effective December 26, 2020. For public libraries, the Provincial regulations for the current lockdown state that: *Public libraries are closed to the public except for the purpose of curbside pickup, or for the return of circulating library materials, or for the delivery of circulating library materials.*

The Premier proclaimed a second state of emergency effective January 12, 2021 and a stay-at-home order effective January 14, 2021. The new regulations under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act Stay-at-Home Order* did not additionally impact the current services and operational requirements of public libraries.

On March 5, 2021, the Premier announced Toronto would move into the grey zone effective March 8, 2021. For public libraries, this meant access to the branches for computer use with no access to collections, study or lounge space or areas such as youth hubs.

On April 7, 2021, the Premier announced a Provincial emergency and stay-at-home order effective April 8 at 12:01 a.m. For public libraries this meant TPL branches were open for contactless holds pick-up and drop-off of library materials only, and maintained current operational hours. All other in-branch services were not available during the Provincial stay-at-home order. Some branches in mall locations were closed because access to malls was shut down.

On May 20, 2021, the Province released a new Roadmap to Reopen three-step plan that is tied to vaccination targets. Step one came into effect June 11. For public libraries, this meant TPL branches were open for contactless holds pick-up and drop-off of library materials and access to computers and washrooms. Step one also eliminated the requirement to quarantine returned library materials.

On July 9, 2021, the Province announced Ontario was moving into step three on July 16, allowing public libraries to be open with the requirement that two meters of physical distancing is maintained along with other mandated health and safety protocols such as masks.

On August, 19, 2021, the City of Toronto announced its mandatory vaccination policy requiring all City employees to disclose and provide proof of vaccination status by September 13 and be fully vaccinated by October 30, 2021.

On August 19, 2021, the City Librarian sent an email to all staff to announce TPL will be requiring all staff to be vaccinated, and is developing a mandatory vaccination policy based on the City's approach and in consultation with the Union.

On September 1, 2021, the Province announced proof of vaccination is required as of September 22 for services considered to be higher-risk indoor public settings where face coverings cannot always be worn, such as restaurants, gyms, and large gatherings. Public libraries are not listed in this category.

COMMENTS

Branch Services
Reopening plans continue to be tied to the Provincial three-step plan. Ontario remains in step three, which means public libraries can be open with the requirement that two meters of physical distancing is maintained along with other mandated health and safety protocols such as masks.

Currently, 95 of TPL's 100 branches are open. All of these branches have regular Monday to Saturday open hours. There are two branches currently providing curbside pick-up of holds only due to their small size and capacity restrictions (Todmorden and Davenport). When City Hall fully reopens, the City Hall branch will reopen. Swansea has not reopened because of planned renovations at the Swansea Town Hall. Wychwood, St. James Town and Mount Pleasant are closed for renovations.

Sunday service recruitment is underway with plans to reinstate Sunday service at all 58 branch locations effective October 17, 2021.

Over the past number of weeks, a number of branch services and other features have been reinstated:

- youth hubs, TD Gallery, digital innovation spaces, KidsStops/discovery spaces, study and music practice rooms have reopened with some modifications;
- newspapers and magazines have been re-introduced;
- beverages are allowed;
- cash payments are accepted.

At its September 2, 2021 meeting, the City's Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee, adopted a motion for City Council consideration at its October meeting to request that TPL make any public printers at libraries available at no cost to residents to print their provincial vaccination certificates to ensure equitable access. Staff have already implemented this recommendation to ensure equitable access to the provincial vaccination certificate upon its availability on September 22, 2021.

Further Reinstatement of Branch Services
Further reinstatement of branch services includes the following plans:

- User education sessions and in-branch programming including collaborative programs – November

- Premium venue rentals – November
- Community outreach and engagement – November
- Museum & Arts Pass (pending partnership agreements) – November
- Volunteers – December
- Appel Salon programs – March
- Externally-led programs – March.

Staffing

Staff have continued to adjust and support the changing service and operational requirements as TPL works through the Provincial restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic.

Over 1,625 staff (80 percent) continue to work on site with approximately 316 (15 percent) working remotely and another 113 (5 percent) working both onsite and remotely. There are approximately 196 vacant positions in branch operations either because staff have been approved for family or medical accommodation, the position is vacant because of the voluntary separation program, or the incumbent has left the position for other reasons and recruitment of a replacement is underway.

Staff who are currently working remotely will continue to do so until the end of October. An administrative policy for staff hybrid work is in development for the few staff who are able to perform their work in this capacity.

TPL introduced a mandatory vaccination policy for staff and volunteers, which is based on the City's policy. TPL, as an employer, has an obligation under the Ontario *Occupational Health & Safety Act* to take all necessary precautions to protect its workers. This policy is part of TPL's efforts to ensure health and safety of staff is protected.

All staff are required to provide proof of vaccination by September 20 and be fully vaccinated by the end of October. TPL will comply with its human rights obligations and accommodate employees who are legally entitled to accommodation.

While contracted staff are not covered by TPL's mandatory vaccination policy, TPL has been working with contractors to discuss vaccination requirements. To date, contactors for cleaning and security guard services have indicated they are implementing mandatory vaccination for their staff.

CONCLUSION

TPL is continuing to adjust reopening plans based on the Provincial regulations and developments. It is anticipated that ongoing adjustments to TPL's reopening plans will continue throughout 2021 and into 2022.

CONTACT

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