

Report to / Rapport au:

**Ottawa Public Library Board
Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa**

June 13, 2023 / 13 juin 2023

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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File Number: OPLB-2023-0613-10.1

SUBJECT: Safety and Security

OBJET: Sûreté et sécurité

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

- 1. Receive this report for information;**
- 2. Direct staff to explore additional security supports, as further described in this report, and to include any recommended costs in the draft 2024 budget; and,**
- 3. Direct staff to explore developing partnerships to offer a variety of social services in library facilities, funded through partner agencies, as further described in this report.**

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa :

1. **Prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information;**
2. **Encourage le personnel à explorer des mesures de sécurité supplémentaires, tel que décrit plus en détail dans le présent rapport, et à inclure tous les coûts recommandés dans l'ébauche du budget 2024; et,**
3. **Encourage le personnel à explorer le développement de partenariats pour offrir une variété de services de travailleurs sociaux dans les installations de la bibliothèque, financés par des agences partenaires, tel que décrit plus en détail dans ce rapport.**

BACKGROUND

In keeping with the *Public Libraries Act, RSO 1990, c.P.44 (the Act)*, the Ottawa Public Library Board ("OPLB" or "the Board"), "20.(g) shall make provision for insuring the board's real and personal property." Subject to the regulations related to the Act, the Board "...may make rules:

- *for the use of library services;*
- *for the admission of the public to the library;*
- *for the exclusion from the library of persons who behave in a disruptive manner or cause damage to library property;*
- *imposing fines for breaches of the rules;*
- *suspending library privileges for breaches of the rules; and*
- *regulating all other matters connected with the management of the library and library property."*

As an employer in Ontario, OPL is required to meet all legislative requirements supporting the *Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1 ("OHSA")*. The OHSA sets out the duties and responsibilities of all workplace parties (employers, supervisors, and workers) in ensuring workplace safety, including the establishment of measures and procedures for dealing with workplace hazards. In 2009, the OHSA was updated to include specific employer obligations, as well as worker rights and responsibilities, relating to the prevention of workplace violence and harassment. OPL also has a general duty under the *Occupiers' Liability Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.2*, to take such care as in all circumstances reasonable "...to see that persons entering on its premises, and the property brought on the premises are reasonably safe."

The OPL Board approaches its role using a policy or strategy model of governance that focuses on setting strategic directions and objectives, making decisions on major projects, and monitoring library performance. To support its statutory and common law duties, the OPL Board implemented a Library (Client) Code of Conduct, and delegated implementation and management to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The position statement describes OPL's expectations with respect to acceptable client behaviours. A violation of the Code either in person or virtually (email, chat, and telephone, or participation in virtual programs and events) may result in a trespass to OPL property and a restriction of OPL services for a defined period.

Furthermore, OPL Board Policy #10, CEO Reporting and Board Monitoring, outlines the CEO's responsibility to provide a risk management update to the Board, as required.

OPL has a series of administrative policies designed to support the employer's obligations under the various Acts. In keeping with the obligations under the OHSA, OPL has implemented a Health and Safety program that includes a policy on Workplace Violence and Harassment. Specifically, this policy expresses a "*...commitment to a physically and psychologically safe and healthy workplace, and to ensure that all incidents of workplace violence or workplace harassment are addressed appropriately.*" In keeping with the Library Code of Conduct, OPL has a Trespass to Property and Restriction of Service policy which provides staff with guidelines to ensure that response to misconduct is clear, consistent, fair, and proportional to the individual's actions. To uphold the transparency and accountability of decisions to issue Trespass to Property and Restriction of Service notices, incidents are documented in accordance with OPL's Incident Reporting Procedure.

The OPL Board received in-camera information about specific incidents and subsequent responses and corrective actions in 2009, 2020, and most recently in March 2022.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an overview of OPL's approach to ensuring safety and security across the library system, information on safety and security incidents occurring in branches such that the Board better understands risks and mitigation, and information on the use of uniformed security guards in OPL branches, including historical information and the current contract. This information provides context for OPL's 2024 operating budget submission, which may include a request for additional funding for guard services.

DISCUSSION

OPL is committed to providing welcoming library services across its various channels (33 facilities, 3 mobile units, and virtual spaces). This is in alignment with OPL's value of Inclusion: *we are welcoming and open to all, and are committed to providing access to spaces, collections, programs, resources, and expertise.*

Service delivery at OPL is increasingly complex considering the broad geographic reach and the diversity of clients among urban, suburban, and rural environments. OPL uses a comprehensive approach that balances both proactive and reactive strategies to manage safety and security requirements. The strategies include policies and procedures, training, technology supports, facility/space design, security services, and incident analysis, monitoring, and evaluation.

Safety and security are shared functions that consider services provided by OPL through the City of Ottawa ("City") Corporate Security Branch, and third-party contracted guard services. This work is achieved through an annual budget for security-related supports of approximately \$560K.

OPL employees, predominantly those in in-person front-line roles in branches, deal with most incidents on a day-to-day basis. Staff are responsible for incident handling, and reporting, as well as associated decisions. Front-line staff are supported by OPL's Corporate Services team, specifically in Facilities Development, who manage and maintain the security program; in Human Resources who are responsible for Occupational Health and Safety; and in Employee Experience who are responsible for training. These supports include creating and maintaining policies, procedures, and documentation; operational implementation; performing periodic security environmental scans; conducting corporate incident reviews and analysis; planning preventative and mitigation activities including training; and partner liaison and contract management.

The City's Corporate Security Branch provides subject matter expertise related to physical security in the workplace such as conducting facility security audits, providing built environment safety recommendations and standards or countermeasures inclusive of security system design, procurement, installation and ongoing administration and maintenance. Photo identification services, alarm monitoring, and response for OPL branches and staff are also provided by City Corporate Security.

Security guards are an integral part in providing a welcoming and supportive environment for both clients and employees and were introduced in 2018 at the Main and Rideau branches, where higher-risk incidents occur most frequently. The current contract expires in 2023 and a renewal will be required in 2024.

As a public space that is open to all, libraries are a microcosm of society. Public libraries serve all members of the community, including vulnerable groups and individuals with diverse needs. Incidents that occur at library locations are not unique to public libraries and must be considered in a broader social context. Gaps in services to support housing, mental health, substance abuse disorder, etc., have pushed those seeking respite and assistance into public spaces, with libraries being no exception. Library employees across the country are "...seeing more people with more complex needs than ever before."¹

At the same time, public libraries across Canada and the United States are under attack for their positions on intellectual freedom and are at the forefront of increasingly intense public discourse rooted in political polarization. OPL staff are aware that this is happening and are monitoring the potential for occurrences in our community.

These elements have combined to result in an increase in the frequency and intensity of incidents in libraries. While most incidents occur in urban contexts, these issues are not limited to downtown locations. These challenges have resulted in threats to the well-being of employees. The Library must balance being a space that is open and welcoming to all members of the public, with the obligation and commitment to keep employees safe. Of concern is both the rise in incidents occurring between clients and those directed at employees. These include being attacked (physically and verbally), threatened, spat on, etc. These types of incidents can have long-lasting psychological and physiological impacts on employees.

Since January 2020, there have been six (6) reported injuries (physical or psychological) to OPL employees, which resulted in an adverse impact for the employees. Four of these incidents have occurred in the first four months of 2023.

Despite the evident impact these incidents have on them, Library employees take great pride in connecting with and supporting our community with compassion, often going above and beyond their roles. Management is committed to ensuring that employees

¹ Hune-Brown, Nicholas, "Have You Been to The Library Lately?", *The Walrus*, June 2023, p. 60 - 69

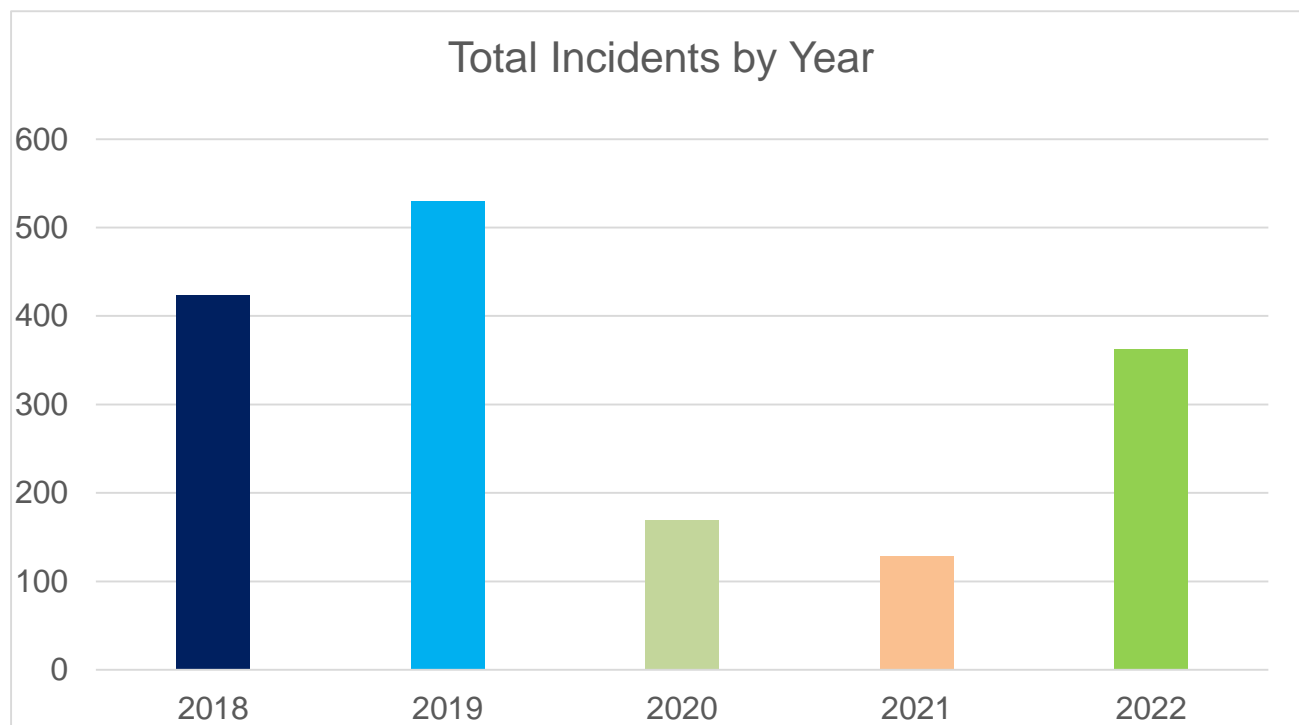
have the capacity to carry out the library services that they are hired to deliver in line with their role and expertise.

OPL staff examined incident reports for the last five (5) years (2018 – 2022) to identify trends and to assist with planning mitigation measures to prevent incidents against employees and clients. From 2018 to 2019 incidents increased following a trend from previous years. This increase follows a period of intentional focus and attention on incident reporting, and as such, may have been due to more vigilant reporting by staff coupled with an increase in incidents for the Main and Rideau branches respectively.

Overall incidents declined between 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic, in line with reduced hours of opening and fewer in-person visits. 2020 saw 169 reported incidents

and 2021 had 128 reported incidents. As the restrictions were lifted in 2022 and OPL returned to more normal hours of operations, the number of reported incidents increased to 363. This represents 0.01 % of overall library visits and is in line with pre-pandemic levels. Table 1 shows the trend for reported incidents between 2018 – 2022.

Table 1: Total Incidents Reported by Year



Recognizing that full hours of operation had not yet resumed in 2022, the ratio of the number of incidents to open hours also shows an upward trend. In 2022, OPL was open to the public for 59,000 hours and reported 363 incidents, resulting in a ratio of incidents to open hours of 0.62. For context, in 2019 OPL was open for 70,000 hours and had 530 reported incidents (0.76 ratio of incidents to open hours). Based on this trend, OPL expects the incident to open hour ratio to increase as OPL resumes full operating hours.

During the first quarter of 2023, employees completed 176 public incident reports, almost half the number of reported incidents in the full year of 2022. In Q1 2023, OPL was open for 18,707 hours to the public which results in a 0.94 ratio of incident reports to open hours. Should this trend continue, OPL anticipates the highest incident reporting of the previous five years by the end of 2023.

Table 2: Incidents to Open Hours Ratio (approximated)

Year	Hours Open	Incidents Reported	Incident to Hours Ratio
2018	70,000	423	0.60
2019	70,000	530	0.76
2020	36,000	169	0.47
2021	59,000	128	0.22
2022	59,000	363	0.62

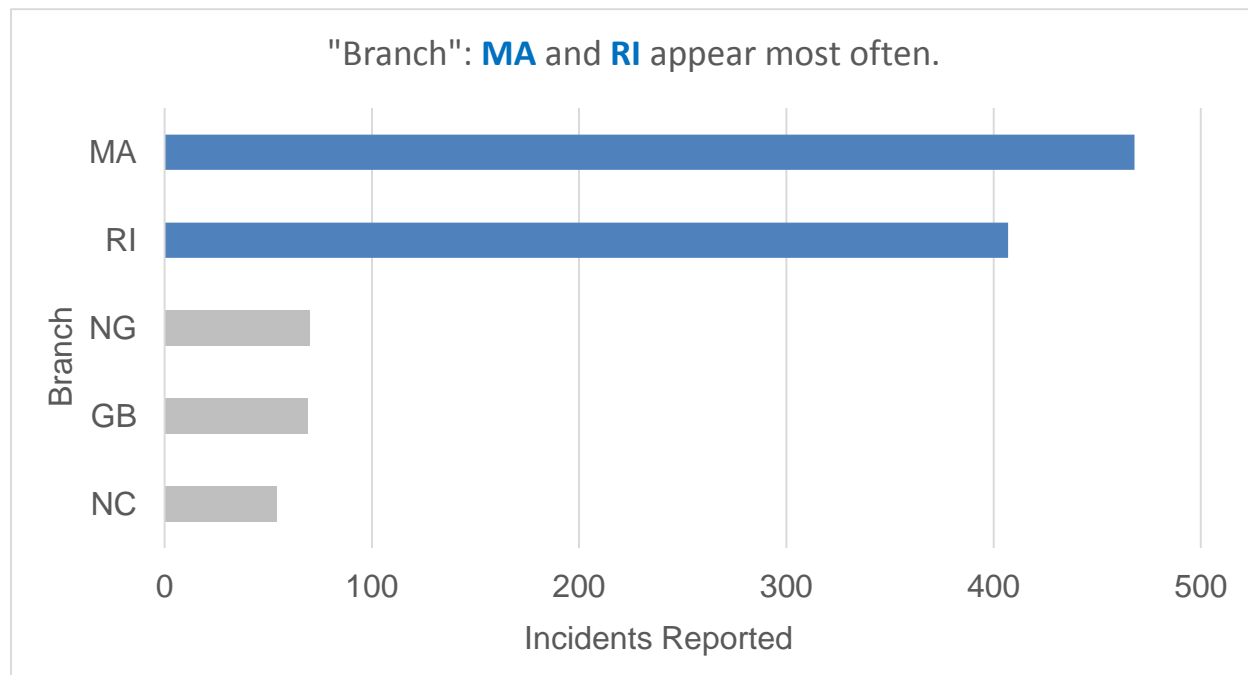
In assessing the 2022 data, staff observed the top three (3) incidents were related to causing a disturbance, drug and alcohol use, and trespassing (that is, clients continuing to attempt to access library facilities after having been asked to leave for a period). Preliminary data for the first quarter of 2023 shows that the top 3 reported incidents are drug and alcohol use, causing a disturbance, and trespassing. On two occasions over the last six months, guards have administered Naloxone. Table 3 shows a detailed synopsis of the reported incidents received in 2021, 2022, and the first quarter of 2023.

Table 3: 2021 and 2022 Reported Security Incidents

Incident Type	2021 (Full Year)	2022 (Full Year)	2023 (Q1 Data)
Causing a Disturbance	71	145	47
Demonstration/Protest	0	1	0
Drug and Alcohol Use	16	62	54
Other Non-Security	2	6	9
Personal Incidents	8	22	12
Suspicious Activity	9	24	9
Theft	5	34	10
Trespassing	10	44	22
Vandalism	7	25	13
Total Number of Incidents	128	363	176

When evaluating where incidents took place for the same five-year period (2018 to 2022), the top five (5) branches for most incidents reported are Main, Rideau, North Gloucester, Greenboro, and Nepean CentrepoinTE. Table 4 illustrates that Main and Rideau experience incidents at a rate of six to six- and one-half times that of the next highest branch, North Gloucester, based on total reported incidents. Vulnerable populations such as those experiencing houselessness, managing a substance use disorder, or struggling with mental illness often had a greater presence in the downtown core and can come into conflict with other Library clients, and/or employees, influencing the higher rate of incidents at the Main and Rideau branches. It is worth noting that the top five branches listed for incidents are not the top five most visited branch locations.

Table 4: Top 5 Branches



In terms of trespass notices issued to clients, notices are issued in time periods of 1-month, 3-months, 6-months, 12-months, and 24-months. In 2022, there were 58 notices issued; of these, 43 (74%) were for a three-month period. As of May 30, 2023, 49 notices have been issued, of which 84% are for a three-month period. More than 70% of trespass notices issued over the past 18 months have been to unique individuals.

Mitigation Measures

OPL takes a multi-pronged approach focusing on four key elements: incident preparation, incident prevention, incident response, and incident recovery.

Incident preparation – Preparation begins by ensuring that the roles, responsibilities, tools, and supports are available in order to better anticipate, respond, and manage incidents. This includes a variety of components such as policy and procedure development, facility audits, and security system design. OPL offers various training and support programs to help employees successfully navigate difficult interactions. Staff training teaches the skills required to work compassionately and effectively with clients, and provides staff with the skills necessary to anticipate, defuse, and de-escalate

challenging situations as they arise. The training programs are both internal, OPL-led, and external, from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). In addition, OPL has established (and continues to establish) community partnerships to help support employees and clients.

Incident prevention – At the Main and Rideau branches, guards work with branch staff to oversee branch activity and help to prevent situations. OPL engages the services of security guards who use an empathy-driven approach, which includes sensitivity, rapport, and knowledge of the challenges some vulnerable clients may be dealing with, including houselessness, or mental health concerns. This approach to guard services requires training in how to *avoid* the use of force.

At all branches, OPL follows a series of principles to ensure the built environment is welcoming and supportive. These include desk design and lower shelving to provide better sightlines across the branch, as well as the use of convex mirrors to provide sightlines into corners and blind spots. Additionally, regular facility maintenance and lifecycle replacement of doors and windows ensures that the building is in working order for developing situations. OPL also utilizes security technology including Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) cameras, duress devices, intrusion systems, and card reader access.

Incident response – OPL and City Corporate Security work together to provide staff with multiple tools to be better aware of their surroundings, safeguard themselves and clients, communicate with management and law enforcement, and signal the presence of risks. Staff are empowered to respond to day-to-day incidents, asking clients to obey the Library Code of Conduct and inviting them to leave if they are unable to adhere to the rules. At Main and Rideau branches, security guards take the lead in defusing situations, allowing each member of the team to focus on serving clients and community members in line with their role and expertise. In all cases, employees have access to City Corporate Security, or where needed, law enforcement.

Incident recovery – Post-incident reporting allows OPL to analyze trends, learning from past incidents to adjust and course correct. Management reviews public incident reports from a variety of lenses to ensure appropriate actions are taken, including providing staff with follow-up supports, issuing Trespass Notices to clients, and amending policies, procedures, etc. All employees have access to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), a service that includes both individual and group

support – specifically noting that OPL has worked with Counsellors who are available to provide staff debriefing services as required.

Future Considerations

OPL is committed to providing employees with a physically and psychologically healthy and safe workplace, and to ensuring that library branches are welcoming to clients. With reported incidents showing an upward trend, staff concerns received, and an increase in security concerns for public libraries across North America, OPL staff have identified several additional measures to be explored for implementation.

Employee health and safety is a top priority. Recognizing that employees respond to situations that are outside of their scope of work, staff are working with partners to conduct a needs assessment to explore additional employee supports and other training opportunities to help develop confidence in responding to aggressive interactions. In addition, OPL plans to introduce a Peer Support Network, which will offer voluntary and confidential listening and support for all OPL employees. Peer Supporters will be trained for their role and will be recognized by Management and Unions as providers of immediate, confidential support to fellow employees.

In terms of mitigation strategies, staff are evaluating several additional measures. At Rideau branch, a trial is underway for washroom security protocols in an effort to lessen the attempted drug use in the branch. Staff are also working with community partners to better understand their role in substance use prevention and how OPL can support, or work alongside, them to mitigate drug use in the branch and on surrounding property.

With the increase of drug-use related incidents, OPL will explore making available Naloxone kits in all branches, for use by anyone – public or staff, similar to the availability of AEDs (Defibrillators). OPL is working with peer libraries and City partners to identify risks, implications, and develop a policy to support this voluntary initiative.

Staff are reviewing the Guard Services contract to determine changes required for the next contract issuance. Considerations include expanded guard services at additional branches, the ability to implement a roving guard on a part-time basis, and the addition of a third guard at the Main branch. OPL will use the data presented in this report, meet with internal and external partners, and engage front-line staff to determine the requirements for the new guard contract prior to bringing any requests for additional funding to the OPLB as part of the 2024 budget process.

Other community support options include working with social services agencies (both City-affiliated and not) to develop partnerships to offer a variety of different services in library facilities, funded through partner agencies. This could include social workers, harm-reduction experts, therapists, and / or counsellors. These types of partnerships have been successful in other library systems at providing client supports in a welcoming space, that serves to improve the environment for all visitors at the same time.

Finally, based on anecdotal reports from other cities with new central branches, OPL staff anticipate a shift in incident patterns when *Ādisōke* opens. Specifically, staff anticipate some current clients of the Main branch may frequent other nearby branches or public spaces. As the opening date nears, management will explore likelihood and develop strategies to support employees.

CONSULTATION

The development of this report required consultation with the City of Ottawa's Corporate Security team.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

Ottawa Public Library complies with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)* in its operations. There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

BOARD PRIORITIES

This report aligns with the OPL Board's legislative obligations as noted throughout the report.

BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS

The business analysis implications are identified throughout this report. OPL staff track a variety of incident trends annually including incident types, the most common time of year for incidents to occur, the most impacted branches based on number of incidents reported, etc.

OPL staff will continue to monitor existing trends and have implemented monitoring of additional data to inform future mitigation measures. The new monitoring includes detailed analysis of the number of incidents reported from clients who have been issued a trespass notice that have visited any OPL location during the trespassed period.

Furthermore, staff are identifying what percentage of incidents reported at the top 5 branches are illegal in nature compared to 'other'.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Any associated financial implications will be included in the draft 2024 budget, for consideration by the Board in Q4 2023.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to implementing the recommendations in this report.

INDIGENOUS AND GENDER EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

OPL does not collect data regarding ethnicity or gender for public incidents. OPL's security guard services are part of a comprehensive approach to incident management in its public spaces, which ensures equitable access to Library services for all, and especially for vulnerable populations and equity-deserving groups. Noting that vulnerable populations may be more likely to be involved in incidents, they may be more likely to receive a trespass notice, additionally marginalizing them by restricting their access to Library services. As noted throughout the report, security guards provide support to ensure that library staff can provide a welcoming and supportive environment that is without discrimination or harassment for all clients. Understanding that equity-deserving groups may experience significantly more interaction with enforcement services, OPL staff and security guards are trained to mitigate these sensitivities.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Risk management implications associated with this report have been included throughout.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

DISPOSITION

If approved, staff will continue to explore options for continued client and employee supports / mitigation measures and will bring forward any funding requests as part of the draft 2024 budget.