

Date of Meeting: October 25, 2024

Report Number: A49-24

Report Subject: Welcoming Spaces Library Consultation Project Report – Q3 Update

Recommendation:

1. THAT the Clarington Public Library Board receive Administrative Report No. A49-24: Welcoming Spaces Library Consultation Project Q3 Update as information.

Background

Libraries are regarded as trusted, safe, and welcoming spaces for all members of the community. They are one of the few places where anyone can stay throughout operating hours without cost. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, public libraries in Durham Region have seen a rise in the number of vulnerable individuals seeking library services, including those experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, or substance abuse issues. Many of these patrons face a combination of these challenges, resulting in complex needs. Public libraries are increasingly stretched to meet these demands with their current staffing and resources.

Following Administrative Report No. A23-24, presented to the Board on April 25, 2024, this report provides an update on CLMA's efforts to support vulnerable populations.

Report Overview

On January 18, 2024, the Region of Durham, in collaboration with the Municipality of Clarington and St. Paul's United Church, opened a temporary 10-bed warming shelter. The shelter, which operated from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., seven days a week, was created to offer refuge from the streets during the cold winter months and to address the ongoing housing crisis. While the shelter provided a critical, life-saving service for those without housing, its proximity to the Bowmanville Library—located directly across the street—led to challenges, including increased illicit drug use, alcohol consumption, litter, and disruptive behavior.

Throughout 2024, CLMA has maintained ongoing discussions about homelessness with our Durham Library colleagues as we work to build upon the Welcoming Spaces report. CLMA has actively engaged in multiple round table and community partner meetings, including those led by the grassroots, faith-based movement at St. Paul's Church, and

has implemented small but meaningful changes to create an environment that is inclusive and welcoming for all.

In September, CLMA welcomed two fourth-year Social Work student placements from Trent University to help library patrons navigate social services and reduce barriers to well-being.

New partnerships include:

1. John Howard Society of Durham Region (JHSD): Weekly outreach at the Bowmanville Library to provide access to housing services, landlord/tenant advocacy, and the By-Name List.
2. Community Development Council of Durham (CDCD): Weekly support at the Bowmanville Library for newcomers, settlement, and refugee services.

CLMA is pleased to report that all objectives outlined in the Q3 Action Plan have been completed, and we are preparing additional strategies for 2025, which will include:

- Formalized staff debriefing sessions
- Enhanced mental health, empathy-based, and trauma-informed care training for staff and managers
- Headsets at the Bowmanville Library to improve staff safety








An additional recommendation will be further discussed and reviewed with the MOC.

- Electronic monitoring in public washrooms











Staff will provide the Board with additional information in the next update. The next Board update will be provided in Q1 of 2025.

Action Plan from Welcoming Spaces Report











This Action Plan presented comprehensive actions, and suggested priorities and timeframes to assist libraries with their implementation processes. The timeline below reflects CLMA's assessment of priorities. All Q1, Q3 2024 objectives have been completed. The next update to the Library Board will be in Q1 2025.

Library Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations				
Implementation Action	Suggested Timeframe			
	Q1 2024	Q3 2024	2025	2026 +
Enabling Strategies				
The Project Team will map out a more detailed Implementation Plan that spans the next 6 months and present to the CEOs in time for their scheduled March meeting.				
In reviewing the recommendations, library leadership will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify which recommendations they wish to adopt, Which are best suited for individual implementation and where efficiencies can be gained through collaboration Develop a resource allocation and/or funding plan to support implementation of the selected recommendations. 				
Develop individual library Action Plans aimed at implementing recommendations from the report.				
Implement Collaborative Pilot Project Approach so that changes can be tested before scaling up at all libraries.				
Form Co-Design planning teams, at each library for ongoing evaluation and planning.				
Engage with or enhance engagement with multi-service community tables at municipal and regional levels to participate in planning & discussions about homelessness issues.				
Communication Strategy				
Communication Plan, to communicate the work of the 'Welcoming Spaces' report, will be developed for:				












Library Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations

Implementation Action	Suggested Timeframe			
	Q1 2024	Q3 2024	2025	2026 +
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Public • Boards 				
Develop a Library Collaboration Plan to guide a continued collaboration and inter-library communication process.				
Initiate and/or continue collaborative conversations with library partners and with community partners to facilitate information sharing and problem solving.				
Ongoing Learning and Development Strategies				
Identify opportunities for learning and initiate collaborative conversations with community partners that will expand library knowledge of community resources related to homelessness services eg/ By-Name List.				
Develop shared staff training plans and begin implementation				
Develop working group mechanisms for front-line staff from collaborating library systems to communicate, support, and problem-solve together eg/ Slack Channel				
Schedule field trips for library leadership to visit collaborating library sites to identify Best Practices that can be shared.				
High Priority and Quick Wins				
Establish priority relationships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham Region Police Services • Region of Durham Outreach Teams • Homelessness Specialist for staff training and support, including safety guard training. 				
Provide Resource List for staff to use (Appendix One). Consider making this available as a community resource in libraries also and designating resources to update with season changes.				
Implement 'one-pager' for situation management				

Library Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations

Implementation Action	Suggested Timeframe			
	Q1 2024	Q3 2024	2025	2026 +
Implement visible clocks and calendars. And simple supports for basic needs – hot or cold drinks, socks, and feminine hygiene products.				
Implement Safety and Accessibility Recommendations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage (or other available messaging) with Overdose Prevention number • Ensure positive library expectations for behavior are clearly visible. 				
Implement Safety and Accessibility Recommendations (quick wins) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedbug monitoring process • Remove or reduce use of plexiglass 				
Implement Safety and Accessibility Recommendations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic washroom monitoring in all locations • Develop an Accommodation Plan process with patrons and key service partners. • Enhance security guard training 				
Implement Enhanced Support options for staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced process for staff debriefing including space and time considerations 				
Implementing Enhanced Support options for staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WRAP training • Management Support for debriefing and support skills 				
Higher Complexity				
Begin developing programming related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-patron understanding, empathy and ‘stigma busting’ • Offering or enhancing mainstream library use and resources by people who are experiencing challenges related to homelessness 				

Library Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations

Implementation Action	Suggested Timeframe			
	Q1 2024	Q3 2024	2025	2026 +
Develop Survey Tool to measure and address user and staff perceptions of safety				
IHI Continuous Improvement training for selected managers through IHI				
Co-Design/Co-production training and mentoring for managers.				
Develop and Pilot (at limited locations): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer navigators • Changes to exclusion practices 				
Develop and pilot, as a collaboration between libraries, a social worker or community health specialist to work with libraries.				
Research storage solutions and develop related facility adaptations in co-design process.				
Establish a dialogue with education institutions and community partners to pilot use of Social Service worker students for focused library support.				

Submitted By:
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