



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: September 17, 2020
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Meeting Date: September 23, 2020

TO: Library Board
FROM: Rhonda Sherwood, Chair, Services, Finance and Human Resources Committee
SUBJECT: **Emergency Response Policy**

SUMMARY

The proposed Emergency Response Policy allows for timely and appropriate decision-making on system-wide closures and expenditure from Library reserves in the context of emergencies.

PURPOSE

This report is for decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board approve the Emergency Response Policy.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Services, Finance and Human Resources Committee discussed the draft policy on July 15, 2020 and provided feedback to clarify process and communication and to define relationships with other policies. These changes were incorporated into the draft policy, which the Committee reviewed and recommended for approval on September 16, 2020.

POLICY

The Emergency Response Policy is proposed as a new Board Policy, and is related to the following Board policies: Library Financial Reserves, Operating Budget, Capital Budget,

Procurement, Code of Conduct and Chief Librarian Succession Plan. It is also related to the Inclement Weather Administrative Policy, which is an operational policy.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The Emergency Response Policy supports VPL's strategic priority of Organizational Strength.

INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS

Vancouver is located on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, and is also home to Indigenous peoples from other First Nation, Métis or Inuit communities. Based on the 2016 Census data, the neighbourhoods around the Britannia, Carnegie, náč̓aʔmat ct Strathcona, Mount Pleasant and Dunbar branches are currently home to more people who identify as Indigenous than other parts of the city of Vancouver.¹ Potential impacts on Indigenous community members as well as other priority populations who may be served by these branches would be considered in making decisions in accordance with this policy.

BACKGROUND

In the context of emergencies, it is critical that VPL be prepared to respond rapidly and to make decisions on a timely basis. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Vancouver, the Chief Librarian identified that there was no existing Board policy that clearly delegated authority to the Chief Librarian to close the system in an emergency. The Chief Librarian contacted the Board Chair and recommended closure based on the existing procedures related to inclement weather in the operational Security Manual.

DISCUSSION

Clear delegation of authority is critical to good governance in emergencies. Contacting the Board Chair or holding special Board meetings in a timely manner may not always be feasible. A delegation of authority to the Chief Librarian for emergency system-wide closures and emergency spending from reserves is a best practice, and is proposed for VPL, while continuing consultation with the Board Chair unless this is not possible, and advising the Board of the closure for information and ratification after the decision is made.

¹ Based on interpretation of data in "Memo - City of Vancouver 2016 Census - Indigenous Peoples, Immigration and Ethno-Cultural Diversity" from Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas, General Manager, Community Services to City of Vancouver Mayor and Council, October 26, 2017.

Staff reviewed the policies of other large urban Canadian public libraries in the development of this policy, including Toronto, Edmonton, and Hamilton, and referred to the CULC Toolkit on Recovery and Reimagined Library Services post-COVID-19.

Feedback received from the Committee members in July identified the need for a definition of temporary; that timelines for advising the Board of decisions, and a process for ratification, would be appropriate to include; and the need for additional information about consulting with other City of Vancouver public facing services and emergency management, financial authority, and decision-making processes. These changes have been incorporated in the text presented below and were reviewed by the Committee on September 16.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Emergency Response Policy allows the Chief Librarian or designate to approve expenditures from undesignated reserves over \$50,000 to a maximum of \$200,000 in the case of an emergency, under conditions outlined in the VPL's Operating Budget policy.

FINAL REMARKS

Clear, consistent and relevant policies are critical for the effective governance and operations of VPL. The Emergency Response Policy allows for timely and appropriate decision-making in the context of emergencies.



BOARD POLICY

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY RESPONSE	
CATEGORY: FACILITIES	POLICY CODE: VPL-BD-BOARD-XXX-2020

Objective

The purpose of this policy is to allow for timely and appropriate decision-making on Vancouver Public Library (VPL or Library) system-wide closures and expenditure from Library reserves during an Emergency.

As a public institution, the Library aims to remain open as much as possible during regular hours to serve the public. However, during an Emergency, the safety of staff and the public may require Library facilities to be closed.

Scope

This policy applies to the Library Board and Chief Librarian in the event of an Emergency, government order to close, or other circumstance as described below.

Definitions

Board Chair: the chair of the Board, or a vice-chair of the Board in circumstances where the chair is not available.

Chief Librarian: the chief librarian appointed by the Board pursuant to the *Library Act*, or their designate under the Chief Librarian Succession Plan, as applicable.

Emergency: a present or imminent event or circumstance that (a) is caused by accident, fire, explosion, technical failure, infectious disease outbreak/pandemic, war, riot, terrorism, or the forces of nature, and (b) requires prompt action to protect the health, safety or welfare of a person or to limit damage to property. Emergencies may range in scope from individual branch flooding caused by a burst water pipe to an earthquake that results in a government-declared state of emergency.

System-wide closure: Closure of all or a majority of VPL's physical locations to the public for any period.

Temporary closure: closure for a finite period, where the Library fully intends to reopen as soon as feasible, and maintains the annual operating budget associated with the location.

Indigenous Considerations

A system-wide closure would result in the temporary lack of access to Library services for all members of the public, including Indigenous communities. If circumstances permit one or more Library locations to remain open, the potential impact of closures on Indigenous communities and other priority populations would influence decisions on which locations will remain open, which locations to prioritize for reopening, and the types of services to be prioritized in reopened locations.

Policy Statements

1. Temporary System-wide Closure

- 1.1 Emergencies may arise in which a rapid system-wide closure is needed to ensure the health and safety of VPL staff, patrons, or the general public. Emergencies may or may not be accompanied by a government declaration of a state of emergency.
- 1.2 Decisions about which locations will remain open, if applicable, will consider community impacts, usage trends, accessibility, geographical distribution, and the ability of the facility to offer a broad range of services.
- 1.3 During an Emergency, the Board delegates to the Chief Librarian the authority to determine whether a temporary system-wide closure is necessary and to implement this decision. Prior to exercising this authority, the Chief Librarian will consult with the City of Vancouver, as appropriate, and will make reasonable efforts to consult with the Board Chair. The Chief Librarian or Board Chair will promptly inform the Board of the decision and will call a meeting to ratify the decision within ten days, or as soon as possible based on the circumstances of the Emergency.
- 1.4 If a system-wide closure is required as a result of a government order, or in other circumstances where VPL is required by law to close its facilities, the Chief Librarian will implement the closure for the duration required and will inform the Board as soon as possible. The prior consultation requirements set out in section 1.3 of this policy do not apply to a system-wide closure necessitated by government order or by law.

2. Temporary Closures of Individual Locations

- 2.1 The Chief Librarian has the authority to temporarily close individual VPL locations as required for location-specific Emergencies, and for operational reasons related to facilities maintenance, health and safety, security, and inadequate staffing. The Chief Librarian will promptly inform the Board of any such closures expected to exceed seven days.

3. Emergency-related Expenditure from Library Reserves

- 3.1 VPL's Operating Budget policy allows for budget transfers or increases, under certain conditions, where the Director of Corporate Services and Facilities has determined

such adjustments can be made from library reserves or operating revenues such that the annual operating budget remains balanced.

3.2 VPL's Library Financial Reserves policy allows the Chief Librarian to expend up to \$50,000 from undesignated Library reserves without Board approval.

3.3 During an Emergency, the Board delegates additional authority to the Chief Librarian to approve expenditures from undesignated Library reserves up to a maximum of \$200,000 in aggregate. The Chief Librarian will make reasonable efforts to consult with the Board Chair prior to exercising this authority. The Chief Librarian or Board Chair will promptly inform the Board of the decision.

Non-compliance Consequences

Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Policy Administration Roles and Responsibilities

Chief Librarian	Oversees and recommends updates to the policy as required.
SFHR Committee	Reviews policy as required and recommends changes to the Board
Board	Approves policy and revisions to the policy
Chief Librarian	Administers the policy

Related Policies

- Library Financial Reserves
- Operating Budget
- Capital Budget
- Procurement
- Code of Conduct
- Inclement Weather (administrative policy)
- Chief Librarian Succession Plan

Approval History

ISSUED BY:	Library Board	APPROVED BY:	Library Board	DATE:		
REVISED BY:		APPROVED BY:		DATE:		
REVISED BY:		APPROVED BY:		DATE:		
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW		REVIEW CYCLE	5 Years			