

York University Security Services Review

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FROM YORK UNIVERSITY

Dear York community,

As part of ongoing efforts to further decolonization, equity, diversity and inclusion (DEDI) on campus, particularly through the lens of community safety, York asked experts within the University to form an internal panel to review our community safety model. This review was identified as an action in the [*Action Plan on Black inclusion: A Living Document for Action*](#) after community consultations revealed an opportunity to develop and implement an alternate model for security services with a greater emphasis on equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization.

Following a one-year review, the security services review (SSR) team, with endorsement from the expert panel, released its findings and key recommendations in a final report to York University leadership in early 2023. The overarching recommendation, supported by a number of detailed recommended actions, is to transition York away from the current law enforcement model that guides our security services and implement an alternative, community-centric model.

To carefully review the report's recommendations and determine the best path forward, York is establishing an SSR task force this spring. As co-sponsors for this work, we will chair the task force and oversee implementation, supported by the executive director of community safety. The SSR review team and the internal expert panel will be rolled into a single advisory committee that will continue to provide counsel and advice through the multi-year change initiative. At the discretion of the advisory committee, working groups will be developed to conduct deeper research on specific actions and contribute to the strength of implementation planning. Over the next several months, the advisory committee and working groups will be holding consultation sessions to gather feedback from the community about the report's recommendations. This input will be used to guide implementation to ensure we are incorporating the needs and perspectives of all equity-deserving groups and the broader York community.

As we move forward, we will regularly report on progress to maintain transparency and accountability throughout the implementation process. We are grateful to the expert panel and the many individuals and groups on campus who volunteered their time, perspectives and honest opinions to contribute to the report and its recommendations for the betterment of the University's security services. We are confident this work will lay the foundation for lasting change at York.

Sincerely,

Carol McAulay

Vice President Finance and Administration

Alice Pitt

Interim Vice President Equity, People and Culture

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SUMMARY REPORT

BACKGROUND

In February 2022, York University formed an internal expert panel to undertake a review of its security services and to develop an alternative security services model for the University.

The Security Services Review emerged in response to a long history of concerns from equity-deserving groups about security activity at York University. In 2019, York University's Community Safety Department Strategic Plan, *Safer Together*, identified themes and areas to improve the University's security services. In June 2020, the University engaged in consultations on anti-Black racism with Black community members. During the course of these meetings, participants shared many experiences and feelings of racial discrimination and harassment, including shared experiences of racial profiling and surveillance while on campus and feelings of a lack of support. The issues identified were centered on uniformed security services and the interface with police.

York gathered concrete suggestions for change from these meetings and developed the [Action Plan on Black inclusion: A Living Document for Action](#). The Security Services Review is a commitment and action identified in this plan.

To conduct the review, the internal expert panel – comprised of a team of York University faculty, staff and an external consultant – completed a formal year-long review of York's security services, guided by an anti-[racism](#), equity, diversity, and inclusion lens. The review took a critical and holistic approach to enhancing safety and security at York to address real issues and concerns identified by members of the University community. This included:

- extensive background research into innovative efforts to address concerns of [racism](#) and discrimination in universities across North America;
- thorough consultation with the York University community;
- critically reviewing the law enforcement model that governs York Security Services' operations; and
- exploring alternative security services models.

The review was guided by the end goal of maintaining a high-level of safety for all York's community members living, learning, teaching, and visiting the University's campuses. It builds on the work of the *Safer Together* and represents the next step to advance the full re-establishment of frontline security services in a manner that is fully consistent with a community safety approach. It concludes that a deep commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and decolonization is essential in moving York toward a community-centric model that effectively serves and ensures the safety of the University's highly diverse community.

KEY RESEARCH THEMES

Through research, the expert panel identified three major equity-related demands that have emerged in the wider society in response to concerns with law enforcement and which have found resonance relating to campus security. These include:

- Demand to end racism in law enforcement
- Demand to develop non-police only frontline responses for mental health crises
- Demand to defund and/or de-task police services and develop more comprehensive safety responses

CONSULTATIONS AND INPUT

For the review, the expert panel engaged in a thorough and robust consultation process. This included:

- Community education sessions
- Three community town halls
- Receipt of written submissions
- Multiple in-person meetings
- Multiple focus groups with equity-deserving groups
- A variety of focused consultation sessions with York's administrative staff, faculty representatives, union representation, York's Community Safety Department and York Security Services
- Three sessions with York University's Community Safety Council, which is an advisory body with responsibility for providing advice to the President and the Community Safety Department on safety matters

KEY CONSULTATION THEMES

Through consultation with the York community, the panel identified a number of themes and issues, including the need for:

- a community-centric approach to security;
- a focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization;
- better coordination with and reduced presence of police on campus;
- enhanced collaboration within the University relating to security and safety matters;
- enhanced community engagement relating to security and safety matters;
- enhanced acknowledgement of the special circumstances and needs of equity deserving groups;
- a representative security service staff;
- enhanced safety of all related to the presence of the unhoused on campus;
- consistent protection for students and other individuals with precarious immigration status;
- enhanced personal safety protection for campus members experiencing threat or harassment; and

- enhanced inclusion of Black and other racialized people from neighbourhoods adjacent to the Keele Campus.

A COMMUNITY-CENTRIC MODEL FOR CAMPUS SAFETY

The overarching recommendation from York’s Security Services Review panel is for the University to transition away from the current law enforcement model that guides its security activities and move toward implementing a community-centric model.

The panel identified seven core elements of a community-centric safety approach to frontline security response.

A community-centric safety approach is and includes:

<p>Bias-free</p> <p>Actively removes systemic and individual bias, especially for Black, Indigenous and other <u>racialized</u> groups.</p>	<p>Transparent and accountable</p> <p>Maintains clear and effective mechanisms to uphold transparency and accountability.</p>	<p>Diverse & specialized</p> <p>Maintains 24/7 delivery of specialized social services, supported by mental health, equity and gender experts.</p>
<p>Community-focused and collaborative</p> <p>Engages and collaborates with the community as partners in safety.</p>	<p>Representative</p> <p>Reflects the diverse campus it serves, particularly in terms of ethno-racial distribution.</p>	<p>Equity training</p> <p>Establishes high quality anti-racism, equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization training.</p>
<p>Organizationally aligned</p> <p>Realigns organizational culture, structures, and capacity to fully deliver a community-centric safety model.</p>		

RECOMMENDATIONS

The expert panel identified a variety of recommendations to ensure York’s approach to campus safety is aligned with each element of a community-centric approach. Properly implemented, these transitions would ensure the safety and security of all members of the University community, including those belonging to equity deserving groups.

Recommendations for a community-centric safety approach at York University

<p style="text-align: center;">Bias-free</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new standard operating procedure and training to prevent racial profiling • Update all practices and procedures to include an anti-bias and anti-racial profiling lens • Reduce police involvement on campus • Implement a race-identity data collection system to monitor for bias • Regularly review data with an equity lens to identify and correct negative patterns 	<p style="text-align: center;">Transparent and accountable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly share Standard Operating Procedures of York University • Implement an independent complaint process • Review communication and information sharing practices from an anti-racism and equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization lens • Begin regularly reporting on hate activity directly, instead of as part of York Security Services Quality of Life category
<p style="text-align: center;">Diverse and specialized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop non-uniformed response options and a hybrid response for mental health crises • Increase expertise to support equity-deserving groups • Introduce sexual and gender-based violence expert support in frontline security response • Develop equitable approaches to address individuals who are unhoused on campus • Develop a pan-University working group focused on risks to personal safety 	<p style="text-align: center;">Community-focused and collaborative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt and implement a community engagement program • Include neighbouring communities to York campuses in community engagement, with the aim of supporting York’s self-designation as an anchor institution for the community
<p style="text-align: center;">Representative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement tools to measure, address gaps and report on representation of York Security Services staff • Address gaps in representation with equity focused recruitment, selection and promotion measures • Seek to negotiate changes to the Collective Agreement to widen the pool for hiring 	<p style="text-align: center;">Equitable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and adopt an anti-racism, equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization training strategy • Build or acquire in-house expertise and capacity for specialized training
<p style="text-align: center;">Organizationally aligned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align service structures, culture and employment with a community-centric safety model • Develop a restructuring team to propose a new structure for a community-centric safety approach to frontline security work • De-emphasize policing and security guard experience and licensing for security staff • Revise key components of York Security Services to better reflect a community-centric safety approach, including the name, uniforms and Security Official title 	

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

To support the successful implementation of their recommendations, the panel identified a number of tactical activities designed to ensure transparency in process, accountability and progress toward a community-centric approach. These activities include:

- appointing a transition leadership group to ensure adequate resourcing for change efforts;
- establishing a project coordination team to guide the University through the multi-year change initiative;
- developing an advisory committee, including students, faculty, staff, members of equity-deserving groups and individuals with equity-related organizational change expertise to support the change; and
- developing evaluation criteria and annually report progress on implementation.