

Toronto City Hall Patron Screening



**Indigenous
Community
Focus Group**

EX35.3

Attachment 5


McLean Consulting
Group

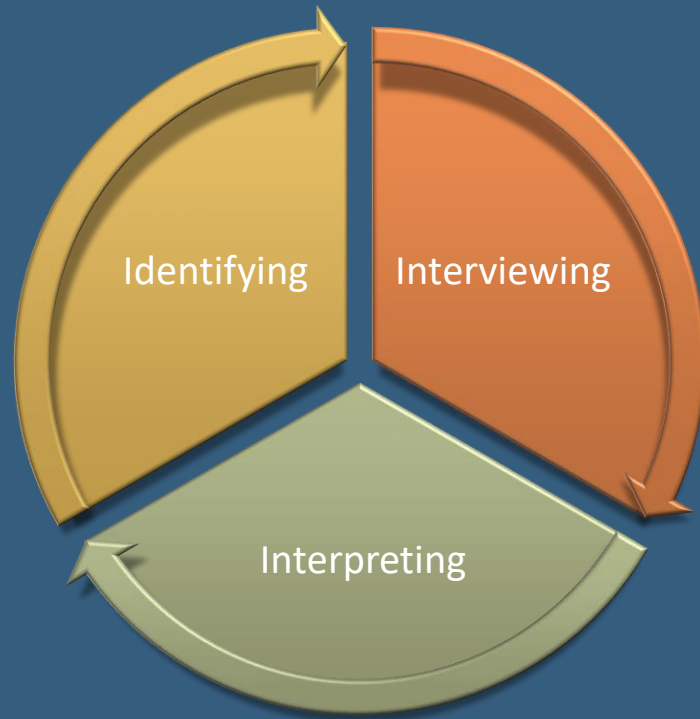
Background



On December 5th, 2017, Toronto City Council passed an amended decision for Enhanced Security Measures at Toronto City Hall based on two separate security threat and risk assessments completed earlier that year. Toronto Corporate Security through the Deputy City Manager were directed to survey the public and report back to City Council.

This report includes the results of the Indigenous Focus Group.

Methodology



McLean Consulting Group (an Indigenous owned and operated company) was contracted to facilitate the Indigenous Focus Group which included setting a date, finding locations, identifying significant individuals and agencies to interview, explaining the concept of Enhanced Patron Screening, seeking feedback including metrics and summarizing the findings in this report.

No City of Toronto staff were present so as to allow the participants comfort and anonymity in sharing their perspectives however a brief Fact Sheet was developed for the participants by the Manager of Corporate Security. The Fact Sheet ensured that the same information was accurately presented to all participants and could be taken back to communities without interpretation.

Methodology

Almost 40 members of the Toronto Indigenous community indicated interest in participating in the Focus Group and feedback was obtained from 27 individuals from a combination of in-person interviews, phone interviews and community forum. Most of the participants were also employees of Indigenous agencies however there were also respondents who came simply as members of the community. McLean Consulting Group ensured that the voices of both youth and women were heard so that the feedback passed through an equity lens of not only the racialized group but also the sub-groups.

The agencies represented were:

Council Fire
Na Me Rez
Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
Native Woman's Resource Centre
Aboriginal Legal Services
Native Child and Family Services
Legal Aid Ontario
Halton Community Legal Services
Human Rights Legal Support Centre, Indigenous Services
Council Fire Native Cultural Centre
Enaahdig Healing Lodge
University of Toronto

Methodology

All participants received a standardized overview of the issue of security at City Hall, the Fact Sheet, the promise of anonymity and then they were presented with 9 questions as well as an opportunity for unstructured feedback.

The questions were purposefully neutral so as to prevent any possibility of “leading” respondents in a particular direction. The questions were also not racialized since standard academic practices discourage “respondent segregation” however they were crafted so that any potential issues particular to this racialized group would have every opportunity to be raised.

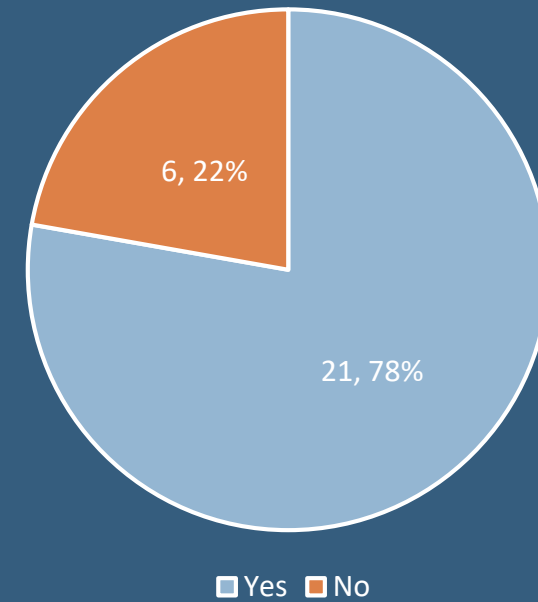


Have You Ever Visited City Hall?

This question is important in order to gauge the veracity of the perspectives of the respondents in future questions and comments.

The experience of visiting City Hall better informs a conceptualization of what Enhanced Patron Screening (EPS) might look like.

Responses



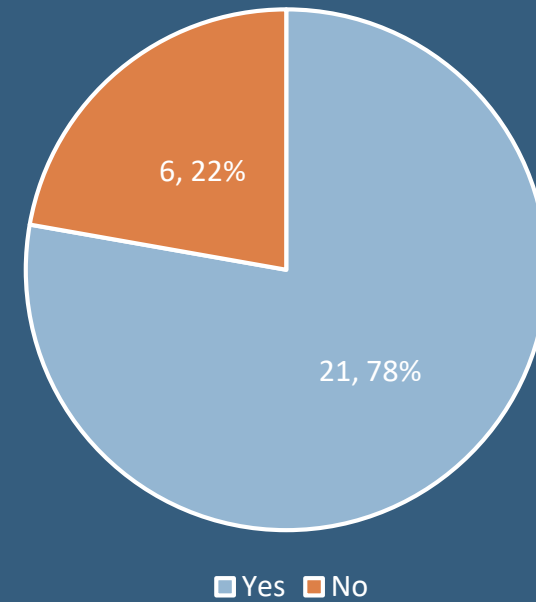
27 Total Responses: 21 Yes & 6 No

Have You Ever Visited City Hall?

It is significant to note that most of those that answered “yes” had been to City Hall as employees of their Indigenous agency, and many times that visit had to do with supporting or advocating on behalf of their Indigenous client.

Some respondents attended City Hall as members of various committees that deal with Indigenous issues. For the most part, visiting City Hall for respondents is a professional matter.

Responses

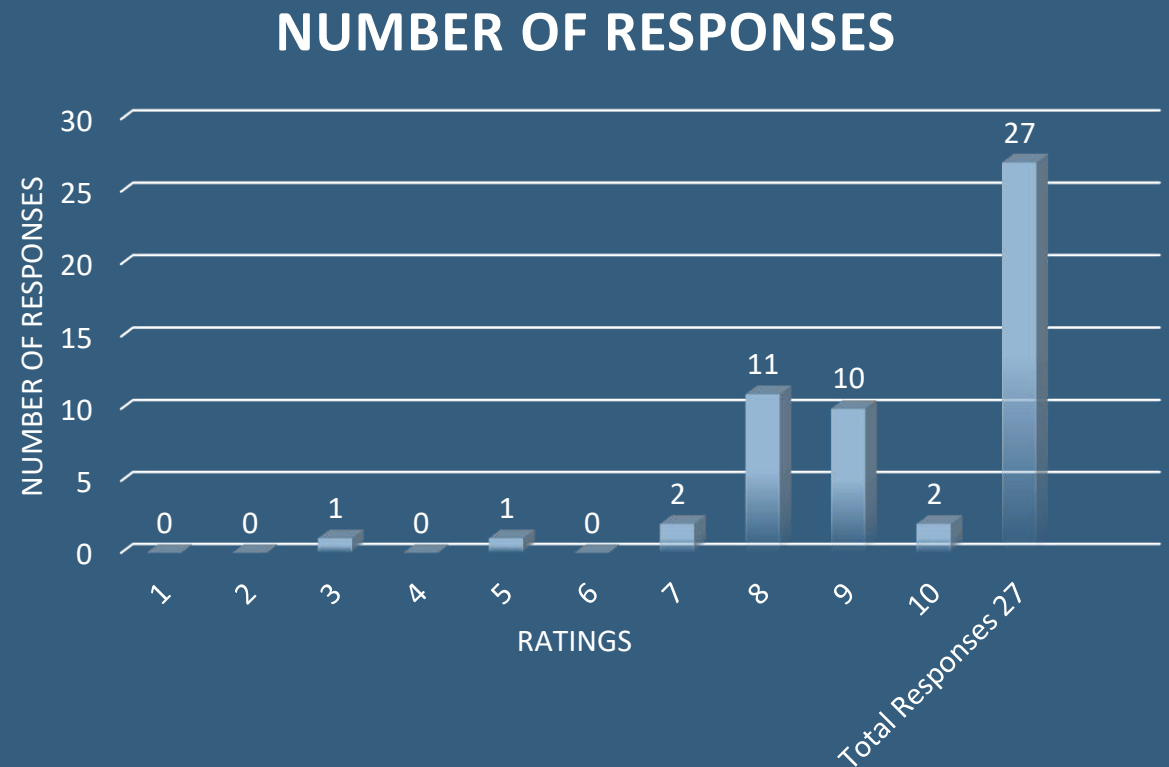


27 Total Responses: 21 Yes & 6 No

On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is “not at all and 10 is “absolutely) did you feel safe visiting City Hall?

This question supports focus on the issue of safety at City Hall and prompts responses regarding what contributes to the feeling of safety.

27 Total Responses
Average Rating = 8.15



On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is “not at all and 10 is “absolutely) did you feel safe visiting City Hall?

Respondents felt safe visiting City Hall except for one youth who had verbal conflict with a staff member.

Any “lack of safety” issues identified were more in regards to the safety of the overall Indigenous community in Toronto and the desire for the City to do more for their safety in their communities.

Respondent perspectives continue to identify systemic racism in several areas as needing to be addressed.

Do you feel the staff are safe at City Hall?

This question probes perceived security needs and informs further perspectives on EPS initiatives.

Very safe - 19
Somewhat safe - 3
Unsure - 5
Somewhat unsafe - 0
Unsafe - 0
Total = 27

Do you feel the staff are safe at City Hall?

Respondents did not see the need for EPS initiatives regardless of being informed that other major cities are doing the same to deal with terrorism and crime. Much of the feedback spoke to staff safety as being very much in the hands of staff and how they treat the citizens of Toronto who come to City Hall for a variety of issues.

A number of comments also spoke to the perception that City Hall, its staff and City Council belong to and are accountable to the residents of Toronto and that EPS initiatives create an “us versus them” or “siege mentality” that is not helpful. This perspective was further strengthened by the Fact Sheet that indicates City Staff would not be required to go through EPS.

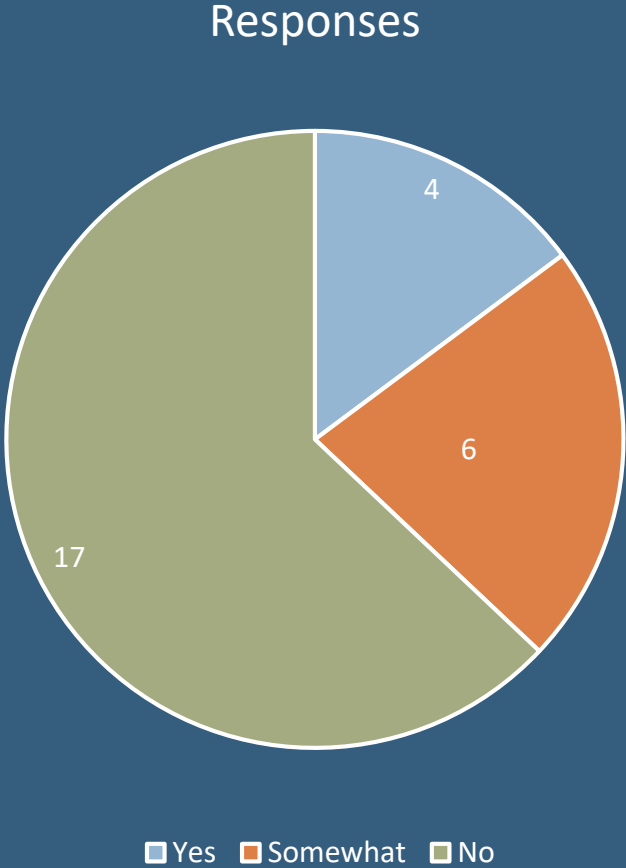
Respondents believe that if staff do not have to endure what citizens do, then they will lose empathy for those who do have to undergo the process. The feeling for most in the focus group was that excepting staff from EPS will result in a lack of accountability because any complaints by the public will not be experientially understood.

The respondents felt it would be necessary to also “change up” the security staff so they did not just give a “free pass” through the EPS for the other staff they were familiar with.

Some comments touched on the belief that staff were citizens of Toronto and just as dangerous as anybody else and therefore should have to undergo EPS as they report to work each day.

Were you aware of some of the threats of violence towards City Hall and City Council?

This question helps inform results and attitudes towards EPS since knowledge of potential or actual threats is far more likely to elicit support for security measures. It also informs City staff as to the level of need for public education in regards to this issue.



Were you aware of some of the threats of violence towards City Hall and City Council?

Clearly the Indigenous community in Toronto is generally unaware of the threats or violent episodes that have occurred lately, nor are they aware of the security audits that have prompted the call for EPS. Although community education could lead to increased support for EPS generally speaking, it is not likely to significantly impact attitudes in the Indigenous community. There was an overall feeling that City Council and Staff have no more right to feel safer than do the Indigenous community, and that vulnerable Indigenous people get attacked everyday yet there is no increased protection for them. The respondents wondered why only City Hall was going to be protected in light of the many City assets that could be a target for terrorism or for others angry with the City.



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Have you ever gone through Patron Screening before? How was your experience?

All respondents reported having experienced EPS previously.

Positive experience - 1

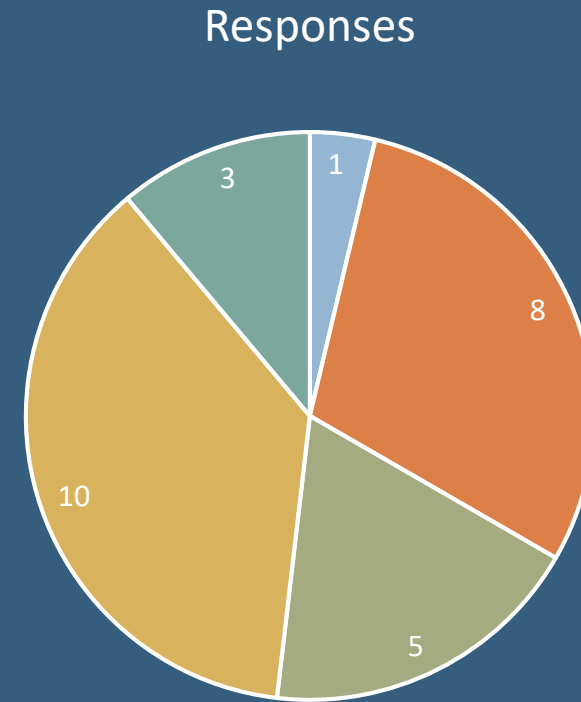
Somewhat positive experience - 8

Unsure - 5

Somewhat negative experience - 10

Negative experience - 3

27 Responses



Positive Experience Somewhat Positive Unsure Somewhat Negative Negative

Have you ever gone through Patron Screening before? How was your experience?

Respondents noted that airports were the first place that they experienced EPS followed by large venue sporting events. There were some comments that indicated the perception/experience of going through EPS for large venue events was different than airports or City Hall because at venues people have chosen to attend for recreational purposes however having access to one's elected officials or municipal staff should be a right. Almost universally, people react to EPS as an intrusion into their personal space or indicative of a lack of trust. Those that felt the experience was positive, somewhat positive or were unsure spoke of effective processes and procedures, courteous and accountable staff, staff empathetic to personal and cultural situations and a physical set up that accommodates efficiencies.

The negative experiences were varied and often shared with emotion. The youth shared that they felt age as well as racial discrimination and that security staff are removed from modern culture and therefore make negative value judgements about youth choices in clothing, music, language or other forms of expression. Many of the women in the focus group shared the discomfort they felt being searched by men and wondered why there are not always female staff present for EPS considering half the population are female. Further to that point, the fact that Indigenous women are far more likely to experience sexual violence than other groups caused the respondents to share that re-victimization of the Indigenous community can happen via EPS.

What would EPS have to look like to be considered respectful and professional?

This question is useful to bring awareness of the unique perspectives of the Toronto Indigenous community regarding EPS.



Top Answers:

Cultural competency training for all staff

Traditional items

Privacy rooms

Traditional people and elders

Male and female staff

Responsiveness to requests for a supervisor

City staff required to go through EPS each day like everyone else

What would EPS have to look like to be considered respectful and professional?

The Focus Group suggested 7 major themes in terms of the implementation of EPS. All City of Toronto staff are asked to go through cultural competency training by people recognized as authentic by the Toronto Indigenous community. The intergenerational trauma from colonialism and residential school (read government institutions) continues to negatively impact the indigenous population. Added to this is a general lack of knowledge of Indigenous culture and world view because it was not taught in the school systems so staff can be innocently ignorant and cause offense. Part of the cultural competency is awareness that sacred items are considered to be persons and cannot be offended, touched or handled by security staff. Elders and traditional people who are recognized by the Toronto Indigenous community could be given pre-clearance and given the same standing as City staff.

What would EPS have to look like to be considered respectful and professional?

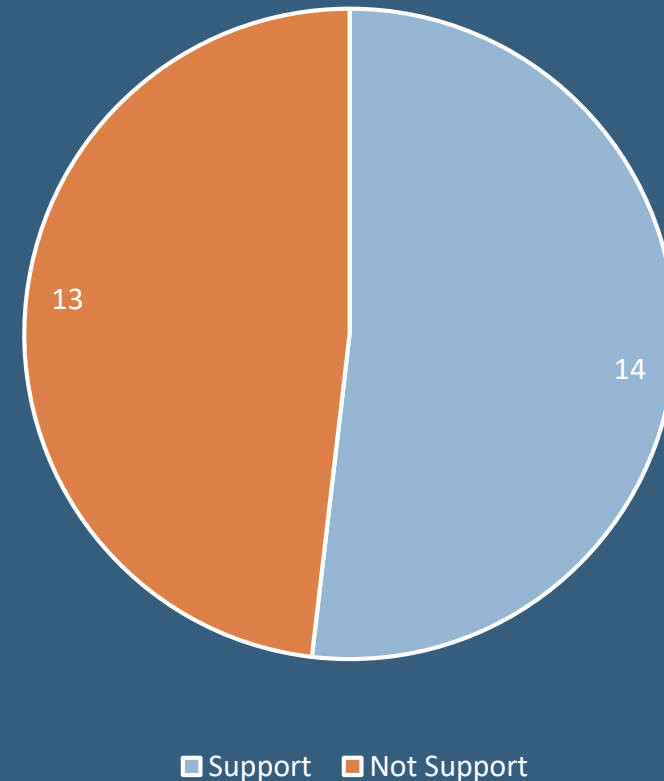
Respondents shared examples of embarrassment and subsequent harassment going through EPS with traditional items. The line for screening gets held up because invariably Indigenous people have to explain their items and advocate for their rights which causes the people behind them to become resentful. It was suggested that a “privacy room” be beside the EPS area so that the process of respectful inspection can take place without holding up the line. Many respondents, especially the youth and the women, strongly suggested that a supervisor always be available by request immediately to ensure their safety and to educate security staff on the spot if necessary.

There was also the assertion that those being screened should have a choice of a male or female security staff member. Going through a delayed, impersonal complaint process was not seen as ever acceptable.

If EPS was done in a respectful and professional manner, would you support it?

This question purposefully follows the previous one to inquire if all concerns were addressed, would the Indigenous community of Toronto support EPS.

Responses



If EPS was done in a respectful and professional manner, would you support it?

The Focus Group was split on this question. Many of those that supported the initiative shared that they felt EPS was going to be imposed whether or not they liked it so it may as well be done in an acceptable manner. The suggestions from the previous question were enough for half the group to find it acceptable. Those that would not support EPS regardless of process and attitude spoke to some of the aforementioned points such as a “siege mentality” or an “us versus them” mindset.

They shared that it is ok for City Council to experience feeling threatened just as everyone else does in their day to day lives, and that this experience leads them to be more empathetic to the residents of Toronto. Some also shared that often times and individual must look at themselves and see if they are inviting threatening responses to their behaviors or decisions.

Do you have any other ideas as to how the City could respond to threats against City Council or staff?

Most respondents suggested that staff training was the best way to deal with threats without the use of EPS. Several people shared that they worked with both vulnerable and volatile clients and in dangerous locations and at all hours of the night. They shared that the type of training they receive to assess, manage or de-escalate clients could be an alternative.

The idea of Indigenous “Peacekeepers” was also raised and expanded upon. Peacekeepers are security staff who promote peace by interaction and understanding. The idea would be to hire security staff from all racialized communities who would greet and chat with visitors to City Hall and the audience of City Council.

Is there a role for the Indigenous community to play if EPS is implemented?

The final question is designed to probe if there can be any partnering moving forward if EPS is implemented, which might ameliorate some concerns from the Indigenous Community of Toronto.



Top Answers:

Cultural Competency Training

Designation of elders and traditional people

“Secret shoppers” to measure quality of EPS staff

Is there a role for the Indigenous community to play if EPS is implemented?

The Focus Group was clear that the Toronto Indigenous Community should be consulted for any type of cultural competency training to ensure it is representative of the community. They also felt that they are the ones who could designate elders and traditional people if the EPS process did involve pre-screening helpers from the community. The example given was if a priest or imam or rabbi walked in, they would be respected as a designated community leader.

Some respondents also felt that any initiatives that suspend civil liberties fully or partially need to be audited on a regular basis. They felt that they could serve a role by purposefully going through the EPS process as Indigenous people and then providing feedback to management about their experience. Security personnel would not know this is happening so the experience would be authentic and allow assessment of staff training competencies.

Summary

- The Toronto Indigenous community visit City Hall regularly and often in a helper/advocate role or committee member role
- The Focus Group was largely unaware of issues at City Hall/City Council with violence or threats
- The Focus Group did not feel safety was an issue at City hall even after learning about some issues
- The Focus Group believed EPS damages the relationship between the City and the Indigenous community as it moves to protect it's own leaders and staff while the community has to deal with violence and the threats of violence every day
- The Focus Group was split on support for EPS with women and youth having the bulk of the concerns
- The Focus Group had several concerns regardless of whether or not they would support such an initiative. If those concerns were dealt with, half of the group would support EPS if implemented.

Summary

- Cultural Competency training for staff delivered by the Indigenous community was the first concern.
- The Focus Group was very concerned about the suggestion that City staff would not have to endure EPS like everyone else
- A privacy room for dealing with traditional items was strongly recommended
- The Focus Group was concerned about the re-victimization of Indigenous women if there were not options for a female security staff to do the search
- Quality assurance measures are important to the Focus Group including the ability to call a supervisor during screening and regular checks on security staff performance
- The Focus Group strongly suggested that their elders and traditional people receive some type of pre-clearance just as City staff might get or members of other religious organizations, etc.