

Policy Name	Policy Type
Response to Demonstrations Policy	Corporate
Original Date	Revision Date
September 22, 2025	

Policy Statement

Demonstrations are public gatherings where people assemble around a common purpose as a form of peaceful assembly and expression. The freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly are enshrined under the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) (the Charter).

In line with the [Policy Framework – City Response to Demonstrations](#), permits are not issued for demonstrations on publicly accessible City property. Non-permitted events do not receive logistical support or services such as power, barricades, furniture, audio-visual equipment, or event set-up.

Demonstrations may occur in areas across the grounds, either spontaneously or without prior notice, potentially impacting public access and safety. This policy outlines procedures for managing demonstrations while prioritizing public safety.

Equity Impact Statement

Exhibition Place is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment—free from harassment, discrimination, and hate—for all individuals. This policy was developed in alignment with internal policies and legislation such as the Anti-Hate Activity Policy, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Recognizing that demonstrations often serve as essential platforms for marginalized voices, this policy upholds Charter-protected freedoms—such as expression and peaceful assembly—while prioritizing public safety and minimizing harm to those most at risk.

Application

This policy applies to all Exhibition Place staff, members of the public, volunteers, clients, visitors, and users of the facilities and public spaces.

All individuals are expected to comply with this policy in addition to municipal, provincial, and federal laws and regulations. Exhibition Place will apply this policy using a balanced and measured approach consistent with the rights and freedoms protected under the Charter.

Definitions

Demonstration

An organized gathering where people assemble around a common form of peaceful assembly and expression. The freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly are enshrined under the Charter. Examples include protests, rallies, and vigils.

Publicly Accessible City Property

City of Toronto-owned or public spaces where demonstrations may occur. These areas include:

- Public green spaces
- Public rights-of-way (streets, sidewalks)

- Parking lots

Exhibition Place, as an agency of the City, is granted legal authority by Section 406 (2) of the *City of Toronto Act* and *Municipal Code 63*, both of which outline the designated uses of the grounds.

Guiding Principles

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Legislation and enforcement must comply with the Charter. In developing the policy, Exhibition Place recognizes its legal obligation to uphold the rights and freedoms set out in the Charter, while balancing the need for public safety and community well-being.

Section 2 of the Charter sets out the fundamental freedoms, which are:

- freedom of conscience and religion;
- freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- freedom of association.

While the Charter guarantees certain rights and freedoms, Section 1 clarifies that all such rights may be subject to reasonable limits prescribed by law, as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

The principles of reasonableness and proportionality will guide actions taken in response to demonstrations and will be implemented in a manner that minimally impairs Charter protected rights.

Hate Activity

Exhibition Place has established a Hate Activity Policy to assist in identifying hate-motivated crimes or incidents and identifying appropriate ways to respond. Under this policy, activities that constitute discrimination, hate speech, or incitement to violence, as defined by applicable legislation, are strictly prohibited, including:

- Section 13 (1) of *The Ontario Human Rights Code* deals with an announced intention to discriminate as follows: “A right under Part I is infringed by a person who publishes or displays before the public or causes the publication or display before the public of any notice, sign, symbol, emblem, or other similar representation that indicates the intention of the person to infringe a right under Part I or that is intended by the person to incite the infringement of a right under Part I”
- The *Criminal Code of Canada*, including sections 318 and 319, prohibits the willful promotion of hatred against identifiable groups, public incitement of hatred, and the communication of hate propaganda.

Exhibition Place condemns actions that promote hatred, discrimination, or incite violence. Public spaces, facilities, and properties under its jurisdiction will not be made available to any individual or group that promotes such views and ideas.

Upon notification of reported hate activity, TPS will be notified. Responses will be guided by the principles of reasonableness and proportionality, ensuring that the response is appropriate to the nature and severity of the incident. Action may include:

- Voluntary removal from Exhibition Place property
- Issuance of Trespass Notice for Exhibition Place of up to one year duration
- Removal under the *Trespass to Property Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. T.21*
- Further involvement of legal services

Ensuring Safety for All

While Exhibition Place respects the right to peaceful and lawful demonstrations, acts that endanger others, threaten public safety, damage property, or impede access to essential services and critical infrastructure will not be tolerated.

In collaboration with the TPS, Exhibition Place is committed to ensuring a safe and hate-free environment for all staff, visitors, show clients, and exhibitors.

Ensuring Staff Safety

Exhibition Place is committed to providing a safe work environment. The Workplace Violence Policy and Guidelines outline responsibilities for management and staff, including risk assessments, incident reporting, and investigation procedures. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, clients, and any person engaged in business with Exhibition Place and visitors to the site.

Implementation

Exhibition Place Jurisdiction

Exhibition Place is municipally owned land, with its powers and duties prescribed by law under section 406(1) and (2) of the *City of Toronto Act*, as well as Chapter 63 (§ 63-4D and 63-6H) of the *Toronto Municipal Code*. These legislative provisions establish the site's designated uses, booking policies, and property boundaries.

Two by-laws grant additional authority. By-law 45-84, "Respecting the Regulation of Traffic in Exhibition Place," classifies internal roads as park roadways and empowers Exhibition Place to manage signage and traffic, and By-law 25-85, "Respecting the Management of Exhibition Place," states that unless authorized in writing by the Chief Executive Officer, no person shall in Exhibition Place:

- Hold an organized gathering which involves exclusive use of an area,
- Operate any amplifying system or loudspeaker,
- Erect, construct, build or cause to be erected, constructed or built any permanent or temporary tent, shelter, building or other structure of any sort whatsoever,
- Take or permit to be taken any film, photograph, or videotape for remuneration,
- Dig or tear up any pavement, roadway, sidewalk, walkway, grass plot or flowerbed or any part thereof,
- Cut, destroy, or damage in any way any tree, flower, plant, shrub or flowerbed,
- Dump, store, leave or maintain any earth, rock, stone, fill, refuse or garbage of any kind whatsoever.

Further, Section 6.2 allows the Chief Executive Officer to:

- Post signs allowing or prohibiting or regulating any activity in any area of Exhibition Place if the permitting or prohibiting of such activity is contemplated by this by-law, and,
- Close off for such temporary period as may be appropriate at Exhibition Place, or part or parts thereof, to relieve or prevent overcrowding or traffic congestion, or in the interests of public safety.

Role of the Toronto Police Service (TPS)

The TPS is the primary responder for demonstrations occurring in the city. The TPS has effective authority, enforcement powers and training to respond to demonstrations. Where Exhibition Place becomes aware of a group or individuals holding a demonstration, TPS will be notified.

The primary role of the TPS at demonstrations is the preservation of the peace and public safety. The TPS ensures that public safety is maintained while individuals are able to lawfully exercise their rights pursuant to the Charter. The TPS upholds the right to demonstrate lawfully, while limiting disruptions to the city and residents. Public updates and communications regarding demonstrations are also issued by the TPS as needed.

City agencies and corporations, in accordance with their mandate, delegated authority, and board-approved by-laws and policies, coordinate with the TPS to respond to demonstrations occurring on or potentially impacting property within their jurisdiction. In some situations, City involvement may be required as appropriate.

Recognizing that some demonstrations may be contentious and attract counter demonstrations, the TPS takes additional steps to ensure public safety during such events. Alleged unlawful conduct is investigated by the TPS and may be the subject of police enforcement either immediately or at a future time.

Role of Exhibition Place Security

Exhibition Place Security is responsible for setting security standards and working alongside the TPS for the protection of staff, show clients, assets, and the public, using a mix of proactive and reactive measures. These efforts are aimed at ensuring operational continuity while promoting a safe and welcoming environment across Exhibition Place.

Demonstrations occurring on or near Exhibition Place property will be reported to TPS for monitoring and an appropriate response. To balance public safety with the right to freedom of expression, designated areas outside Exhibition Place have been established for demonstrations and protest activities. These include:

- The east side of the Princes' Gates along Strachan Avenue, and
- The area north of the Dufferin Street Bridge.

In the event of demonstrations or the likelihood of expected demonstrations occurring on or potentially impacting the property, Exhibition Place Security is immediately engaged. Exhibition Place Security responds proactively and in real-time to demonstrations taking place on the grounds with the TPS.

When Exhibition Place becomes aware of demonstrations occurring on or potentially impacting the property, security personnel will be deployed to collaborate with TPS to assess and respond as appropriate. Additionally, Exhibition Place Security will work directly with organizers to ensure that the event is conducted safely, protected from other competing disturbances, and complies with Exhibition Place regulations. During the demonstration, Exhibition Place Security and the TPS will monitor and take appropriate action as required. Following the disbandment of the demonstration, Exhibition Place Security staff are to debrief with the TPS staff and document lessons learned in preparation for future events.

Trespass to Property Act

The *Trespass to Property Act* provides the City and its agencies with a mechanism to prevent unauthorized entry, prohibit certain activities, or remove individuals from their property. The use of the Act on public properties may be subject to review by the courts. The effectiveness of the Act as a tool in public spaces is highly dependent on the facts of the situation.

Exhibition Place can elect to use the Act to prohibit a person from engaging in prohibited activities on its properties, or to prohibit entry to the premises. A breach of a trespass notice issued under the Act may result in a fine of up to \$10,000.

Exhibition Place Security and TPS are authorized to enforce Section 2(1)(b), allowing officers to act where prohibited activities occur on the premises. This authority applies to lands under Exhibition Place's jurisdiction, including tenant-occupied spaces. However, this does not preclude tenants from entering into equivalent enforcement arrangements directly with the TPS for their leased areas.

Legal Services

Legal Services provides legal advice and expertise to City Council, including agencies. Exhibition Place's legislative powers and available tools to respond to demonstrations need to be balanced with its jurisdiction and legal obligation to respect Charter protected rights and freedoms. Any enforcement actions will require consultation with the CEO and City Solicitor to determine the appropriate response.

Notification to Staff

If a demonstration is deemed to create an unsafe working environment, a communication or warning system via text, email, or phone will be implemented to alert staff and provide necessary safety instructions.

Notification to Clients and Tenants

If a demonstration is deemed to create an unsafe working environment, a communication or warning system via text, email, or phone will be implemented to alert tenants and provide necessary safety instructions. For Licensed events actively occurring in Exhibition Place managed venues, the Event Services Coordinator will immediately inform the authorized client contact and take appropriate action, which may include invoking the client's Emergency Protocol Plan in conjunction with event security, Exhibition Place Security, and the Toronto Police Service.