



# Building Healthy Communities:

Fostering Social Connection and  
Belonging in Older Adults

Fall 2025

# Why TPL?

## Torontonians Rely on Toronto Public Library

**Not all residents in our city have equal access to economic, educational, health, cultural, and social opportunities that are critical to succeed in Toronto.** Access to these resources and opportunities often depends on where you live, how much you earn, and who you are, which creates dramatic divides in our city and a success gap that impacts us all.

**The function of public libraries expands far beyond just books.** Libraries are a much-needed public space, providing a critical link to the health and wellness of communities. Our 100 branches represent a safe, welcoming and low-barrier point of access for vulnerable residents.

A ground-breaking **2023 Social Impact Study** shows that TPL profoundly touches people's lives and enables Torontonians to grow and thrive. The results prove how vital Toronto Public Library is to the city and demonstrates the need to continue to invest in library services at a time when social cohesion is more important than ever.

Read the full report at [tplfoundation.ca/socialimpactstudy](https://tplfoundation.ca/socialimpactstudy)

## The Facts

- Toronto Public Library is the biggest and busiest public library system in the world
- 81% of Torontonians use the Library
- TPL collections are comprised of 10.5 million items in 40 different languages
- No other public institution has the mandate and reach, physical and technical infrastructure, talent and community presence to empower Torontonians and help them succeed the way TPL does



# Social Connection and Belonging

## How TPL Can Support Healthy Aging in Place

**Fostering social connection for older adults has never been more important.**

In its 2025 Report, the World Health Organization makes clear that loneliness and social isolation are major public health challenges. The Toronto Vital Signs report (2024) shared that **37% of Torontonians report feeling lonely** at least three to four days in the last week, making us amongst the loneliest Canadians.

**Toronto is in the midst of a loneliness epidemic.**

Many Torontonians, particularly seniors, are **disconnected from vital resources, social and wellness services, and organizations that foster connection**. For seniors, significant barriers include growing social isolation, geographic proximity, disability, lack of transportation, and financial insecurity.

**Libraries have an essential role to play in addressing these concerns, and Toronto Public Library is uniquely positioned to respond to these challenges.** We have:

- **An extensive collection** that offers multiple viewpoints, represents diverse experiences, and promotes critical thinking and lifelong learning.
- **A physical presence across communities.** With 100 safe and welcoming branches, TPL is the biggest and busiest public library system in the world. And, we know how to reach deep into communities, even beyond library branches.
- **Welcoming and expert staff** who create a supportive space where individuals can explore interests, develop skills, and engage in programs.
- **A strong network of partnerships** with subject matter experts and community organizations that extend the Library's reach and impact.

**For the 81% of Torontonians who use our services, the Library is a lifeline, connecting them with the tools and resources they need. Together, we can foster belonging, build resilience and strengthen our most vulnerable communities.**

# Meeting the Moment

## Connecting seniors at their point of need

Now more than ever, there is a greater disconnect between Torontonians, their communities, and the resources they depend on not just to survive, but to thrive. This is where the Library can step in, and step up – with your help!

The City of Toronto is experiencing rapid growth which is placing an unprecedented demand on social and healthcare services. Data suggests that by 2031, **approximately one in five Torontonians will be seniors**. With this in mind, there is an urgent need to broaden support beyond traditional health care. It is time to innovate.

**Toronto Public Library has long been committed to serving seniors.** From the Home Library Service that delivers books to homebound residents across the city, to our Community Librarians who promote digital literacy education, **TPL is equipped to address the barriers and challenges faced by older adults.**

Now, TPL aims to amplify the success of its recent senior-focused initiatives and introduce innovative ways to deepen its impact within this growing community.

Building on these successes, we are launching an **innovative and first-of-its-kind** initiative that will connect seniors—both at home and in-branch—with the tools they need to become **more connected, healthy, and active participants in their communities.**





# Program Overview

## Seniors Social Connection and Belonging

TPL has developed a new initiative to **increase social connection and belonging for low-income seniors** by reaching deep into our communities. This initiative aims to foster an environment where older adults can continue to live active and healthy lives – where they can connect, learn, and grow. **Deep impact will be achieved through a multi-pronged approach:**

- We will introduce **a new service to reach seniors in Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)**, bringing Community Librarians and a range of programs to help seniors successfully age in place, supported by outreach vans.
- We will develop an innovative new **public library Social Prescription service model** to ensure healthcare providers have the information they need to formally connect their patients with the non-clinical services available at TPL branches. This approach will address social determinants of health, such as loneliness, isolation, and financial stress, and improve overall health and well-being.
- We will develop **new library programs** for seniors that help create awareness of the health risks of loneliness and social isolation; providing social inclusion opportunities for seniors, such as programs that foster intergenerational connection.

A significant philanthropic investment has allowed TPL to develop a 5-year plan to develop and facilitate this new initiative. With wind beneath our sails, we are now focused on our fundraising goal—to match a portion of this commitment and **raise an additional \$2 million** to realize the full scope of this ambitious multi-year project.



# About TPL Foundation

The **Toronto Public Library Foundation (TPLF)** is a registered charity that raises funds to support the exemplary collections, ground-breaking programs and services, and the innovative community spaces at **the busiest public library system in North America**; Toronto Public Library.

Philanthropic support allows the Library to act swiftly **to respond to the evolving needs of the communities it serves**. Private dollars allow TPL to extend its impact far beyond what can be achieved through City funding alone; donations support pilot programs and early-stage initiatives that, when successful, can unlock sustainable municipal funding.

Donating to Toronto Public Library is **an investment in literacy, education, culture, and in the vitality of a world-class city**. Together with our community of Library supporters, we are building a stronger and more connected Toronto where everyone can thrive.



## TPLF's Role and Strategic Priorities:




**Innovate:** we inspire donors to invest in early-stage initiatives with great potential to shape the Library's impact in the areas of community literacy and access to opportunities for equity-deserving communities.



**Accelerate:** we galvanize donors to champion signature programs, collections, and spaces that have the potential to enhance TPL's leadership role in the sector and that amplify TPL's impact throughout our city, neighbourhood by neighbourhood.



**Advocate:** we promote the value of TPL and libraries locally, nationally, and internationally, demonstrating the lasting importance of libraries as cornerstones of democracy, civic life, and intellectual freedom.



# Making a difference, together.

At Toronto Public Library, philanthropy plays a critical role in supporting the social health and wellness of those most vulnerable in our communities.

Thank you for sharing in this vision.

William R. Scott, PhD  
Chief Executive Officer, TPL Foundation  
[wscott@tpl.ca](mailto:wscott@tpl.ca) | 416-207-1322

Moir Dossetor, PhD  
Vice-President, Philanthropy, TPL Foundation  
[mdossetor@tpl.ca](mailto:mdossetor@tpl.ca) | 416-276-0662

Charitable Tax Number: 886554476RR0001

**tpl:** toronto  
public library  
foundation

**Join the Conversation**



[tplfoundation.ca](http://tplfoundation.ca)