

Standing Committee Report

REPORT NUMBER 342-2025-Corporate Services-Licensing & Enforcement

DATE

PREPARED

November 3, 2025

FILE

STANDING

COMMITTEE

November 18, 2025

MEETING DATE

SUBJECT

Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek feedback and endorsement from the Quality of Life Standing Committee for the proposed Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot.

WITH RESPECT to Report (342-2025-Corporate Services-Licensing & Enforcement), we request endorsement of the Standing Committee for inclusion of a Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot service level expansion in the 2026 Operating Budget for City Council's consideration;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to ongoing public and employee concerns about safety and recurrent incidents of disorderly behaviour, Administration is recommending a Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot. The pilot will operate at transit terminals, on board buses, and across public spaces and municipally owned facilities, providing support to neighbourhood and community organizations in addressing safety issues.

The pilot proposes the deployment of Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) in a mobile capacity to provide a visible, proactive presence and timely response to incidents of unwanted behaviour or disorderly conduct that do not warrant police intervention. The service would operate seven days per week between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 a.m., with teams of two officers on rotating shifts supported by field supervision.

The objectives of the program are to:

- Enhance public safety;
- Foster community engagement; and
- Support vulnerable populations.

The pilot would emphasize education, prevention, and de-escalation, with all officers receiving extensive training including communication, de-escalation, and Mental Health First Aid, and would enhance measures already taken to address issues that disrupt transit services. Administration will include the initiative as a service expansion in the 2026 Operating Budget for Council's consideration during budget deliberations.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

There continue to be ongoing concerns from riders, the public and transit employees regarding perceived and specific safety concerns at the transit terminals and on-board buses.

A safer work environment contributes to greater employee engagement, reduced lost-time injuries and absences, and improved recruitment and retention. Enhanced public confidence in the transit system may also encourage increased ridership, supporting higher revenues and more efficient service delivery.

Corporate Report R059-2025, presented to City Council in March 2025, provided an update on Transit Operator Safety. While the total number of staff-reported incidents and/or negative interactions directly involving Operators declined between 2022 and 2024, a significant number of incidents continue to occur both on buses and at the Transit Terminals. The City has an obligation under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to protect workers from violence and harassment in the workplace and take every reasonable precaution to protect employees in the workplace.

In addition, there are social and legislative responsibilities to ensure that public spaces are safe. Moreover, to further encourage growth and improve safety perceptions of our city, additional effort is warranted to ensure that public spaces are welcoming for all users. Recent incidents of disorderly behaviour in and around City Hall and in many other public spaces and public buildings have further underscored the need for a coordinated and visible safety presence.

At present, one static contracted security guard is assigned inside of City Hall during operating hours. A second guard is assigned to provide outside security dedicated to support transit services. On August 28th an additional outside guard for transit was added in response to recent incidences. Outside guard coverage to support transit services is currently provided as follows:

- Monday through Saturday: Guard #1 on-duty 13:00 – 24:30 and Guard #2 on duty 16:30 – 24:30
- Sundays and Statutory Holidays: Guard #1 on-duty 13:00 – 23:30 and Guard #2 on duty 16:30 – 23:30

Current contract security responsibilities are primarily monitoring and reporting, with limited authority to intervene.

Several organizations in the vicinity of City Hall currently maintain a contract security presence or have identified the need for additional security to address ongoing safety concerns.

In 2024, Administration issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) to identify potential community partners interested in collaborating on a pilot program to respond to incidents occurring in and around City Hall. Services envisioned under the EOI included health, social service, and culturally appropriate supports intended to reduce calls to emergency services, leverage community expertise, and optimize the use of public resources.

No submissions were received through the EOI process. Consequently, Administration turned its attention to reviewing successful approaches implemented in other municipalities.

Specifically, municipalities such as Sudbury and Mississauga have implemented a security enforcement model where Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEO) can be called in to respond to incidents which are disruptive but do not warrant police intervention.

Administration has engaged with these municipalities and believe that this model could be effective in the City of Thunder Bay as well.

Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot

Administration is recommending implementation of a Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot to deter disorderly conduct and other unwanted behaviours at transit terminals, on board buses, and across public spaces and municipally owned facilities.

The objectives of the pilot would be as follows:

- **Enhance Public Safety** – Address safety concerns in key public areas through a consistent, visible presence and timely response.
- **Foster Community Engagement** – Build trust with community members through respectful, proactive communication and presence.
- **Support Vulnerable Populations** – Provide a compassionate approach to enforcement, connecting individuals to appropriate supports when possible.

With appropriate training and policy development, the program would provide a balanced enforcement presence that emphasizes de-escalation and community safety. Training would include communication, de-escalation, Mental Health First Aid, and other relevant certifications. Officers would be required to complete all training prior to deployment and participate in refresher courses as required.

Teams of two MLEOs would operate on rotating shifts, seven days per week between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 a.m. The officers would have access to a vehicle and would conduct proactive patrols, respond to concerns from residents and City staff, and support on-site presence at key locations such as the transit terminals and on buses.

The visible presence of MLEOs is expected to serve as a deterrent to unwanted behaviours. Where intervention is required, officers would seek voluntary compliance through communication and de-escalation. In cases of persistent non-compliance, officers could issue trespass notices.

The proposed service would operate 16 hours per day, year-round, equating to approximately 6.0 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Estimated annual salary and benefits for these positions would total approximately \$540,000. To effectively implement this service, and at the same time create capacity within the traditional Municipal Enforcement Services, 2.0 FTE Field Supervisors would be required at an estimated cost of \$205,000. Including \$25,000 for training and equipment, the total annual cost of the pilot program is estimated at \$770,000.

Broader Community Safety Context

The development of a Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot builds on the City's ongoing and coordinated efforts to enhance community safety and well-being. This initiative complements a range of existing strategies and partnerships that together work toward a safer, more inclusive, and supportive community.

Through the Community Safety & Well-Being Plan, the City continues to strengthen collaboration across sectors to address the root causes of social issues and reduce risk before harm occurs. The Thunder Bay Drug strategy remains a cornerstone in promoting health, prevention, and recovery, while the City's Encampment Response Plan provides a compassionate and coordinated approach to supporting individuals living unsheltered.

Additionally, over the past year there has been preliminary discussions with local business organizations to explore opportunities to develop a proactive, community-oriented approach to support downtown vibrancy, hospitality, and connection.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate the City's commitment to advancing both enforcement and prevention, balancing accountability with empathy, to build a community where everyone feels safe, respected, and supported. The proposed Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot is another important step in this integrated approach, providing visible presence, by-law enforcement, and outreach in a way that emphasizes prevention, communication, and care.

Next Steps

Administration is seeking endorsement of the proposed Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot from the Quality of Life Standing Committee, along with any related feedback. The Pilot will be brought forward as a proposed service level enhancement in the 2026 Operating Budget for City Council's consideration during budget deliberations.

Any necessary by-laws and supporting policies will be developed and presented to City Council for approval to ensure the pilot program aligns with Council priorities.

CONSULTATION

Administration met with several organizations located around City Hall in July 2025 to discuss security concerns, identify common challenges, and share experiences. There was a general consensus on the need for collaborative, shared solutions. Administration has committed to ongoing dialogue with these organizations and will consult with them in the design of the pilot program.

In addition, Administration will consult with the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Advisory Committee and collaborate with community service providers to support alignment of the pilot with the CSWB Plan and broader community needs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

There are no direct financial implications with this report. The costs associated with the Mobile Safety and Security Response Pilot will be included in the 2026 Operating Budget for City Council's consideration and are estimated to be \$770,000 annually.

BACKGROUND

The Transit Services Division provided an update on safety initiative trends and an update on safety initiatives in March 2025 (R059-2025 Transit Operator Safety Update).

Annual safety reports to Council dating back to 2018 have consistently identified incidents of violence against Transit Operators, highlighting this as a longstanding issue requiring attention.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

None.

REPORT PREPARED BY

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REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

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Date 11/10/2025 (MM/DD/YEAR)