SAFETY REVIEW & RISK - PUBLIC REPORT

King International Advisory Group

TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SCHOOL COMMUNITY SAFETY

May 2024

In light of a recent string of violent incidents at Toronto District School Board (TDSB) secondary schools, Legal Services retained King International Advisory Group (KIAG) and Turner Consulting Group to simultaneously perform school safety reviews from two distinctive lenses of four high schools located in the east end of the city which included:

- David and Mary Thomson CI, 125 Brockley Dr., Scarborough, ON M1P 0E3
- Victoria Park CI, 15 Wallingford Rd., North York, ON M1G 3M3
- Woburn CI, 2222 Ellesmere Rd., Scarborough, ON M1G 3M3, and
- Birchmount Park CI, 3663 Danforth Ave., Scarborough, ON M1N 2G2.

King International Advisory Group (KIAG) was retained to conduct analysis of the school environment. This was not an investigation of the actual critical incidents that occurred at each school. The focus of this work was on assessing potential threats and evaluating the existing security measures in place.

Each group had a different focus. Turner Consulting was tasked with looking at what we called the "Software" of the schools. The educational environment including social context and support systems. KIAG looked at the "Hardware", the physical security infrastructure including the policies and processes that direct and govern them.

Although conducted independently, the Turner and KIAG analysis was complimentary of each other. There is a direct relationship between the physical environment, human behaviour, the appropriate use of space, and the prevention of crime or nefarious activity. The most effective security programs "Protect-in-Depth" via fundamental objectives that aim to Deter. Detect, Delay, Disrupt and Defeat sources of threat. These objectives can be achieved through changes to the physical and social school environment.

The Turner and KIAG public reports should be considered jointly. They may address the school conditions from different lenses but ultimately, they are still providing recommendations that will enhance the overall security of the spaces and safety of the students, and visitors.

It is through wholistic analysis we can find the most relevant and effective solutions to combat observed adverse behaviour and create the conditions for safer schools.

KIAG has concluded that the vast majority of students are behaving appropriately and only a very small minority are responsible for negative behaviours and the escalation in violent incidents and "near misses" at these schools. The schools are felt to be safe spaces. Students come to class early and stay late. Even those students who are engaged in what could be considered detrimental conduct are choosing to attend school for the socializing environment and perceived security it provides.

While the four above-noted schools were KIAG's focus, the incidents and issues are not necessarily exclusive to one school or geographic area within the TDSB. The observations and findings should be considered for the entirety of the TDSB, as they relate to stakeholders across the school system. The following report contains numerous recommendations for action in the following four areas and broad themes:

Physical Security Infrastructure

The conditions of the schools as well as the quality and deployment of physical security tools such as cameras, signage and access controls to sensitive areas vary greatly between institutions. This is largely due to independent security design standards used in construction that pre-dates board amalgamation. Going forward efforts should be made to create physical security standards with input on design, materials, and implementation from all security stakeholders to ensure the most appropriate as well as efficient decisions are made on what systems are used and that they can be effectively deployed by those who will be responsible for using them.

Policies, Procedures, and Best Practices for Safety in Schools

The TDSB maintains robust security policies. However, considering the evolving challenging security environment, new functionality of security tools (such as cameras), additional resources (such as School Based Safety Monitors), and the increasing number of visitors wearing clothes (like non-religious face-coverings, masks and sunglasses that hide their identity) that

can make it more difficult to differential students from unauthorized visitors, some of these policies have become dated and would benefit from a refresh.

Communication and Information Sharing

Some incident reporting standards and guidelines may not be evenly applied leading to confusion regarding communication and information sharing authorities and responsibilities. A comprehensive review with wide input should be undertaken to clarify process; including stakeholder's respective information needs and expectations. The goal should be to ensure that all departments and responsible individuals have the information they need for their role and receive it in a predictable and timely manner to execute their functions.

Training, Oversight, and Accountability

The requirements and staffing for various security stakeholders such as the security teams, SBSM's and Caring and Safe school advisors should be reviewed and considered in light of increased demand due to the escalating frequency and severity of incidents. Support for those with security functions in terms of training and opportunities for professional development should be commensurate with expectations of their roles and responsibilities.

KIAG is very cognizant that schools should be warm and welcoming facilities with environments that are conducive to learning, not fortresses. We are also of the belief that schools are safe and security enhancements can be done efficiently and cost effectively through addressing some gaps in standards, processes, and engagement with security stakeholders over large investments in infrastructure. By ensuring that there is uniform physical security design, wide input on security policies, processes and tools, clarity on roles and responsibilities for reporting and communication, as well as training and oversite the TDSB can enhance the security posture of these sites and continue to provide safe schools.

Recommendations

1. Create a security design standard for the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) that will guide future school new builds and upgrades (include requirements for signage, access controls, independent alarms on high value rooms and other features like speedbumps and bollards).

2. The camera replacement project should not be constrained by the current interpretation of the school condition improvement grant which dictates a camera can only replace an existing camera.

3. Review and remediate items of security, health and safety concern, such as graffiti and securing unused lockers.

4. Consider a review of student dress code and the use of ID badges to assist in student identification.

5. Review definitions and notification requirements for 'critical' and 'non-critical' incidents. Ensure effective communication policies and processes are in place and adhered to in both types of events providing relevant information to the security team to assist, where required.

6. Reporting system should be reviewed with input from all stakeholders to ensure that TDSB is adhering to Ministry reporting guidelines and providing all relevant information to all key security decision makers while maintaining appropriate privacy and confidentiality requirements.

7. Build TDSB corporate ties with police and the City of Toronto and develop regular familiarization exercises and shared security awareness training opportunities beyond individual relationships.

8. The School-Based Safety Monitor program should be reviewed with standardized and robust training, oversight and accountability.

9. The Institutional Accountability Checklist should include a supplement or alternative documentation that confirms or acknowledges that the Superintendents have reviewed the responsibilities and discussed with the Principals that they have been met.

10. Either adjust or supplement the current TDSB security guard schedule to ensure there is adequate coverage at critical hours. Consider adding more guards to ensure adequate resourcing for the required tasks.