



## Ottawa Public Library Board

### Minutes

**Meeting #:** 10  
**Date:** February 13, 2024  
**Time:** 5 pm  
**Location:** Champlain Room, 110 Laurier Avenue West, and by electronic participation

**Present:** Chair Matthew Luloff, Vice-Chair Kathy Fisher, Trustee Jessica Bradley, Trustee Mary-Rose Brown, Trustee Alison Crawford, Trustee Rawlson King, Trustee Catherine Kitts, Trustee Harvey A. Slack, Trustee Adam Smith

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1. Notices and meeting information for meeting participants and the public  
Notices and meeting information are attached to the agenda and minutes, including: availability of simultaneous interpretation and accessibility accommodations; *in camera* meeting procedures; information items not subject to discussion; personal information disclaimer for correspondents and public speakers; notices regarding minutes; and remote participation details.  
Notes:
    1. The meeting began at 5:18 pm due to technical difficulties.
    2. Chair Luloff, Trustees Bradley, Brown and Kitts participated electronically.
  2. Recognition of Anishinābe Algonquin Territory  
Chair Luloff welcomed members and attendees to the Ottawa Public Library Board meeting and delivered the Indigenous land acknowledgment statement.
  3. Roll Call

The Chair proceeded with roll call by voice in random order.

4. Regrets

There were no regrets.

5. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were filed.

6. Confirmation of Minutes

6.1 Minutes 9 - Tuesday, 5 December, 2023

6.2 Confidential Minutes 4 – Tuesday, 5 December, 2023

Results: Carried

7. Communications

There were no communications.

8. Chair's Verbal Update

**Ādisōke Update**

Chair Luloff provided an update on the progress of Ādisōke. The iconic roof is taking shape, with work on the steel for the structure façade along the exterior almost complete, and work on the ceiling wood panels and interior support columns ongoing. Also inside the building, work on the vapour barrier continues, as does partition framing and electrical and mechanical prep work. More information on the Ādisōke project including construction updates can be found by visiting [Adisoke.ca](http://Adisoke.ca) or on the Central branch web page on the OPL site.

**Freedom to Read Week**

Chair Luloff noted that Freedom to Read Week (FTRW) is quickly approaching, adding that this is an annual event that encourages Canadians to think about and reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom. Celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, FTRW events are happening across the country this year from February 19 to 24. Recognizing that OPL and the Board are deeply committed to intellectual freedom, the Chair noted how OPL supports curiosity and inquiry, and he underscored the importance of intellectual freedom as the prerequisite for an informed, democratic society. As part of OPL's celebrations this year, Chair Luloff announced that OPL will be a Book Sanctuary location, joining other public libraries in Canada and the United States in committing to provide free and uncensored access to challenged material. He added that he looked forward to the staff presentation later in the evening regarding challenges to free expression

at OPL in 2023 and an update on OPL events planned for FTRW. In closing, Chair Luloff encouraged everyone to truly cherish and appreciate their freedom to read, including, supporting it via their wardrobe, recognizing that several trustees and employees were wearing their FTRW t-shirts at the meeting.

### **Awesome Authors**

Chair Luloff reminded trustees that entries for the annual Awesome Authors Youth Writing Contest are currently open until February 23. Made possible with the generous support of the Friends of OPL (FOPLA), this competition provides an opportunity for young writers between the ages of 9 and 18 to see their work in print and win a cash prize. Winners will be notified in April. He also highlighted the workshops offered by local authors and contest judges, available on OPL's YouTube page.

### **MOTION OPL 20240213/1**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board receive the Chair's verbal update for information.**

Results: Received

#### 9. Chief Librarian/Chief Executive Officer's Report

##### **Fund Development**

Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) began her report by sharing great news about a generous donation of \$200,000 to the Unlock Potential campaign for the Ottawa Central Library by the Crabtree Foundation, in honour of Ms. Dorothy L. Davidson. Ms. Davidson loved reading and was a lifelong supporter of libraries and education; she was a former president of the Crabtree Foundation, which was founded by her father Harold in 1952. Ms. Bebbington noted that Ms. Davidson was the first woman to sit on the board of the Mechanics Institute in Montreal, now the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, and was a regular client of the Main branch of OPL for many years. In her later years, Ms. Davidson took the bus from Sandy Hill to the Main branch, where she was a regular reader of large print books and enjoyed the outing to connect with her neighbours. Her niece later borrowed her books for her to read, and her family shared how books helped her get through a difficult time. Ms. Davidson died in 2010, a month before her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. Ms. Bebbington thanked the Crabtree Foundation for their generous donation, honouring someone who loved and used OPL.

## **Black History Month**

Ms. Bebbington shared information about recent and upcoming initiatives to celebrate Black History Month and honour the stories and lived experiences of Black Canadians past and present. Earlier in February, OPL hosted a well-attended hybrid event (made possible thanks to the support of FOPLA) with best-selling author Kai Thomas, who was born and raised in Ottawa. Thomas spoke about his debut novel *In the Upper Country*, which won both the 2023 Atwood Gibson Writers' Trust Fiction Prize and was shortlisted for the 2023 Governor General's Award for Fiction. Attendees remarked that the conversation was "thoughtful and insightful" and that "Jamaal was a fabulous moderator and Kai was such a good speaker." Ms. Bebbington reminded trustees that there is still time to attend the conversation between authors Blaise Ndala and Marie-Célie Agnant the following evening (February 14). To learn more about OPL's programming and online resources for Black History Month, visit the OPL website.

## **Family Day Closure**

Ms. Bebbington mentioned that OPL will be closed Monday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, to celebrate the importance of families and family life, including chosen families, to people and their communities.

### **MOTION OPL 20240213/2**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board receive the Chief Librarian/Chief Executive Officer's report for information.**

Results: Received

## 10. Reports

### 10.1 Ottawa Public Library Board Policy Amendments – Delegation of Authority

File Number: OPLB-2024-0213-10.1

### **MOTION OPL 20240213/3**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board approve the proposed amendments to Policy 002-OPLB – Delegation of Authority as further described in this report.**

Results: Carried

### 10.2 Intellectual Freedom Annual Report: 2023 Challenges

File Number: OPLB-2024-0213-10.2

Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian/CEO, Sarah Macintyre, A/Division Manager, Client Services, and Alexandra Yarrow, Program Manager, Board and Strategic Services presented the Board with a high-level summary of the 2023 challenges to items in the OPL collection.

Ms. Bebbington noted that the report reflects the first calendar year since the adoption of OPL's revised Intellectual Freedom Position Statement ("the Statement"), approved by the Board in June 2022. Ms. Yarrow provided additional context about the importance of free expression in OPL's services; Ms. Macintyre summarized recent data regarding Requests for Reconsideration received by OPL in the last eight years and provided details regarding Requests for Reconsideration received by OPL in 2023. Ms. Yarrow provided trustees with information about additional resources and about upcoming Freedom to Read Week activities at OPL. In closing, she also noted that staff will continue to work on implementing changes to administrative operations to align with the Intellectual Freedom Position Statement, and committed that staff will provide the next annual report to the Board in Q1 2025.

The Chair opened the floor to questions from trustees regarding the report.

Trustee Smith inquired whether OPL tracks books that go missing from the collection and how that information is measured over time. After clarifying that the trustee was referring to clients taking items from the collection so that they are no longer available for others to borrow, Ms. Macintyre commented that that it is difficult to infer reasons for missing items (they could be misplaced, marked as lost, or damaged). She replied that she would report back to the Board regarding details of missing items over time, with the data available.

In reference to the graph indicating Requests for Reconsideration in the last eight years, Chair Luloff inquired regarding the number of items removed from the collection over that period of time, and whether staff were considering a reconciliation of these items in light of the revised Board Intellectual Freedom Position Statement. Ms. Macintyre indicated she would report back on these numbers following the meeting. Chair Luloff thanked staff for the great work.

In response to a question from Trustee Crawford regarding whether there were certain observable trends in the subject matter of books that go missing from the collection, Ms. Macintyre said that information could be included in a response to the Board at a later date.

Trustee King commended staff for their good work ensuring compliance with the Board's Intellectual Freedom Position Statement. Noting that OPL submits challenged titles to the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) survey, he added that there was a tremendous amount of discussion about the importance of the CFLA survey to measure cross-country trends at the recent Ontario Library Association Conference he attended. Trustee King added that he found the high rates of under-reported challenges discussed at the conference significant, and noted his pride in hearing that OPL and Toronto Public Library are on the cutting edge of reporting. In closing, he commented that his impression at the conference was that OPL is a good example of the importance of having strong policies in place to strengthen intellectual freedom.

In response to a question from Vice-Chair Fisher regarding the history of the Book Sanctuary and whether OPL's Book Sanctuary is a first for a large urban public library, Ms. Bebbington responded that the Book Sanctuary movement began in September 2022 when the Chicago Public Library declared themselves a space for endangered stories and called for others to do the same. She noted that Toronto Public Library is OPL's closest neighbour to participate in this initiative, and that that Calgary is also a Book Sanctuary. OPL's Book Sanctuary includes adult, teen, and children's books: criteria included titles that have been challenged at OPL or in other libraries across Canada and the United States, with a mix of historical and current titles, French and English titles, as well as range of frequently challenged topics and diverse perspectives. Ms. Yarrow added that approximately a dozen public libraries are participating in the Book Sanctuary movement, as well as a number of other municipalities or other organizations or entities.

In closing, Chair Luloff observed that upholding the Board's Intellectual Freedom Position Statement takes a strong commitment, and that OPL will continue to receive challenges. He shared that he feels strongly that engaging with material that you don't necessarily agree with provides perspective on a given topic: you may shift, or you may reaffirm your values and beliefs on that subject. Both potential outcomes are valuable in a democratic society. The Chair said he is very proud of the work that OPL is doing in this area.

There being no further discussion, the report was RECEIVED as presented.

**MOTION OPL 20240213/4**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board receive this report for information.**

Results: Received

10.3 2023 Fund Development Update

File Number: OPLB-2024-0213-10.3

**MOTION OPL 20240213/5**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board receive this report for information.**

Results: Received

11. Trustees' Items

11.1 Ontario Library Association 2024 Conference – Trustee Rawlson King Report

File Number: OPLB-2024-0213-11.1

Prior to inviting Trustee King to share his reflections on the recent Ontario Library Association (OLA) 2024 Conference in Toronto, Chair Luloff mentioned that in February 2023, the Board approved sending three trustees to this conference in the 2023 Board Continuing Education Plan and Conference Attendance Pla. He noted that unfortunately, he and Vice-Chair Fisher, also approved, were unable to attend, and thanked Trustee King for so ably representing the OPL Board at this event.

Trustee King commented that it was a pleasure to attend OLA. The 2024 theme, "Getting Loud," emphasized equity, diversity, and truth in society. Commenting that the keynote presentations, plenary sessions, trade show, and annual trustee "boot camp" were excellent, and that the interactive nature of many sessions is unique, he highlighted the themes of intellectual freedom and governance in his reflections. He felt OPL and the Board were doing very well in continuing to work with partners and the community regarding challenges to intellectual freedom. At a governance session, Trustee King shared the Chair's practice of asking the Board and staff for their reading recommendations at Board meetings, which was enthusiastically received by other attendees. He also noted that partners from Library and Archives Canada provided an excellent presentation at the conference, and acknowledged the work of Alexandra Yarrow and

other OPL staff who gave conference presentations. He concluded by noting that attending the OLA Conference is an excellent opportunity for dialogue and networking with other library systems and trustees. He thanked staff for the logistical support to attend the conference.

**MOTION OPL 20240213/6**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board receive this report for information.**

Results: Received

12. In Camera Items

**THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE *PUBLIC LIBRARIES ACT*, THE OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD RESOLVE IN CAMERA PURSUANT TO 16.1 (4)(D), LABOUR RELATIONS OR EMPLOYEE NEGOTIATIONS, TO RECEIVE A LABOUR RELATIONS UPDATE - REPORTING OUT DATE: NOT REPORTING OUT**

A confidential presentation was circulated to the Board via email prior to the meeting that consisted of a brief Labour Relations Update. The Board Members had no questions for staff, and therefore did not require to go In Camera/into Closed Session for this item.

**MOTION OPL 20240213/7**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board receive the update with respect to Labour Relations.**

Results: Received

13. Notices of Motions (For Consideration at Subsequent Meeting)

There were no Notices of Motion.

15. Inquiries

There were no Inquiries.

16. Other Business

Trustee Bradley shared that she read three novels over the holidays from the OPL collection. Craig Ginther, Division Manager, Service Planning, shared that he is listening to a compelling audiobook via OPL's Libby App of the novel "[Circe](#)", Madeline Miller's 2018 adaptation of the Greek legend of Circe, a witch whom Odysseus encounters on his journey home from the Trojan War. Julie Tremblay, Library Board Assistant is reading "[Firefly Lane](#)", by Kristin Hannah, a



novel about a lifelong friendship. Diana Adjarska-Litzanova, Account Manager, Finance Services Unit, City of Ottawa is reading a historical novel by the Finnish writer Mika Waltari "The Egyptian". The Chair is reading "[Napolean the Great](#)" by Andrew Roberts, and recently also enjoyed "[Churchill Walking with Destiny](#)" by the same author. The Chair thanked everyone for sharing their reading recommendations and encouraged everyone to choose a great book from OPL's collection.

17. Adjournment

**Be It Resolved that the Ottawa Public Library Board meeting be adjourned at 6:01 pm.**

18. Next Meeting

Tuesday, 12 March, 2024

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Original signed by Matthew Luloff,  
Chair

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Sonia Bebbington, Recording  
Secretary