



## Ottawa Public Library Board

### Minutes

**Meeting #:** 12  
**Date:** April 9, 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 5:00 pm.
2. Trustees Bradley, Brown, and Smith participated electronically.

The Board suspended the rules of procedure to move the following motion:

**MOTION OPL 20240409/1**

Moved by Vice-Chair Fisher:

**WHEREAS from time to time, staff adjust the Board meeting schedule in order to align with the meeting dates of respective City of Ottawa Committees or Ottawa City Council meetings and to allow OPL staff to prepare documents for these meetings;**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ottawa Public Library Board meeting date of Tuesday, May 14, 2024 at 5:00pm be rescheduled to Thursday, May 2, 2024 at 5:00pm.**

Result: Carried

2. Recognition of Anishinābe Algonquin Territory

Chair Luloff welcomed member 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 11 – Tuesday, 12 March, 2024

6.2 Confidential Minutes 5 - 12 March, 2024

Results: Carried

7. Communications

There were no communications.

8. Chair's Verbal Update

**Ādisōke Update**

Chair Luloff provided an update regarding the construction progress of Ādisōke. Several sections of the feature stairs have been installed, the mechanical room on the fifth floor has been completed, and mechanical equipment has moved in. There has been ongoing electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and masonry work on

parking levels 1 and 2. Outside, the installation of façade steel continued to progress, as well as glazing and exterior sheathing. Timber roof beams continue to be placed, with the first atrium beam being installed. The wooden roof paneling is also getting close to completion. The Chair encouraged everyone to follow construction progress by visiting [Adisoke.ca](http://Adisoke.ca) or the Central branch web page on the OPL website.

### **One eRead Canada 2024**

The Chair noted that the bilingual virtual book club *Un livre/One eRead Canada* will be offered once again, as it is annually, in April. The program, in which Canadian libraries from coast to coast participate, helps highlight OPL's rich virtual collection, and helps reduce barriers to enjoying outstanding Canadian literature. This year's pick is "*Hotline*", by Dimitri Nasrallah: as part of the program, everyone can borrow the book without needing to wait for a copy to become available during the month of April. On April 23, the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec will be livestreaming their conversation in French with *Hotline*'s translator, Daniel Grenier, and on April 25, OPL will partner with Library and Archives Canada to welcome the author for a discussion at 395 Wellington. In closing, the Chair noted that those interested may register for these events, and learn more about One eRead, by visiting the OPL website.

### **Observing Holidays at OPL**

Chair Luloff observed that over the last few weeks, members of the Ottawa community observed Ramadan, or celebrated Holi, Easter, or the Persian New Year, Norwuz. In the coming weeks, members of our community will also be celebrating Passover. Chair Luloff mentioned that some branches featured colorful displays for these events and online booklists can be found highlighting great reads about some of the topics.

### **MOTION OPL 20240409/2**

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

Results: Received

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

### **Croisée des mots**

Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) began her report by announcing that the Association of French Authors Ontario and OPL are pleased to invite everyone to the final 'Croisée des mots' virtual event of the

2023-2024 season, with author and visual artist Gilles Lacombe in discussion with Hugues Beaudoin-Dumouchel at 7:00 pm on April 16.

### **Orleans Branch Closure**

Ms. Bebbington mentioned that the Orleans branch will be closed April 15-17 to replace the fire detection system. Fire alarms tripped on several occasions in 2023, and the system replacement will mitigate the risk of future false alarms at the branch. She said the short (three business days) closure was publicly communicated, and is announced to the Board for information in keeping with the branch closure policy.

### **Kiosk Services Update**

Ms. Bebbington said that she was pleased to announce the re-opening of the holds pick-up lockers service at the Hunt Club Riverside Park Community Centre, following the installation of replacement lockers. Clients of this service have received information via email and can contact InfoService for assistance changing their holds pickup location or with any other questions. Ms. Bebbington indicated that library staff will be on-side Tuesday afternoons from 1:00-4:30 pm for the next few weeks to provide additional assistance.

### **Volunteer Recognition**

In recognition of Volunteer Recognition Week (celebrated April 14-20, 2024), Ms. Bebbington underlined that volunteers are a key element of OPL's success, supporting employees and championing the public library. Ms. Bebbington thanked the over 450 volunteers who contributed more than 7,000 hours in 2023, noting particularly that more than three-quarters of the volunteers are teens who provide valuable input into OPL's services, especially through Teen Advisory Groups. Sharing some photos of volunteers at OPL, Ms. Bebbington highlighted teen input into the 'Haunted Hayride Escape Room' at St-Laurent branch and the 'Day of Play' at Strathcona Park with Rideau branch staff last summer. Ms. Bebbington also thanked the Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association (FOPLA) for their tremendous support of OPL, and thanked OPL Board Trustees for being passionate stewards of the library. Lastly, Ms. Bebbington recognized Vice-Chair Kathy Fisher for her additional volunteer service representing OPL on the Board of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) and on FOPL's Indigenous Libraries Working Group.

### **MOTION OPL 20240409/3**

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

Results: Received

10. Presentations

10.1 Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association

Kathleen O’Connell Renaud, President, Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association (FOPLA) and Alexandra Yarrow, Program Manager, Board and Strategic Services and staff FOPLA lead provided a presentation about FOPLA, including an overview of the organization and its volunteers, a summary of recent achievements, and the impact of FOPLA’s donation to OPL in the community, including both system-wide and branch-specific initiatives (general and regional funds) spent in 2023.

Ms. O’Connell Renaud thanked OPL’s Senior Leadership Team and staff for a fulfilling partnership, noting particularly the support of Alexandra Yarrow, who is proactive and professional in liaising with and supporting FOPLA. Ms. O’Connell Renaud also thanked the Board for their support. She also thanked Anna Basile, Deputy CEO, Corporate Services and former CEO, Danielle McDonald for their past involvement in FOPLA, on the Investment Committee and the Board, respectively.

Ms. O’Connell Renaud then announced that the 2024 FOPLA donation to OPL is \$143,800. She also announced a milestone gift of \$750,000 to the “Unlock Potential” campaign, in support of the Central branch at Ādisōke. Ms. O’Connell-Renaud said she hopes that the donation inspires others in the community to support this important project.

Chair Luloff expressed his gratitude for the very generous annual donation, as well as the milestone gift for the Central branch at Ādisōke, which will be a catalyst for creativity and prosperity, help OPL provide meaningful spaces both exciting and contemplative, and support programming to support literacy. He thanked FOPLA for the incredible work they do and underlined the importance of his family’s regular visits to the FOPLA bookstores to both buy and donate books. FOPLA’s support with the landmark donation will be instrumental.

Trustee Slack urged the Board to pass a unanimous motion to express the Board’s appreciation for FOPLA’s generous contribution, which is an inspiration to the community and to other organizations.

Moved by Trustee Slack:

**Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Ottawa Public Library Board express its unanimous appreciation for FOPLA’s generous**

**contributions to OPL, including the annual donation of \$143,800, and the \$750,000 FOPLA gift to “Unlock Potential” campaign for the Central branch at Ādisōke, which is an inspiration to the Board, the community, and other organizations.**

Results: Received

There being no further discussion, the presentation and motion were RECEIVED as presented.

#### **MOTION OPL 20240409/4**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board:**

1. **Receive the presentation for information; and,**
2. **Express its unanimous appreciation for FOPLA’s generous contributions to OPL, including the annual donation of \$143,800, and the \$750,000 FOPLA gift to the “Unlock Potential” campaign for the Central branch at Ādisōke, which is an inspiration to the Board, the community, and other organizations.**

Results: Received, as amended

## 11. Reports

### 11.1 2024 Ottawa Public Library Board Work Plan

File Number: OPLB-2024-0409-11.1

Trustee King asked staff to elaborate regarding the removal of the item to “develop an inclusion and anti-racism action plan” from the Board Work Plan. Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian and CEO indicated that the removal of this item recognizes that OPL will continue concerted efforts to identify and remove barriers, and that an inclusion lens will be applied to OPL initiatives. Alexandra Yarrow, Program Manager, Board and Strategic Services added that the item was removed at the recommendation of the Governance Ad hoc Committee members, noting updated language regarding identifying and addressing barriers in the October 2023 approved Strategic Plan as well as specific recent initiatives that have reduced barriers for vulnerable residents such as the Materials Recovery Model. She noted staff will continue to consider activities that align with the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) Statement on Racial and Social Equity, of which OPL became a signatory in 2017. In closing, Ms. Yarrow underlined that the Governance Ad hoc Committee discussion focused, as

Ms. Bebbington noted, that anti-racism work should primarily consist of a concerted effort to integrate this lens into all of the work that is considered or undertaken at OPL.

Further to a question by Trustee King regarding whether OPL liaises with the City of Ottawa's Anti-Racism team, Ms. Yarrow confirmed in the affirmative, noting that discussions have occurred regarding both public facing services and human resources support.

Trustee King asked if any additional or outstanding policies remain or are required to be ratified and approved by the Board and whether staff would be considering the potential of an anti-racism action plan in the future. Ms. Yarrow said there is always the potential for developing an action plan at a future time, at the will of the Board, and noted that the Board will review the more than 20 Board Policies before the end of the term in 2026, as well as the two Board Position Statements. Ms. Yarrow noted that the Intellectual Freedom Position Statement was recently reviewed, and that upcoming work on the Library Code of Conduct Position Statement in 2025, led by Branch Services, will incorporate an equity lens.

Thanking staff for their comments, Trustee King shared his appreciation of recent OPL initiatives to engage with racialized communities, for example the recent collaboration with Prezidential Basketball, and noted that there are ongoing challenges in engaging with racialized communities, citing the upcoming report regarding branding engagement.

Chair Luloff expressed his gratitude to Trustee King for asking these questions and for the anti-racism work he also does at Council.

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

#### **MOTION OPL 20240409/5**

##### **That the Ottawa Public Library Board:**

1. **Receive the report for information;**
2. **Approve the 2024 Board Work Plan items in Document 1; and,**
3. **Receive the 2024 Corporate Work Plan items in Document 1 for information.**

Results: Received and Carried

#### 11.2 Branding Strategy: Phase 1 – Research and Discovery

File Number: OPLB-2024-0409-11.2

Anna Basile, Deputy CEO, Corporate Services provided opening remarks and introduced Ben Hagon, President, Intent. Mr. Hagon provided a presentation regarding the Research Phase Results (*Held on file with the Chief Librarian and CEO*). Key highlights of the presentation included:

- Overview of Phase One – Research and Discovery;
- Key Results (Internal and External Themes);
- Key Convergences and divergences; and,
- Next steps.

The Board heard from the following delegation:

**John D. Reid** said the consultant's report highlights community members' opinions and while the summary paints a positive picture, Mr. Reid's key observation was that OPL is seen mainly as an extension of a generic public library brand. In his view, residents feel that OPL offers essentially the expected public library experience and that most of the library materials and services are common to those found in other major municipal libraries. He noted his agreement with the description of OPL as "stodgy and bureaucratic," citing what he felt was consistent sharing of Board reports at the last minute. He also highlighted that he thought a large percentage of respondents (13% of non-users; half the number of current cardholders) cited distance as a reason for not accessing the library, underscoring the importance of well-located branches. He suggested that the low rate of cardholder growth despite population growth within the city could be a branding issue, and that the low response rate for postal codes within River Ward could be a result of what he felt was a lack of trust in OPL by his community, given long-standing unmet requests for a branch. In closing, he underscored that new branding is not a replacement for service gaps or deficiencies, and that the community deserves consistent good service and positive experiences across the city.

**There being no questions for the delegate, the Chair proceeded with questions to staff from the Board.**

In response to a question from Vice-Chair Fisher regarding how the branding team intends to engage teens, Ms. Basile noted they will partner with a local high school with a diverse student base for focus groups later in the week.



Trustee Kitts commented that as a related note, the OPL website was in need of a refresh. In response to the comment that some respondents did not see the library as an alternative to coffee shops, she added that she hoped that libraries could be viewed as an alternative to coffee shops in the future, and indeed could perhaps co-locate with coffee shops or integrate them into the library. Regarding the website, Ms. Basile indicated that independently of the branding work, staff recently presented a new “draft” homepage design to the Senior Management Team, and that staff will be proceeding with implementation this quarter. With respect to the coffee shops proposal, she added that staff could consider this in the future. Ms. Basile noted that OPL has had varying levels of success with coffee shops within its facilities in the past, and provided an example of one key consideration such as the availability of such services in close proximity. Trustee Kitts was pleased with the commitment to consider this option in the future.

In response to a question from Trustee Kitts on survey methodology and the impact of one choice on the results, Ms. Basile clarified that the key findings shared with trustees appeared in responses from a variety of formats and sources, from a variety of different questions and discussions.

Trustee King noted that he was impressed by the response rates from the Francophone community, given OPL’s bilingual nature. He asked staff to comment on the impact and importance of bilingualism to OPL and the survey results. Ms. Basile mentioned that respondents self-identified for demographic questions and the responses illustrate the willingness of the Francophone community to ensure they were represented. Mr. Hagon added that some members of the Francophone community also completed the survey in English, and that the city’s bilingual nature will continue to influence OPL’s branding work going forward.

With respect to a question by Trustee King regarding newcomer and newcomer youth engagement, Ms. Basile indicated that there is an engagement session (hosted at the YMCA) scheduled for later this week, along with ongoing plans to work with Ottawa Community Housing. Trustee King was pleased with these plans, and further noted that as an ambassador for diverse youth, engaging them will emphasize the importance of public library services to enhance literacy.

Chair Luloff asked staff whether the public’s impression was that OPL was stodgy and bureaucratic. Ms. Basile confirmed that this comment reflects

an internal perception, and that these words were not used by members of the public.

Chair Luloff inquired whether restrictions on design imposed by *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* requirements might account for negative perceptions of OPL's branding and website. Ms. Basile said one of the biggest challenges for all public libraries is with website architecture; simply put, given the wide variety of collections and services offered, it is challenging to make a library website, for example, "lean." She added that creating a vibrant brand and supporting accessibility are not mutually exclusive. Mr. Hagon added that in fact accessibility requirements generally improve design and branding for all users, commenting that "accessible design is simply good design."

Chair Luloff said he receives positive community feedback about OPL's app and vendor partner apps (for example, Libby for eContent), and that the survey results indicate a strong methodology and representative perspective. He suggested additional means to reach teen audiences, such as via schools that are co-located with OPL branches.

Noting that sometimes citizens are critical of branding exercises as a waste of funds to simply develop a logo, Trustee Crawford asked staff to elaborate on the anticipated use of the data from the branding survey. Ms. Basile noted that several of the questions received from trustees demonstrate the broad value of the information received via the survey results. They will inform both the development of the new brand, and how we understand OPL clients and their interests and needs. This information is of use to branch staff for operational reasons, to the Client Services team (such as for community development), and to many other projects and initiatives. Picking up on the key finding that books are the mainstay of OPL, Ms. Basile noted that during the Facilities Framework public engagement process, a comment was received that we spoke about what OPL does, and the library as a public space, but the word "book" was not emphasized. Recognizing the importance of books for the community is an important key finding that will inform future initiatives and messaging.

In closing, Trustee Crawford observed that the value placed on this by respondents may reflect that OPL has an excellent collection.

There being no further comments or questions, the report was RECEIVED and CARRIED as presented.

**MOTION OPL 20240409/6**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board:**

1. **Receive the results of the Brand Strategy Phase 1 – Research and Discovery, as attached in Document 1; and,**
2. **Direct staff to proceed to Phase 2 – Brand Strategy Development, and report back to the Board by Q4 2024.**

Results: Received and Carried

11.3 Alta Vista Branch Closure for Lifecycle Project

File Number: OPLB-2024-0409-11.3

**MOTION OPL 20240409/7**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board:**

1. **Approve the temporary closure of the Alta Vista Branch for six (6) weeks beginning June 2024 to undertake facility improvements; and,**
2. **Approve modified service delivery to the Alta Vista community at the Jim Durrell Recreation Complex, for the duration of the closure, as further described in this report.**

Results: Carried

11.4 Semi-Annual Performance Measurement – July-December 2023

File Number: OPLB-2024-0409-11.4

Trustee Kitts inquired why, given the economic situation, cardholder numbers did not increase in the second half of 2023, and whether OPL's numbers reflected broader trends in data from other public libraries. Specifically, she inquired whether people potentially looking for ways to save in their budgets would obtain library memberships. Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian & CEO agreed that staff could review data from other library systems, as well as additional data, to confirm whether there has traditionally been a correlation between fluctuations in the economy and library membership. Ms. Bebbington also underlined a related key finding from the branding report regarding the different value placed on the public library as a free resource by clients and non-clients. Trustee Kitts urged staff to consider emphasizing the budget-friendly (free) aspect of public libraries during difficult economic times in subsequent planning.

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

**MOTION OPL 20240409/8**

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

Results: Received

12. In Camera Items

There were no *in camera* items.

13. Information Previously Distributed

13.1 Correspondence – Orléans Branch Closure

13.2 Memo – City reporting on Development Charges

13.3 Memo – OPL Board 2023 Meeting Evaluation Questionnaire Results

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

There were no Notices of Motion.

15. Inquiries

There were no Inquiries.

16. Other Business

Ben Hagon is reading [“The Shards”](#) by Bret Easton Ellis and [“Trust”](#) by Hernán Díaz. Laura George Fernandes is reading [“The Wonderful Wizard of Oz”](#) by Frank L. Baum, and [“Hotline”](#) by Dimitri Nasrallah. Sonia Bebbington is reading [“What Strange Paradise”](#) by Omar El Akkad, recommended by Anna Basile. Vice-Chair Fisher is reading the latest book in the [“Outlander”](#) series, and [“Go Tell the Bees That I Am Gone.”](#) Alicia Laviolette is reading (for the first time!) [“Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone”](#) by J.K. Rowling. Chair Luloff is reading a book recommended by Trustee Kitts called [“Bad Blood”](#), by John Carreyrou. Trustee Crawford is reading [“This Much Is True”](#) by Miriam Margolyes. Trustee Slack is watching Scoop, a documentary based on a book by Sam McAlister.

17. Adjournment

**Be It Resolved that the Ottawa Public Library Board meeting be adjourned at 6:32 pm.**

18. Next Meeting

**Thursday, May 2, 2024 (as per motion)**

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Original signed by Matthew Luloff,  
Chair

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Sonia Bebbington, Recording  
Secretary