

MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE



To / Destinataire OPLB Trustees

cc: Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian and CEO

From / Expéditeur Craig Ginther, Division Manager, Service Planning

Subject / Objet Plans for public art at Main branch **Date:** November 22, 2024

The purpose of this memo is to make trustees aware of current plans for the existing public art at the Main branch at 120 Metcalfe.

The branch features artworks by prominent Ottawa area artists Victor Tolgyesy, Gerald Trottier and Art Price, as well as a heritage-stained glass piece by Harry Horwood originally commissioned for the 1906 Carnegie Library.

Given their significance to Ottawa's built heritage and to OPL's organizational legacy, we have been carefully considering the future of these public art commissions in planning for the opening of the new Central branch at Ādisōke in 2026.

To help make responsible and informed decisions on the artwork, staff engaged with the artists estates, consulted with the City of Ottawa's Public Art Program, and sought professional services of an art conservator to advise on the condition, treatment, and potential removal of the artworks.

The conservator noted that the artworks (except for the stained-glass window) were created specifically for integration into the Main branch when it was built in 1974, and that adjustments or removal of the artworks risk undermining the purpose and spirit for which they were created. Specifically, the work of Gerald Trottier and Art Price are fully integrated into the building's architecture, and removal of the artworks would expose them to damage. It was further noted that finding a suitable alternative location would be challenging given that, for example, the Trottier mosaics are built into an internal staircase and include handrails.

With that in mind, and with the generous support the FOPLA, staff have decided to relocate the Horwood stained-glass window and the two aluminum medallions by Tolgyesy into the new Central branch at Ādisōke, and to donate, relocate or deaccession the other two artworks by Trottier and Price.

As such, staff have reached out to relevant cultural institutions in Ottawa to gauge interest the possibility of a donation or reinstallation of these two works. As anticipated, this is proving challenging due to the size and integrated nature of the pieces, as well as storage and installation capacity.

If a donor or new location for the works in question cannot be found, the artworks will be deaccessioned and/or returned to the artist estates in keeping with best practices for public art management. Alternatively, the works could be left in the care of the new current property owner for future consideration.

Staff will continue to consider possible solutions for the artwork and will handle the matter with care and responsibility, ensuring that the artists estates continue to be consulted.