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**Report to / Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Public Library Board  
Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa**

**December 3, 2024 / 3 décembre 2024**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

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**File Number/Numéro du dossier: OPLB-2024-1203-11.2**

**SUBJECT: Governance Evaluation Report and Action Plan**

**OBJET: Rapport d'évaluation de la gouvernance et plan d'action**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board:**

- 1. Receive the 2024 Governance Evaluation Report (Document 1) for information, as described in this report; and,**
- 2. Approve the updated 2023-2026 OPL Governance Action Plan, as described in this report.**

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa (BPO) :**

- 1. Prenne connaissance du Rapport d'évaluation de la gouvernance 2024 (Document 1) à titre d'information, tel que décrit dans le présent rapport; et,**

**2. Adopte le Plan d'action actualisé en matière de gouvernance 2023-2026 de la BPO, tel que décrit dans le présent rapport.**

**BACKGROUND**

As per Ottawa Public Library (“OPL” or “the Library”) Board (“the Board”) Policy 001, Roles and Responsibilities of the Board and Trustees, the Board’s role includes reviewing and approving major strategies, plans, and decisions.

The Board’s responsibility with respect to its own governance is further defined in Policy 015, Board Evaluations and Governance Reviews. Most recently revised and approved by the Board in November 2022, this policy includes a requirement for trustees to complete several self-evaluation questionnaires during each Board term: the Meeting Evaluation Form (Appendix A of the policy) is completed annually to assess the general structure and functioning of Board meetings, and the Performance Evaluation Form (Appendix B of the policy) is completed every second year, commonly in Years 2 and 4 of the term of Board, to assess the Board’s performance. Subsequent to the Performance Evaluation Form, staff arrange for confidential interviews with each trustee by a third party, as may be required, distribute a summary of evaluation findings to each trustee, and develop recommendations for Board and CEO implementation for discussion at a Board meeting, in keeping with Policy 015.

The Board establishes a Governance Ad hoc Committee (“the Committee”) to, among other tasks, advise and support staff in the review of trustee feedback regarding Board performance and governance, and assist in the development of a Governance Action Plan (“the Plan”). The Plan is normally produced in the first year of the term of Board and reviewed and revised at the mid-term point or at other times as required.

In September 2023, the Board approved the Board Governance Evaluation Report and Action Plan (“the 2023 Plan,” OPLB-2023-0912-10.1), which included three recommendations: 1. To review the trustee orientation process, 2. To review the trustee continuing education process, and 3. To review Board Policy 003, Trustee Orientation and Continuing Education, and other supporting policies as required.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from the mid-term governance review (the 2024 Governance Evaluation Report, Document 1) and outline key

recommendations for the Plan for the remainder of the term that could be implemented to improve the effectiveness of the Board.

## **DISCUSSION**

OPL Board trustees were invited to complete the Performance Evaluation Form in Q3 2024. Staff subsequently engaged the services of Transform Management Consulting to review the results of the Performance Evaluation Form questionnaire with members of the Governance Ad hoc Committee (“the Committee”), complete confidential interviews with trustees to gather insights on the Board’s governance strengths and weaknesses (Q4 2024), and observe meetings in order to gain a better understanding of the Board’s business.

In Q4 2024, initial findings from the questionnaire, interviews, and meetings observed were presented to the Committee and senior staff. Based on feedback from these groups, the 2024 Governance Evaluation Report was finalized.

Findings of the report include confusion regarding current Ad hoc committee functioning, overwhelming orientation process, a need for governance-related educational opportunities, a need for more fulsome discussions to occur at Board, and greater transparency between committees.

Summary of the report recommendations based on findings:

- Revise the trustee orientation process to offer a shorter initial session focusing on key aspects of governance and additional orientation sessions in the first six months of the Board’s term;
- Task the Governance Standing Committee with providing guidance to staff regarding continuing education topics for trustees;
- Establish three Standing Committees of the Board: Finance, Facilities and Risk; Governance; and, CEO Performance;
- Dissolve the current Ad hoc committees;
- Provide continuing education in small groups on key topics balancing governance and operations;
- Structure the consent agenda process; and,
- Include an Agenda item periodically that focuses on Board functioning.

### Updated 2023-2026 Governance Action Plan

- **Recommendation 1:** Revise the trustee orientation process for the 2027-2030 Term of Board to shorten the initial orientation session and develop the content and timeline for several additional sessions in the first six months of the term (supports Recommendations 1 and 3 in the 2023 Plan).
- **Recommendation 2:** Disband the current operational Ad hoc committees, effective Q1 2025. The seven current Ad hoc Committees and approved membership (as per a February 2023 report, OPLB-2023-0223-10.2) are as follows:
  - i. Branding: Trustees Crawford and Smith;
  - ii. Chief Librarian/CEO Performance Review: Chair Luloff, Vice Chair Fisher, and Trustee King;
  - iii. Finance and Facilities: Trustees Fisher and King;
  - iv. Fund Development: Trustees Slack and Smith;
  - v. Governance: Trustees Bradley and Slack;
  - vi. Service Strategies, including Ādisōke: Trustees Brown, Crawford, and Kitts; and,
  - vii. Service Channel Frameworks: Trustees Bradley and Brown.
- **Recommendation 3:** Establish three Standing Committees of the Board: Finance, Facilities and Risk; Governance; and, CEO Performance, and solicit interest from trustees for membership on these committees, to be approved by the Board at a subsequent meeting.
- **Recommendation 4:** Engage the Governance Standing Committee in the development of plans for trustee continuing education and a regular discussion regarding the Board's functioning involving all trustees (supports Recommendations 2 and 3 in the 2023 Plan).

The above-noted recommendations of the updated Governance Action Plan are aligned with the existing OPL Board Rules of Procedure By-Law, which allows for both Standing Committees and Ad hoc Committees. The move to a Standing Committee structure is anticipated to increase transparency, to ensure that similar initiatives are considered consistently and with clearer connections to related issues, and to ensure more effective use of trustees' time.

## **CONSULTATION**

Library staff worked with the OPL Board Governance Ad hoc Committee to review and better understand the Q3 2024 questionnaire results and provide recommendations for the Governance Action Plan.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

Ottawa Public Library complies with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)* in its operations. There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

## **BOARD PRIORITIES**

This report aligns with the OPL value of integrity (“We embody the principles of public stewardship, transparency, and accountability in our operations and interactions.”). This report is prepared in compliance with OPL Board Policy 015-OPLB - Board Evaluations and Governance Review.

## **BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendations in this report were developed from the results of the self-evaluations completed by OPL trustees.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report. Should external professional consulting services be subsequently engaged to support the Plan, funding for these services is available in the existing annual operating budget.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations in this report.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Implementing the Governance Evaluation Action Plan may assist in more effective risk management processes at OPL: better understanding of trustee roles and responsibilities, and of OPL as an organization, will also support informed and evidence-based decision-making.

### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no technology implications related to this report.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 2024 Governance Evaluation Report

### **DISPOSITION**

Upon approval of this report, the Manager, Board & Strategic Services will lead the implementation of the updated 2023-2026 OPL Governance Action Plan.