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Report to / Rapport au:

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

March 11, 2025 / 11 mars 2025

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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SUBJECT: 2025 Board Continuing Education Plan

OBJET: Plan de formation du Conseil d'administration de 2025

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board approve the 2025 Board Continuing
Education Plan (Document 1).**

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

**Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa approuve le
plan de formation continue de 2025 (Document 1).**

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the Ottawa Public Library ("OPL" or "the Library") Board ("the Board" or "OPLB") Policy 003 - Trustee Orientation and Continuing Education, trustees are encouraged to participate in relevant educational opportunities during their term(s) to advance personal lifelong learning goals and contribute to their advocacy role as a trustee. These educational opportunities may include internal options such as site visits or tours, as well as external options such as industry events (webinars, lectures,

working groups, or conferences. Participation in continuing education, and the associated expenses, are subject to Board pre-approval, in keeping with two OPL Board policies (002-OPLB Delegation of Authority (“the DOA”) and 007-OPLB Trustee Expense Reimbursement) and the City of Ottawa Travel Guidelines.

Each year, staff develop an annual Board Continuing Education Plan (“the Plan”) for trustees based on their input, which highlights planned and suggested continuing education opportunities for the upcoming year. The Plan is guided by the principles of fairness (for example, each trustee should have the opportunity to attend a minimum of one library conference during their four-year term, and a trustee who is active in an event such as a conference or committee will be given priority to attend) and fiscal responsibility (in alignment with the Library’s operating budget).

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Board approve the attached 2025 Board Continuing Education Plan (Document 1).

DISCUSSION

Generally, the Board Continuing Education Plan includes a proposal for the attendance of trustees at key industry conferences for that year. 2025 Board Conference Attendance was approved in December 2024 as a separate report (OPLB-2024-1203-11.3). At that time, the development of the 2025 Board Continuing Education Plan was deferred to early 2025 in order to solicit additional input and in alignment with the Governance Evaluation Report and Action Plan, approved at the same December 2024 meeting (OPLB-2024-1203-11.2). Recommendation 4 in the 2023-2026 Governance Action Plan was to “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.” In preparing the 2025 Continuing Education Plan, staff engaged both the OPLB Governance Ad hoc Committee and all trustees.

In January 2025, the Governance Ad hoc Committee reviewed potential formats and topics for trustee continuing education; subsequent to this, in February 2025, an online questionnaire was sent to all trustees incorporating Committee feedback and suggestions.

The questionnaire provided the following key insights into trustees’ interest in continuing education opportunities:

1. The majority of respondents preferred continuing education opportunities in person, with the whole Board (55% of respondents), but only one trustee ranked Board workshop as their preferred format for continuing education;
2. There was no clear preference for format of continuing education, although four respondents indicated they prefer industry conferences as their first preference;
3. Regarding information presentations at Board meetings, a variety of topics were suggested including:
 - a) Challenges and opportunities facing public libraries, including financial challenges and the future of eContent (2 respondents), community development (2 respondents), intellectual freedom and misinformation, branding and marketing;
 - b) Strategic vision, governance, and service delivery, including best practices in other libraries; and,
 - c) The future of public libraries.
4. Regarding Board workshop topics, again, a range of subjects were proposed, including:
 - a) Library programming;
 - b) Strategic planning;
 - c) Intellectual freedom (two respondents), including the library's role in civil discourse;
 - d) Reconciliation; and,
 - e) Partnerships with other institutions such as LAC, other libraries or museums current library practices.

These elements were incorporated into the proposed 2025 Plan, described below.

OPL (Internal) Opportunities

In 2024, staff provided two presentations at Board meetings (topics: Friends of the Ottawa Public Library (FOPLA), presented jointly with the FOPLA President), and Digital Collections. In 2025, staff recommend several presentations at regular Board meetings. Further details are provided in Document 1 OPL Board 2025 Continuing Education Plan. Additional topics identified in the trustee questionnaire (for example, branding, community development, eContent, reconciliation) will be incorporated into planned reports and/or presentations in 2025.

Staff also extended invitations to trustees to attend various OPL events, including the anniversary celebrations for both Cumberland and Stittsville branches, and the

Richmond Branch Community Appreciation Day. These opportunities allow trustees to engage in informal conversations with employees and clients, learn more about community interests, and act as advocates for OPL. In 2025, staff will continue to invite trustees to key OPL programs and events.

In 2025, staff recommend a Board workshop with guest Tommi Laitio about the role of the public library in fostering convivencia. Mr. Laitio is an internationally recognized leader and expert on public life, cities and public innovation, and was the City of Helsinki's first Executive Director for Culture and Leisure and the inaugural Bloomberg Public Innovation Fellow at Johns Hopkins University. His current research focuses on convivencia, defined as "a cooperative state between harmony and open conflict, which emphasizes practice, effort, negotiation, and accommodation," and the talk is anticipated to align with several OPL strategic priorities, including the commitment to integrating intellectual freedom into OPL activities and to defining the ideal client experience¹ The timing will coincide with a presentation by Mr. Laitio at the OPL Employee Forum.

Library Industry (External) Opportunities

Webinars (live or pre-recorded) are often offered by industry associations or cooperatives regarding a variety of relevant topics for public library trustees. In 2024, one trustee expressed interest in webinars, specifically, an online parliamentary procedure course: the first vendor was unavailable to provide the course, and the trustee was unable to participate in the second similar course offered.

As this is the third year of this term of the Board, the 2025 Continuing Education Plan emphasizes online learning related to planning for end of term governance activities. Staff also encourage trustees to signal interest in other topics and will work individually with these trustees to identify webinars of interest. Staff will coordinate registration for all webinars. Further details as available at the time of this report are provided in Document 1 OPL Board 2025 Continuing Education Plan.

In addition to the Board-specific continuing education opportunities, staff note that Vice Chair Fisher continues to serve on the Board of Directors of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) until April 2027 and is a member of FOPL's Indigenous

¹ Learning to live with others at the library: <https://tommilaitio.medium.com/convivencia-navigating-co-existence-in-libraries-1a316bd4f278>

Libraries Partnership Working Group (until November 2025, with possibility of annual renewal). Vice Chair Fisher's attendance at FOPL meetings is financed by FOPL, and in instances in which meetings occur at events (such as the 2025 Ontario Library Association (OLA) Super Conference in January) for which OPL has supported the Vice Chair's attendance, costs are divided proportionally by OPL and FOPL.

CONSULTATION

As part of the consultation process, staff consulted with the Governance Ad hoc Committee and all OPL Board trustees were provided with details of the key continuing education opportunities (as available) and encouraged to express interest. The Senior Management Team was also consulted regarding internal learning and advocacy opportunities.

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

The report aligns with OPL's value of Literacy, by cultivating the joys of learning and discovering. It also aligns with the Strategic Directions and Priorities 2023-2028, specifically the direction to strengthen community relationships and advocacy. Lastly, it aligns with OPL Board policy 003-OPLB Trustee Orientation and Continuing Education, as well as 002-OPLB Delegation of Authority ("the DOA") and 007-OPLB Trustee Expense Reimbursement.

BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS

There are no business analysis considerations associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funds for the proposed Continuing Education Plan fall within the 2025 budget approved in December 2024.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 OPL Board 2025 Continuing Education Plan

DISPOSITION

Upon approval of this report, staff will:

- Coordinate continuing education opportunities for trustees; and,
- Continue to support the ongoing development of trustees via engagement with trustees and senior staff.

OPL Board – 2025 Continuing Education Plan

Timing	Type	Topic
Ongoing	Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OLS Governance Hub webinars • Other topics (Details TBD)
Ongoing	Event	Attend an OPL program or event (Details to be shared with trustees via email, as available)
January 29-February 1	Conference	Ontario Library Association Toronto, Ontario
Q2	Presentation	Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association
Q2	Presentation	Content Services
Q3	Presentation	Accessibility
June 26-30	Conference	American Library Association Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Q4	Presentation	Early literacy programming
Q4	Workshop	Convivencia (guest: Tommi Laitio)