



Ottawa Public Library Board

Minutes

Meeting #: 28
Date: December 2, 2025
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.

This draft Minutes document contains a summary of the disposition of items and actions taken at the meeting. This document does not include all of the text that will be included in the final Minutes, such as the record of written and oral submissions. Recorded votes and dissents contained in this draft Minutes document are draft until the Minutes of the meeting are confirmed by the Board. The final draft Minutes will be published with the agenda for the next regular Board meeting and, once confirmed, will replace this document.

Notes:

1. The meeting began at 5:01 pm.
2. Trustee Mary-Rose Brown arrived at 5:06 pm.
3. Trustee Jessica Bradley left the meeting at 7:41 pm.

The Chair asked the Board to move Item 10.3 - Ādisōke - Update on Construction and Operational Planning up to the first order of business, in order to ensure that Board members receive pertinent new information prior to considering the draft Budget, and to align with information shared with several Board members earlier in the day at the Finance and Corporate Services Committee Meeting. As such, the Board moved Item 10.1 - 2026 Draft Operating and Capital Budget Estimates and Four-Year Capital Forecast to the second order of business, followed by Item 10.2 - 2026 Board Continuing Education Plan and Conference Attendance.

2. Recognition of the Territory of the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation

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 27 - Tuesday, 4 November 2025

Results: Carried

7. Communications

7.1 Letter of support from Christine Johnson - 2026 OPL Draft Operating and Capital Budget

7.2 Support for the Expansion of the Elmvale Acres Library Branch - Tomas Szeredi, President, Elmvale Acres Community Association

7.3 Letter of support from Audrey Bélanger, President, Hunt Club Community Association - 2026 OPL Draft Operating and Capital Budget

8. Chair's Verbal Update

2025 In Review

Chair Luloff noted key 2025 highlights and strategic decisions of the Board, including expanded opening hours at seven rural branches, responding to feedback from rural residents, numerous branch improvements including at Osgoode and Sunnyside branches, Board approval for seeking spaces for a branch in Old Hunt Club, a legacy gap area, as well as Board approval for both the Asset Management Plan and the Facilities Master Plan. Chair Luloff also noted the Board's approval in 2025 of the five OPL Service Strategies, which will guide upcoming initiatives and provide transparent objectives for service consistency, approval of the new brand strategy for OPL, and approval of extending free OPL memberships to members of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinaabeg First Nation, the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, and urban Indigenous people in the Ottawa-Gatineau area. The Chair further noted this year's ratification of the new Collective Bargaining between OPL management and the CUPE 503 Library bargaining unit, the website refresh, recruitment efforts for the new Central branch at Adisoke,

In acknowledging the work of his colleagues on the Board, Chair Luloff noted critical governance work undertaken in 2025, including implementing the recommendations of a mid-term governance review to reflect reflecting the continued commitment to a strategic governance approach. He noted that Board members also fulfilled their critical role as advocates for OPL this year, by participating in fund development activities, attending sector conferences, and/or attending local OPL events. He thanked Vice-Chair Fisher and Trustee Crawford for attending the Ontario Library Association Super Conference and Trustees King and Slack for attending the American Library Association Conference alongside him and reporting back to the Board on key takeaways. He thanked Board members for joining staff at the recent Board workshop, and thanked each Board member for their guidance, wisdom, and support for OPL.

MOTION OPL 20251202/1

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 CEO announced a recent anonymous donation of \$25,000 to the *Unlock Potential* campaign. She noted that while the specific designation of this gift is still to be determined, the donor is interested in creative and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programming, reading and literacy engagement, and spaces that foster community connection. Staff will ensure this gift has impact in the areas most meaningful to the donor.

Latvian Embassy Donation

To mark the 500th anniversary of Latvian publishing, a milestone of profound cultural and historical significance for those of Latvian heritage, the Latvian Embassy generously donated a selection of books to OPL. Ms. Bebbington was honoured to welcome His Excellency Ambassador Kaspars Ozolins to the Main branch on November 28 to formally receive the donation.

Most Requested Books

Ms. Bebbington shared some of the books Ottawans most loved in 2025: the complete list is available on the [OPL website](#). She was thrilled to see the interest generated by OPL's rich collections. 2025 was an incredible year for readers, and Ms. Bebbington noted that she looks forward to continued momentum in 2026.

2025 In Review

The Chief Librarian / CEO also noted that over 650 employees attended the recent Employee Forum featuring Tommi Laitio, who shared insights about the concept of "Convivencia," the concept of living well together through cooperation and negotiation. Ms. Bebbington emphasized the relevance of this concept to OPL's mission, in particular the values of access and intellectual freedom, and she praised staff for their engagement, energy, and teamwork both in preparation for, and during, the Forum. Building on the Chair's reflections on the year, Ms. Bebbington highlighted progress on other major initiatives: the Riverside South branch designs and public engagement planning, the Barrhaven branch feasibility study, the completion of the Enhanced Risk Management Review, the launch of automated staff scheduling, and the development of improved InfoService processes. She credited OPL staff's creativity and dedication for these successes.

In closing, Ms. Bebbington expressed her gratitude to the Board for their guidance, wisdom, and unwavering support for the Library, which ensures OPL's vibrancy and strength as we look to the future. On behalf of the Senior Leadership Team, she wished the Board, colleagues at OPL, and clients, a restful and joyful holiday season.

Hours of Operation During the Holidays

Ms. Bebbington reminded members and attendees that branches will be closed December 25 and 26 for Christmas and Boxing Day, as well as January 1 for New Year's Day. She noted that Branch Services, including Bookmobile, Homebound, and Info Service will be open 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on December 24 and 31. She encouraged everyone to explore OPL's digital collections over the holidays, including magazines, movies, music, and more.

MOTION OPL 20251202/2

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

Results: Received

10. Reports

10.1 2026 Draft Operating and Capital Budget Estimates and Four-Year Capital Forecast

Please refer to the 4 November 2025 OPL Board meeting for the documents (Item 11.1)

In his opening remarks, Chair Luloff noted the draft budget reflects a prudent financial approach, and will help ensure that OPL remains a vital, responsive, and sustainable service for Ottawa residents now and into the future. He thanked staff for attending various Councillor-led budget consultations to ensure residents are informed about OPL's priorities, can ask questions, and share their input and feedback. He acknowledged advocacy at the Board and staff level with City colleagues for a stable funding source for Central branch operations.

Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) added that the draft budget maintains current operations within Council-directed funding, supports asset maintenance and includes funding for a new branch to serve the Hunt Club neighbourhood, enhances the client experience through increased collections funding and expanded Sunday hours year-round, builds staff capacity for existing services, provides incremental funding for Central Branch operations, and strengthens financial stewardship through efficiencies and fair user fee updates.

Ms. Bebbington summarized public feedback received (*correspondence was also included with the Agenda package*), including support for year-

round Sunday hours and adding Sundays at additional branches, support for the Hunt Club branch, support for expansion of the Elmvale Acres branch, and a request regarding ergonomic chairs in all branches. In closing, Ms. Bebbington confirmed no changes to the draft budget are recommended at this time based on this feedback.

Anna Basile, Deputy CEO and Division Manager, Corporate Services and Matthew Pritz, Program Manager, Finance and Business Services were in attendance to respond to questions, as were City of Ottawa representatives Cyril Rogers, General Manager, Finance and Corporate Services Department and Chief Financial Officer, and Svetlana Valkova, Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Corporate Services Department.

The Board heard from the following delegations. Those marked with an asterisk (*) below denote that a written submission or presentation is held on file with the Chief Librarian and CEO.

Riley Brockington, Councillor, Ward 16 (River) registered to speak prior to the meeting, he left prior to Item 10.1 and did not delegate.

Ana Maria Cruz-Valderrama* asked the Board to consider acquiring two (2) ergonomic chairs for each branch in the 2026 budget to assist clients with accommodation needs. She felt that it was unreasonable for clients to have to wait three weeks for an ergonomic chair, and noted she cannot visit the library or participate in activities there due to unmet accessibility needs.

Trustee Slack thanked the delegate for addressing the board and was in support of the request.

Vice-Chair Fisher asked staff to provide details regarding accessibility services at OPL. Ms. Bebbington noted requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, including incorporating accessibility design, criteria, and features in procurement and making reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, practices, and procedures respect people's dignity and independence. She noted that a variety of seating options are available to clients, anticipating diverse needs, and that staff are always willing to work with clients in order to meet their accessibility needs. She further noted that advance notice

provides staff with the ability to prepare the best possible resources to assist each unique client.

John D. Reid, resident of River Ward, asked the Board to approve the 2026 budget and for councillor trustees to advocate for the full budget approval at Council. He expressed his concerns regarding the funding for the Central branch, and expressed his wish that if Council directs the Board to further prioritize needs that citizens have an opportunity to provide feedback as part of this process. He further urged staff to consider the distance criteria in the OPL Facilities Framework, suggesting a smoothly graduated score and incorporation of public transit data. In closing, he suggested staff consider a climate lens and consider how library operations can contribute to greenhouse gas emission reductions.

The Chair thanked the delegate for his continued advocacy, and asked staff to comment on using a climate lens. Ms. Bebbington said she could provide information to the delegate regarding this at a later date.

There being no further questions for delegations, the Board proceeded with questions for staff.

Chair Luloff asked staff to comment regarding the portion of the budget that is outside of the purview of the Board. Ms. Bebbington noted the Board's role is to ensure the budget request meets OPL's operating needs and to direct the use of all funding sources under its control. For 2026, there is a need for approximately \$4.9M above directions primarily for operationalizing the Central branch. Of the Central-related costs, 20% have been funded within the Council-directed increase. The remaining amount of approximately \$4.9M, as noted on page 12 of the Budget Book, is reflected as revenues over two lines. She indicated that she understood that the City would fund this from a one-time source, the Tax Stabilization Reserve (TSR), and welcomed further clarification from Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers agreed with Ms. Bebbington, noting the Central Branch (Ädisōke) portion of the budget she referred to includes \$4.9M, split as follows: \$2.5M base funding (permanent, part of OPL's annual budget) and the remaining \$2.4M one-time funding from the Tax Stabilization Reserve, covering costs during the transition, considering the project

delays. Any unused funds in 2026 will return to the TSR, with a full base top-up expected in 2027.

Chair Luloff asked Mr. Rogers to confirm that the \$2.9M he just referred to is in fact base funding that will be available on a go-forward basis in OPL's annual base budget. Mr. Rogers provided additional context: OPL's normal funding increase as per direction is \$2.9M. He noted the multiple sources of City funding, and confirmed that in light of this transformative period at OPL, he is referring now to an additional \$2.5M, provided as base, ongoing funding. The residual \$2.4M is provided as one-time funding, giving the timing of the opening of the Central branch.

Chair Luloff thanked Mr. Rogers for the clarification and noted OPL has absorbed some of the costs of ramping up for the Central branch at Ādisōke into its normal budget allocation and he was seeking assurances that future budgets would account for these needs. He asked for confirmation that the residual \$2.4M currently provided as one-time funding would be added to the base budget in the year that the Central branch opens, as the Library Reserve is not intended for operations. Mr. Rogers noted that staff cannot pre-commit for future annual budgets as the City is bound by an annual budget approval, but expressed confidence that the \$2.4M should come through in the base in the next cycle, and that the City's intention is for the residual base to be allocated to OPL in 2027 to fully support operations. Chair Luloff was hopeful that Mr. Rogers was right regarding his assumptions.

Chair Luloff asked what the new base annual budget in 2026 will be. Speaking extemporaneously, Mr. Rogers indicated it would be whatever the total is today, less that \$2.4M one-time allocation, and Ms. Bebbington sought confirmation, assuming the total budget envelope is \$68.48M, following the Council-directed increase. Mr. Rogers believed the \$2.5M was included in the base budget, however, he stated that the OPL budget template differs slightly, the explanatory notes template shows \$4.830M and of that, \$2.5M is the base and the residual is \$2.4M one-time. Mr. Rogers noted that he would follow up offline with Ms. Bebbington regarding the precise numbers and prior to Council approval.

Noting that the budget indicates \$2.78 million in efficiency over this term of the Board, Trustee King inquired regarding how staff track efficiencies and

how future efficiencies are identified. Ms. Bebbington cited some examples of efficiencies noted in the report, and added that 20% of costs for the Central branch at Ādisōke have been absorbed by OPL through various efficiency strategies. She further noted that this rate of absorption will not be possible on an ongoing basis. Ms. Basile confirmed this and provided additional examples of efficiencies.

Trustee King thanked staff for the additional context and applauded the Library for their good faith efforts to work collaboratively with the City to manage costs and maintain and improve resident services.

In terms of OPL's budget planning, Trustee King inquired about risks identified such as funding gaps (depleted reserve funds, cost-of-living allowances (COLA)), as well as needs such as maintaining facilities and climate change mitigation as noted by a delegate and in the staff report which flagged the deferral of climate initiatives as a potential risk. Ms. Bebbington underlined that staff are managing risks in several ways: on the financial front, efforts continue to adequately prepare to resource the Central branch as well as Hunt Club, and will return any one-time funds not used in 2026. Ms. Basile added that elements of the last round of collective bargaining provide stability in the client experience allowing for the provision of year-round Sunday services at applicable locations and will also help in managing risks; she added that while the implementation process for the new collective agreement has some risks as well, staff are well-positioned to manage that process.

Trustee King thanked staff for these impactful efforts and noted he was pleased to learn that every dollar invested in the library returns \$4.30 in economic value. He added that the Library further provides intangible impacts related to social connections, intellectual engagement, and creative exploration. Ms. Basile reminded the Board that staff are poised to bring a report to the Board in Q1 2026 regarding these impacts.

Chair Luloff noted that this is the final budget for this term of Board and inquired whether staff are adequately resourced to prepare for the opening of the Central branch while maintaining operations. Ms. Bebbington confirmed that OPL is adequately resourced, provided the funding sources are approved as described this evening, and noting the importance of the additional \$2.4M projected for the 2027 annual base budget.

In closing, Chair Luloff thanked Mr. Rogers for his dedication and that of his team in attending Councillor-led consultations and hearing from residents, and for working collaboratively with OPL on the budget. Chair Luloff then thanked the Chief Library/CEO, and Senior Management for their work on the budget, and thanked all staff for their tremendous work delivering excellent service across the city.

There being no further discussion, the OPL 2026 Draft Budget was CARRIED as presented.

MOTION OPL 20251202/5

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

1. **Approve the 2026 Draft Budget for Ottawa Public Library, including a withdrawal of \$2.945M from the Library Reserve Fund, as further described in this report; and,**
2. **Direct staff to forward the report to Ottawa City Council, for consideration on December 10, 2025 as part of the City Council's approval of the City of Ottawa 2026 Draft Operating and Capital budget.**

Results: Carried

10.2 2026 Board Continuing Education Plan and Conference Attendance

File Number: OPLB-2025-1202-10.2

Chair Luloff noted that staff advised that Trustee Brown was no longer available to attend the 2026 Ontario Library Association (OLA) conference. As such, Trustee Slack has been suggested to replace Trustee Brown at OLA.

Moved by Vice-Chair Fisher:

MOTION OPL 20251202/6

That the Ottawa Public Library Board approve that Trustee Harvey A. Slack replace Trustee Mary-Rose Brown at the Ontario Library Association (OLA) Conference.

Results: Carried

MOTION OPL 20251202/7

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

1. **Approve the 2026 Board Continuing Education Plan (Document 1); and,**
2. **Approve the attendance of trustees at conferences in 2026, as further described in this report and amended with Trustee Harvey A. Slack replacing Trustee Mary-Rose Brown.**

Results: Carried, as amended

10.3 Ādisōke – Update on Construction and Operational Planning

File Number: OPLB-2025-1202-10.3

As noted above, this was the first item of business.

Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian and CEO, provided brief opening remarks. Tammy Rose, General Manger, and Carina Duclos, Director from City of Ottawa Infrastructure and Water Services, and Craig Ginther, Division Manager, Facility and Technology Services provided a presentation regarding the Ādisōke project, including an update regarding the construction schedule and events, indicating a delay in construction and that opening is now anticipated in 2027. The presentation also included the schedule mitigation to date, budget, communications and engagement, and operational planning. (*Held on file with the Chief Librarian and CEO*). Tara Blasioli, Manager, Design and Construction, Buildings and Chris Merrick, Legal Services, were in attendance to respond to questions.

Following the presentation and before the Board moved to delegations or questions of staff, Board moved into closed session.

Moved by Vice-Chair Kathy Fisher:

MOTION OPL 20251202/3

That, in accordance with the *Public Libraries Act*, the Ottawa Public Library Board resolve to move In Camera pursuant to 16.1(4)(f), to close part of a meeting to members of the public as the subject matter considered is to receive advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose, which will not be reported out.

Results: Carried

Note: The In Camera meeting began at 5:54 pm. Upon resuming in open session at 6:53 pm, the Chair advised that the Board went In Camera /

into closed session to receive advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose. The specific details of this item cannot be reported out for the reasons stated previously. **No votes were taken and no decision made in camera.**

MOTION OPL 20251202/4

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

Results: Received

11. In Camera Items

The Board went *in camera* for Item 10.3 as noted above.

12. Information Previously Distributed

12.1 September OPLB meeting response to question about collections

12.2 Memo – City Reporting on Ādisōke

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

There were no Notices of Motion.

14. Inquiries

There were no Inquiries.

15. Other Business

Myra Skaronski, Division Manager, Branch Services is reading *“The Let Them Theory”*, by Mel Robbins. Trustee Mary-Rose Brown is reading *“C.D. Howe, A Biography”*, by Robert Bothwell. Sarah Macintyre, Division Manager, Client Services is reading *“Atmosphere”*, by Taylor Jenkins Reid. Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian and CEO is reading *“The Good Allies”*, by Tim Cook and *“Charlotte au pays des mots”*, by Emmanuelle Erny-Newton.

16. Adjournment

Be It Resolved that the Ottawa Public Library Board meeting be adjourned at 7:48 pm.

17. Next Meeting

Tuesday, January 13, 2026 (*held*)

Original signed by Matthew Luloff,
Chair

Sonia Bebbington, Recording
Secretary