



Ottawa Bibliothèque
Public publique
Library d'Ottawa

10.1

Report to / Rapport au:

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

February 10, 2026 / 10 février 2026

Submitted by / Soumis par:

**Sonia Bebbington, Chief Executive Office and Chief Librarian / Directrice générale
et bibliothécaire en chef**

Contact Person / Personne ressource:

*Sarah Macintyre, Division Manager, Client Services / Directrice, Services à la clientèle
(613) 899-3539 Sarah.Macintyre@bibliooottawalibrary.ca*

File Number/Numéro du dossier: OPLB-2026-0210-10.1

SUBJECT: Library Code of Conduct Position Statement

OBJET: Énoncé de position du Code de conduite de la Bibliothèque

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Ottawa Public Library Board approve the revised Library Code of Conduct Position Statement.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa approuve l'énoncé de position révisé du Code de conduite de la Bibliothèque.

BACKGROUND

In keeping with the *Public Libraries Act*, RSO 1990, c.P.44 ("the *PLA*"), other relevant statutes, laws, and good governance practices, the Ottawa Public Library ("OPL") Board ("OPLB" or "the Board") retains accountability for the full range of decisions affecting the organization. According to Section 15 of the *PLA*, the Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") shall have general supervision over, and direction of, the operations of the public library

and its staff, and shall have the other powers and duties that the Board assigns to them from time to time.

The Board uses a policy or strategic model of governance in which trustees primarily set strategic directions and objectives, make decisions on major projects, and monitor performance. As such, the Board has a document framework that outlines the position statements, policies, and frameworks that are under the purview of the Board.

According to the PLA, Section 23 (4), the Board may make rules for "...the use of library services...", "...the exclusion from the library of persons who behave in a disruptive manner ..." and "...suspending library privileges for breaches of the rules...". Since amalgamation, the OPL Board has prepared a position statement regarding the code of conduct expected of the public. This position statement is reviewed once during each term of the Board, unless otherwise required or to align with other statements or policies, as applicable. On May 10, 2022, the OPL Board approved the current version (Report #OPLB-2022-0502), which had been revised to incorporate more plain language for better comprehension.

The purpose of this report is to seek Board approval, as further detailed in the report, of a revised Library Code of Conduct Position Statement, based on a review for this current term of Board.

DISCUSSION

The Library's Code of Conduct Position Statement provides guidance to staff and serves as the basis for procedures and practices related to public conduct in Library spaces. Clients agree to respect the Code of Conduct when registering for membership and using public computers and Wi-Fi, and the statement appears on the website and is displayed in branches as a reminder to people using Library services. The Code of Conduct applies to any person using OPL services, whether virtually or physically, and the expectation is that all persons must adhere to the Code of Conduct.

In preparation for the review of the Library's Code of Conduct Position Statement for the current term of the Board, staff conducted the following activities to gather information:

- Environmental scan: Staff completed a review of codes of conduct from urban public libraries across Canada.

- Employee feedback: The current Code of Conduct was reviewed by OPLs leadership team (Managers and Supervisors) from across the organization.
- Municipal review: Employees from the City of Ottawa's ("the City's") Corporate Security team and the Recreation, Culture, and Facilities Services (RCFS) team provided feedback on initial draft changes for the Code of Conduct.
- Equity and Inclusion Review: The City's Gender, Race and Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations, and Social Development Group (GREIRDI), as well as the City's Housing & Homelessness team provided feedback on initial draft changes for the Code of Conduct to ensure an inclusion and equity lens was applied. In addition, both the City's Indigenous Relations team and OPL's Indigenous Services team provided feedback on initial draft changes to the Code of Conduct.

The feedback collected indicated that a plain language review was warranted, to ensure that clients reading the Code of Conduct are able to understand the information and reduce confusion or misinterpretation. A general observation indicated that clarity was needed regarding the intersection with the Intellectual Freedom Position Statement, specifically, around the fact that the Code of Conduct refers only to actions and behaviours. Moreover, it was recommended that the number of bullets be reduced, and where possible, more general terminology be used. Feedback also suggested that the section about consequences and the appeals process be made more transparent.

Based on the information gathered over the review period, staff focused on the following areas as they revised the Code of Conduct Position Statement:

- Increased plain language;
- Improved clarity of sections/format;
- Enhanced emphasis on client behaviour to reduce the risk of conflation with the Intellectual Freedom Position Statement;
- Improved description of unacceptable behaviour; and,
- Ensured additional transparency around consequences for not following the Code of Conduct.

In addition to posting the Code in appropriate formats on the OPL website and ensuring that it is made available in all physical touch-points (e.g. in branches, on the bookmobile, at events, etc.), supporting resources on the Code will be provided for employees, and case studies regarding application of the Code in complex client interactions will be integrated into existing OPL training. This will ensure continued

awareness of the updated Code, and will support its consistent, equitable, and fair enforcement across OPL.

Staff recommend that the OPL Board approve the revised Library Code of Conduct Position Statement to ensure the Board's expectations of public conduct in Library spaces are clear, and to support OPL in providing a welcoming environment for all.

CONSULTATION

The development of the Code of Conduct included consultation with the OPL Board Governance Standing Committee. Further details regarding consultations can be found in the discussion section of this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

OPL complies with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)* in its operations. OPL is committed to providing inclusive and barrier-free access to its collections, expertise, programs, spaces, and tools. The proposed Library Code of Conduct has been revised with simpler language for increased comprehension.

BOARD PRIORITIES

The report aligns with the strategic directions to “Redesign the Library Experience: Define the ideal experience across physical channels” and “Build Organizational Capacity: Redesign the employee experience”.

BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS

There are no new business analysis implications. Staff will continue to monitor data such as public incident reports, as per usual practice.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of translating and printing the revised Library Code of Conduct for use in branches has been included in the Communications annual budget. Annual budget funds are already allocated for changes to training offerings.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

INDIGENOUS AND GENDER EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

The proposed Library Code of Conduct Position Statement was reviewed by the City's Gender, Race and Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations, and Social Development Group (GREIRDI). Research has indicated that library codes of conduct, particularly through their application and enforcement, can disproportionately disadvantage vulnerable clients.¹ Efforts have been made by staff to engage with groups representing individuals with Indigenous and gender equity considerations to incorporate their feedback into the recent revisions.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Library Code of Conduct Position Statement ensures transparency of expectations regarding behaviour in Library spaces and explicitly prohibits harassment, discrimination, violence, or illegal activities. It supports the application of consequences of non-compliance, including, as appropriate, suspension of privileges, eviction, imposition of cost-recovery charges or prosecution.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 Library Code of Conduct Position Statement (current)

Document 2 Library Code of Conduct Position Statement (revised)

¹ Bourret, Grace. "Reflections on the Public Library System in Canada: Inclusivity, Race and Power." *Dalhousie Journal of Interdisciplinary Management*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.5931/djim.v16i1.10880>.

DISPOSITION

Once approved, the Library Code of Conduct Position Statement will be implemented. Related policies and procedures will be updated accordingly. The Library Code of Conduct Position Statement will be reviewed in the next term of the new OPL Board, unless otherwise required due to legislative requirements or alignment with other statements as applicable.

Library Code of Conduct Position Statement (current)

Welcome to Ottawa Public Library (OPL).

Our goal is to ensure that everyone has a positive experience when using the Library and its services. The Library values the diverse identities and perspectives of its community members. The Library also strives to foster an environment free of discrimination, bullying and harassment. Everyone is welcome here.

Let's work together to create a positive Library experience all can enjoy, whether in a virtual or physical space.

When using the Library or when on Library property, please:

- Be respectful.
- Take responsibility for those in your care.
- Dress appropriately (shirt, footwear, etc.).
- Do not wear scents that can negatively impact others.
- Keep noises at a low volume.
- Use the Library's materials, computers, equipment, and furniture for their intended purposes.
- Keep your belongings with you.
- Eat and drink in designated areas only.
- Leave privacy screens on Library computers.
- Bring in only registered guide or service animals.
- Follow Library and Security staff direction.
- Follow all Library policies and statements.
- Follow all municipal, provincial, and federal laws/codes/rules/regulations.

Certain behaviours are not acceptable when using the Library or when on Library property, including:

- Abusing, harassing, or threatening behaviour.
- Discriminatory language or behaviours.
- Intoxication or using any intoxicating substances.
- Smoking or vaping.
- Carrying or using a weapon, and other illegal activity.

- Damaging or stealing property.
- Interfering with others' use of Library spaces.
- Trespassing into restricted areas or if you have been evicted.
- Sleeping for prolonged periods of time.

We ask that you please respect and follow the Library's Code of Conduct.

Anyone choosing not to follow the Code of Conduct or refusing to modify behaviour will be asked to leave. Continued disregard could result in suspension of Library privileges, eviction, cost-recovery charges, and/or prosecution.

Library Code of Conduct Position Statement (revised)

Everyone is welcome at Ottawa Public Library!

The Library is a public space. We want everyone to feel welcome, and enjoy visiting our spaces and using Library services in-person or online. We value the diversity of our community members and we work to create a respectful and inclusive environment.

Code of Conduct

The Library Code of Conduct is simple: respect employees, clients, policies, and spaces. This means:

- Be considerate of others
- Look after people in your care
- Keep your belongings with you
- Use Library spaces, materials, equipment, and furniture as intended
- Follow Library employee and security instructions

Unacceptable client behaviours include:

- Actions that are disruptive to clients or employees
- Actions that are violent or put clients or employees at risk
- Actions that cause damage to Library spaces, materials, equipment, and furniture
- Offensive language, shouting, rude, or discriminatory comments
- Unwelcome advances or comments, or harassment
- Threats or intimidation
- Asking clients or employees to donate money or buy things
- Actions that are against federal and provincial laws, municipal by-laws, or library policies

Clients not following the Code of Conduct

Clients who do not follow the Library Code of Conduct will be asked to change their behaviour. Library employees or security will approach clients with curiosity and compassion, and will explain how their behaviour goes against the Code of Conduct.

Unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. If a client is unwilling or unable to change their behaviour, they will be asked to leave the Library.

In cases of serious or repeated unacceptable behaviour, the Library may suspend Library access, issue a trespass notice, or take other available legal actions. Clients who disagree with any suspension of Library access or trespass notice may write to the CEO to appeal the Library's decision.