



SUBJECT: OPL Double Standard – Centretown vs Barrhaven

OBJET Disparité dans les services de la BPO : centre-ville et Barrhaven

From: Ginther, Craig <Craig.Ginther@bibliooottawalibrary.ca>

Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 4:09 PM

To: Alan Dodson

Cc: Luloff, Matt; Bradley, Jessica; RideauRockcliffe Ward; Kitts, Catherine; Troster, Ariel; Leiper, Jeff; Bebbington, Sonia; Ottawa Public Library Board

Subject: RE: OPL Double Standard - Centretown vs Barrhaven

Dear Mr. Dodson,

Thank you for sharing your concerns regarding library access in Centretown and the differences you've noted between Centretown and Barrhaven. We appreciate the time you've taken to outline your perspective and reference recent articles and communications.

The Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Facilities Framework guides long-term planning for equitable access across the city. Together with the [Facilities Master Plan \(FMP\)](#) approved by the OPL Board in September 2025, the Framework takes a holistic approach to ensuring OPL serves all communities with the resources available. In recognition of OPL's commitment to serve all Ottawans, the gateway criterion in the Framework defines a legacy gap as one where an urban or suburban neighborhood's average travel distance to the closest branch exceeds 3 km (rather than the distance between branches), using definitions and data from the [Ottawa Neighbourhood Study \(ONS\)](#) and [Neighbourhood Equity Index \(NEI\)](#). This gateway criterion is fundamental but is only one of several factors relevant to the Framework; the others include population growth and equity. Population density is not a criterion in the Facilities Framework: density does not reliably indicate barriers to access, and lower-density areas may still require service enhancements if travel distances or equity considerations demonstrate a meaningful gap in access. The approved criteria (distance, equity, and population growth) were identified by best practice, tabled with the Board, received positive feedback through public engagement, and were publicly deliberated prior to approval.

The purpose of a framework of any kind is in part to assist in counteracting structural bias in decision making, and to ensure consistent and transparent application of

standards, criteria, and processes. Our current priorities reflect a commitment to reducing barriers to OPL services.

By way of clarification regarding plans for Barrhaven, at the September 2025 OPL Board meeting, staff identified that decommissioning the Ruth E. Dickinson branch would create a gap in the Old Barrhaven West neighbourhood of more than 3 km - again, noting this is the average travel distance for residents in the area based on population distribution, not a distance between specific facilities - and the Board approved proceeding with a feasibility study to maintain a reduced presence at the current location. Notably, Barrhaven comprises five distinct neighbourhoods in the ONS (Old Barrhaven West, Old Barrhaven East, Stonebridge - Half Moon Bay, Chapman Mills and Rideau Crest – Davidson Heights). The new branch will address the current distance gap for the neighbourhoods of Chapman Mills and Stonebridge – Half Moon Bay, ranked number 4 and 14 on the OPL Facilities Framework Prioritization Matrix, respectively. While not a criterion within the Framework, it is perhaps worth stating that the combined population of the neighbourhoods that make up the Barrhaven community is now more than 100,000 people, based on 2021 Census data, compared to less than 32,000 in the Centretown neighbourhood. Further, significant growth has been seen in Stonebridge - Half Moon Bay within the last 5 years alone, with another 15% forecasted in the next 5 years.

We expect the feasibility study regarding the existing branch at Ruth E. Dickinson to take place in 2026. Any subsequent recommendations regarding the Ruth E. Dickinson branch have not yet been determined and will return to the Board for consideration via a report in the future.

Where concerns the shift from the current Main branch to the new Central branch at Ādisōke, no gap as defined by the Framework is created, as you note. The Central branch will provide a modern, fully accessible facility with services for all residents. While no gap is created, we recognize that its opening will change the experience for some downtown users. We believe that Centretown residents living in the eastern part of this singular ONS neighbourhood will find something at the Central branch at Ādisōke worth travelling a bit further for, and we are excited to be new neighbours with residents of West Centretown. We also continue to provide a range of options to reduce barriers to service, including working with community partners to deliver off-site programming, home services for clients confined to their homes, and a variety of digital collections and virtual programs.

We will ensure your comments are shared with all Board members and listed after discussion items for the February 10, 2026 Board meeting as “Information Previously Distributed.” The process for lifting an item under this category for discussion is outlined in the [OPL Board Rules of Procedure By-law, Section 21\(3\)](#).

Thank you again for your commitment to library services in Ottawa. I hope we can count on your continued support of OPL as we work to collectively improve our city.

Craig
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Directeur, Services des installations et des technologies
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Sent from the unceded and ancestral territory of the Anishinābe Algonquin People
Envoyé du territoire traditionnel non cédé du peuple algonquin Anishinābe

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From: Alan Dodson
Sent: Wednesday, January 14, 2026 7:11:50 PM
To: Ottawa Public Library Board\C.A. de la bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa; Luloff, Matt; Bradley, Jessica; RideauRockcliffe Ward; Kitts, Catherine
Cc: Troster, Ariel; Leiper, Jeff
Subject: OPL Double Standard - Centretown vs Barrhaven

Good evening OPL board members and others,
This message concerns a double-standard when it comes to library access.

The Main branch will shut down when Ādisōke eventually opens, leaving many downtown residents with a much further route to their 'local' branch. This was discussed in a recent Centretown Buzz article, and many residents have fought against this decision without success. Indeed, I was one of those who had many criticisms of the site selection of Ādisōke and how it would affect downtown residents.

The final paragraph of the article is interesting (despite its incorrect claim of the distance between Ādisōke and Main which is ~1.2km):

"Since Ādisōke is several kilometres away from the current Main library, the Centretown Community Association has pushed for a small branch library downtown, without avail. The OPL's Facilities policy says that branches must be at three kilometres apart, regardless of density of population."

The [Facilities Framework](#) is a well-done and interesting document which is full of detail and nuance, and the '3km separation' generalization in the newspaper article is generally correct in this circumstance.

That Centretown Buzz paragraph is interesting because of a sentence in Councillor David Hill's recent newsletter:

"Based on our community's advocacy, the OPL will maintain a library presence at 100 Malvern Drive as part of their long-term operational planning, ensuring Barrhaven will have two libraries once the Community Centre is built!"

The new library in Barrhaven will be just ~2.1km from the existing Ruth E. Dickinson site. Given the reduced density in Barrhaven compared to Centretown, and given that urban wards heavily subsidize suburban wards and their infrastructure, how can a brand-new facility be approved for Barrhaven 'based on community advocacy' while the city ignores the years-long and continuing advocacy of downtown residents for a closer branch? This is indeed a double-standard! I'm all for everyone having the easiest possible access to libraries - I don't think this should be taken away from Barrhaven. However, I'm stunned that the policy reason for NOT providing easy access for downtown residents can simply be ignored when it comes to the suburbs! I'd really like to know more about this issue.

Every day there is something new that is really frustrating about how this city is governed.

Alan Dodson

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