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**Report to / Rapport au:**

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

**October 11, 2022 / 11 octobre 2022**

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**File Number: OPLB-2022-1011-11.1**

**SUBJECT: Vulnerable Communities and Community Development Update**

**OBJET: Mise à jour sur les communautés vulnérables et le développement  
communautaire**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Public Library Board:**

- 1. Receive this report for information; and,**
- 2. Direct the inclusion of ongoing operational funding of \$50,000 be secured in 2023 and subsequent budgets to continue efforts related to community development.**

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

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

- 1. Prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information; et,**

- 2. Oriente l'inclusion d'un financement opérationnel permanent de 50 000 \$ dans le budget de 2023 et les budgets suivants afin de poursuivre les efforts liés au développement communautaire.**

## **BACKGROUND**

In accordance with the *Public Libraries Act*, RSO 1990, c.P.44, the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Board (the Board) has accountability for the full range of decisions affecting the organization. The Board uses a model that focuses trustee attention on setting strategic direction and objectives, making decisions on major projects, and monitoring performance.

In June 2019, the Board approved a new Strategic Plan, including five values, a strategic statement, and key strategic directions and priorities (OPLB-2019-0601). One of OPL's values is community: "we are an active part of our community, reaching beyond our spaces to build relationships that enrich Ottawa."

Community development work at OPL was galvanized in 2016, when staff developed a toolkit for internal use. Within the library context, community development means connecting, consulting, and working collaboratively with community members to understand their needs and to inform the direction of library work and policies. This work begins by engaging with community members to help staff define barriers to library service, identify solutions, and work together to implement new initiatives. Community development is about having conversations that are open-minded, inquisitive, and authentic; these conversations help library staff understand what is relevant and meaningful to members of different communities in Ottawa.

At the November 30, 2021, OPL Board meeting, a discussion ensued about community development work when reviewing the annual budget. Trustees recognized that community development work enhances OPL's ability to fulfil its mission to inspire learning, spark curiosity, and connect people. As part of that discussion, recognizing that current funding for community development is dispersed between centralized programming efforts and local branch budgets, and that there is a desire to address the needs of vulnerable communities and communities without a local branch, the Board received Motion OPL 20211130/6, as moved by Trustee Brockington. This motion allocated additional funds to "support increased community development efforts system-wide in 2022." Specifically, the Board approved "re-allocating \$40,000 in the draft

budget from “Transfer to Reserves” to Account 170073 for 2022 (one-time) to allow staff to increase community development work throughout the system to address the needs of vulnerable communities and others, as funds permit.”

At the same meeting of the Board (November 30, 2021), the needs of vulnerable communities were also discussed. Trustee King inquired regarding vulnerable communities, and the Board supported direction to staff to:

- Provide a definition or list of priority or vulnerable communities to the Board;
- Consider adding, as part of the Needs Assessment component of the Evaluation process for Hours of Operation, the inclusion of a criteria that considers the needs of vulnerable communities, and that staff give appropriate weight to those criteria, and;
- That the “needs of vulnerable communities” criteria be completed before any new branches are recommended for Sunday service hours.”

In February 2022, staff provided trustees with a presentation regarding community development. Trustee Brockington further requested that “staff report back on the needs of vulnerable communities and communities without a local branch.”

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with updates regarding community development and vulnerable communities, including the expenditure of the \$40,000 allocated for community development work in 2022; and to recommend dedicated funding be included in future budgets to continue these efforts.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Working definition of vulnerable communities**

In July 2022, the Library Senior Management team developed a working definition of vulnerable communities. The Library defines vulnerable communities according to the criteria from the Neighbourhood Equity Index, developed by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa. The Neighbourhood Equity Index is “a tool to assess and compare unnecessary and unfair differences at a neighbourhood level on factors impacting wellbeing.”<sup>1</sup> The Index measures how each neighbourhood is doing in five domains of wellbeing (economic, health, social and human development, physical environment, and

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<sup>1</sup> The Neighbourhood Equity Index <https://neighbourhoodequity.ca/>

community and belonging) supported by 28 indicators. Staff also recognize that, on a smaller scale, there may be “pockets” of other vulnerable groups or communities within individual neighbourhoods. These are identified by branch staff as required. The Index also identifies equity-deserving population groups including seniors, immigrants and racialized groups, youth, and families and children.

### **2022 Annual Budget: \$40,000 for community development work**

Nine projects were developed using the 2022 community development funding. These projects are reaching community members from Barrhaven to Stittsville, and from Carlington to Centretown. They are tailored to children, teens, young people on the autism spectrum, at-risk youth, justice-involved adults, members of the LGBTQIA2s+ community, adults with dementia, street-involved people, precariously housed families, and new Canadians. Several projects, such as ones based around specific events, are considered complete and are listed first. Others remain in progress and are presented in chronological order based on start date. The projects include:

- **School professional development days airplane kits:** Approximately 200 laser-cut model airplane take-home kits were distributed to children in the Centrepointe and Carlington areas during March Break 2022 Professional Development days. The kits provided an engaging take-home activity for families to share during a day “off” from school and to promote the OPL Imagine Space.  
**Status:** Complete.
- **Capital Pride Parade and Street Festival:** OPL showed support for the LGBTQI2S community by participating in annual Capital Pride Week celebrations in August 2022. Approximately thirty staff, family and friends marched with the Bookmobile in the Parade, and an info booth at the Street Festival attracted over five hundred visitors, many of whom received a free book or graphic novel.  
**Status:** Complete.
- **Food Literacy Workshops and School Lunch Kit distribution:** Food scarcity and food literacy proved to be the most urgent issue based on community conversations. Staff from multiple branches, including Greenboro, Beaverbrook and Centrepointe, report that food scarcity is a significant concern to Ottawa residents. Local food banks, community houses and co-operative groups, and community associations consistently inform staff that food costs and lack of food literacy is a barrier for their clients. In addition, municipal partners such as Ottawa Public Health and the City of Ottawa Integrated Neighborhood Services

Team confirm they are receiving similar feedback from the community. In response multiple branches are working to provide food literacy seminars featuring registered dietitians. Seminars have taken place across the City, including Carlington, Ledbury and Ottawa South. Kits including items such as bento boxes, water bottles, thermoses and ice packs will allow attendees to create inexpensive and healthy lunches for their families.

**Status:** In progress. Launched August 2022.

- **Travelodge West teen leadership:** Carlingwood branch staff guided Carlington area teens to mentor younger children by planning multi-age social activities. Teen participants develop leadership skills and develop relationships in their communities.

**Status:** In progress. This series of workshops are scheduled to be complete in mid-November 2022.

- **Sensory program toolbox for children on the Autism Spectrum:** Ruth E. Dickinson branch staff developed specialized programs for children aged 0-6 living with Autism Spectrum Disorder. A toolbox has been created containing interactive sensory items such as beanbags, beads, and educational toys.

**Status:** In Progress. Anticipated launch November 2022.

- **Youth self-care kits:** Staff at the Rosemount branch partnered with local agencies to help at-risk youth maintain a healthy lifestyle and to prepare themselves for work or interviews. In addition to personal hygiene items the kits will direct youth towards employment resources and free gym memberships.

**Status:** In progress. Anticipated launch November 2022.

- **Book clubs for justice-involved adults:** Staff from the Main branch and Content Services have partnered with the John Howard Society to develop book clubs and provide reading material for justice-involved persons at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre.

**Status:** In progress. Anticipated launch November 2022.

- **Menstrual products in the library:** The Main and Nepean Centrepointe branches provide a safe, private, and stigma-free atmosphere for customers to have access to free menstrual products. The communities were identified by a partner organization as suitable locations. These locations include large populations of new Canadians, precariously housed families living in temporary housing, or street-involved residents.

**Status:** In progress. Anticipated launch November 2022.

- **Memory Activity Toolbox:** Each toolbox contains materials and activities to provide recreation and mental stimulation to adults with early, middle, and late-stage dementia. Stittsville branch staff will host adult customers and guide them through the many activities.  
**Status:** In progress. Anticipated launch November 2022.

As of October 1, 2022, 60% of the community development funds have been spent. Expenses include programming supplies, entry fees to public events, and the costs of paid presenters. The remaining funds have been encumbered and are anticipated to be spent by December 31, 2022.

These projects will be evaluated to measure success, lessons learned, and to assist in determining plans for community development activities in 2023. As an example, while several of these initial projects focused on a particular branch or neighborhood, many of these efforts have the potential to be expanded across the city.

#### **Next Steps: Serving vulnerable communities and community development work**

As noted above, community development work often reaches, or attempts to reach, vulnerable communities; however, community development work is broader in nature and includes engaging with other community members across the City.

Based on the success of the 2022 Community Development Fund staff recommend that the Board direct staff to include ongoing operational funding of \$50,000 in 2023 and subsequent budgets to continue efforts related to community development.

Staff will continue to engage in community conversations to guide this work, particularly with vulnerable communities. Staff will also continue to consider the needs of vulnerable communities when undertaking other strategic initiatives. For instance, the recent survey regarding hours of operation asked respondents to self-identify in several demographic categories that may overlap with the working definition of vulnerable communities. If this dataset is large enough to be considered statistically significant, there may be useful information for staff in this survey regarding the needs of vulnerable communities. Currently, staff anticipate presenting an update about survey results in November 2022. Subsequently to this, staff will examine how to integrate criteria considering the needs of vulnerable communities before proposing any future changes to regular hours of operation, including Sunday hours.

## **CONSULTATION**

OPL Managers (including the Manager, Alternative Services) and the Library Senior Management Team were consulted in the development of this report.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

Ottawa Public Library complies with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, (2005) in its operations. The projects enabled by the one-time community development fund allowed OPL to provide additional services to people with disabilities, seniors, and other groups at risk of exclusion, as identified in the City's Equity and Inclusion Lens.

## **BOARD PRIORITIES**

The recommendations in the report align with OPL's values, including community and inclusion. The report also fulfills one of the priorities under the strategic direction to redesign the Library experience, specifically the direction to assess the impacts of barriers to service.

## **BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate business analysis considerations associated with this report. Ensuring appropriate oversight of community development work may include future data requirements. Staff will report back to the Board regarding this matter.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the recommendations, the Board directs staff to include ongoing operational funding of \$50,000 in 2023 and subsequent budgets to continue efforts related to community development.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **INDIGENOUS AND GENDER EQUITY IMPLICATIONS**

Several of these projects have gender equity and Indigenous implications. As an example, the provision of menstrual products assists in addressing gender inequality, and participation in Pride events addressed needs expressed by members of the LGBTQI2S community.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

### **DISPOSITION**

Upon receipt of this report, staff will:

1. Include additional annual funds for community development work as part of the 2023 draft budget and subsequent budgets; and,
2. Consider the needs of vulnerable communities when determining criteria for changes to hours of operation.