

**Report to / Rapport au:**

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

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**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Danielle McDonald, Chief Executive Officer / Directrice générale**

*Contact Person / Personne ressource:*

*Catherine Seaman, Division Manager, Customer Experience / Directrice, Expérience  
clientèle*

*(613) 580-2424 x24259, Catherine.Seaman@BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca*

**File Number:** OPLB-2022-0502

**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**

According to the *Public Libraries Act*, 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 Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Board (the Board) has prepared a  
position statement regarding the code of conduct expected of the public. This position

statement is reviewed during each term of the Board, unless otherwise required or to align with other statements or policies, as applicable.

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. Customers agree to respect the Code of Conduct when registering for membership and using public computers and wifi, and the statement appears on the website and is displayed in branches as a reminder to people using Library services and spaces. The Code of Conduct applies to any person using OPL spaces, whether virtually or physically, and the expectation is that all persons must adhere to the Code of Conduct.

On January 16, 2016, the OPL Board approved the current version (Report #OPLB-2016-0121), 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**

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 thorough review of codes of conduct from urban public libraries across Canada and three (3) public libraries in the United States (New York, Chicago and Los Angeles). Staff focused on eight (8) from Canadian libraries that had been recently updated, with the following key findings:

- Consistent use of simple and direct language;
- Zero tolerance for abusive, discriminatory or violent behaviours; and,
- Inclusion of virtual points of contact (e.g. phone, email, chat, Zoom, etc.)

### **Analysis of incident reports and eviction notices**

OPL staff track library-related incident reports, with each incident linked to one of 15 broad categories. 70% of incidents and evictions at OPL locations over the review period were due to:

- Illegal activities or behaviours causing a disturbance, such as harassing or discriminatory language; and
- Violence towards employees, other Library users, and security guards.

It should be noted, that more than 99% of the reported incidents took place in branches, with the remainder occurring at Infoservice and Homebound.

### **Assessment of customer touch points**

Over the past two (2) years, OPL has increased its virtual service offerings and use of social media, as well as introduced live online programming and virtual Board meetings. As a result, interactions with the public in an online environment have increased significantly, with a rise in disruptive and harassing behaviours on the Library's virtual platforms (eg. "Zoom bombers" during virtual programs and Board meetings, aggressive behaviours over the phone, etc.). Although not reported through OPL's incident reporting process, incidents were shared anecdotally with managers. With new incident report training completed and a Code of Conduct with a stronger focus on virtual spaces, it is expected that incidents that take place in an online environment will be reported more accurately.

### **Employee feedback**

The current Code of Conduct was reviewed by the management team and the Customer Experience Advisory Committee (CEAC), which is made up of employees from across OPL.

Overall, the current Code of Conduct meets the need of employees working with the public. However, staff reported the following concerns:

- Length dissuades some persons from reading it;
- Vocabulary used is not clear to everyone;
- Statements are not direct enough;
- No language specific to harassing, discriminatory or violent behaviours; and,
- Focus is on physical spaces

### **Equity and Inclusion Review**

The City's Gender, Race and Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations, and Social Development Group (GREIRDI) reviewed the Code of Conduct Position Statement to

ensure an inclusion and equity lens was applied. In addition to minor edits, new language regarding sleeping in the Library was proposed.

## **Revisions**

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

- Language level and clarity of messaging;
- Types of public library spaces;
- Harassment, discrimination, and violence; and,
- Clarity regarding sleeping in the Library.

As a result, the proposed Code of Conduct Position Statement (see Document 2) has been modified to:

- Be simpler and more direct;
- Expand the definition of spaces to include the virtual environment;
- Include language specific to harassing, discriminatory and violent behaviours; and,
- Clarify the statement regarding sleeping in the Library.

In addition, staff have reworded the Position Statement from Customer Code of Conduct to Library Code of Conduct to include all people (not only customers) using public Library services and spaces.

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 provide a welcoming environment for all.

## **CONSULTATION**

Staff members of OPL's Customer Experience Advisory Committee, management and senior management teams, the Board's Governance Ad Hoc Committee and the City's Gender, Race and Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations and Social Development Group (GREIRDI) were consulted in the revision of the position statement.

Recently updated codes of conduct from other urban Canadian public libraries (North Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, BAnQ, Peterborough) were also reviewed.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

Ottawa Public Library supports and considers the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)* in its operations. The proposed Library Code of Conduct has been shortened and revised with simpler and more direct 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**

Incident reports and evictions are reviewed regularly to track the type and frequency of incidences, including those that violate the Library’s Code of Conduct. Of the 497 reports analyzed, 70% of incidents were due to illegal activities, violence or behaviours causing a disturbance, with 32% resulting in eviction. All but four (4) incidents reported took place in branches.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of translating and printing the revised Library Code of Conduct for posting in branches has been included in the Communications annual budget.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications associated with 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 (GREIRD). There are no Indigenous, gender or equity implications associated with this report.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The Library Code of Conduct Position Statement reduces the risk of harassment, discrimination, violence or illegal behaviours in Library spaces, and provides supporting documentation for the suspension of privileges, eviction, cost-recovery charges or prosecution of individuals.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no technological implications associated with this report.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 Customer Code of Conduct Position Statement (current)

Document 2 Library Code of Conduct Position Statement (revised)

## **DISPOSITION**

Once approved, the Library Code of Conduct Position Statement will be adapted into French and posted in appropriate formats on the OPL website and across OPL's branches. Related policies and procedures will be updated accordingly and communicated to employees.

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.