

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:

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File Number: OPLB-2020-1204

SUBJECT: 2021 Board Continuing Education Plan and Conference Attendance

OBJET: Plan de formation du Conseil d'administration de 2021 et participation aux conférences

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

- 1. Approve the 2021 Board Continuing Education Plan (Document 1); and,**
- 2. Approve the attendance of Trustees for the 2021 Conferences as proposed.**

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

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

- 1. Approuve le plan de formation continue de 2021;**
- 2. Approuve la participation des administrateurs et administratrices pour les conférences de 2021, tel que proposé.**

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Board Policy 003-OPLB Trustee Orientation and Continuing Education, trustees are encouraged during their term to attend relevant conferences, seminars, and workshops, as well as participate in provincial and national associations. Trustees are also encouraged to participate in several internal educational opportunities to learn more about the Library's programs and services (including Board educationals, generally presented during Board meetings, and field opportunities at OPL locations). Staff develop an annual Continuing Education Plan ("the Plan") for trustees, which highlights available continuing education opportunities for the upcoming year.

Continuing education for trustees is guided by the principles of fairness (for example, each trustee should have the opportunity to attend a minimum of one library conference during their four-year term) and fiscal responsibility (the Library budget). Preference is given to those who play an active role in a conference or workshop (e.g. presenter, panelist, Board's representative on an external body).

Conference or workshop attendance or participation, and the associated expenses, is subject to Board pre-approval, in keeping with two OPL Board policies: 002-OPLB Delegation of Authority ("the DOA") and 007-OPLB Trustee Expense Reimbursement, and the City of Ottawa Travel Guidelines.

Trustees attending a conference of a duration longer than 24 hours are required to provide a written report. The report will be submitted to the Board within two (2) Board meetings immediately following the conference. For conferences of less than 24 hours, trustees are required to provide a verbal report at the meeting immediately following the conference.

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Board approve the attached Plan (Document 1), and further approve the attendance of Trustees for 2021 Conferences as proposed. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the notion that learning comes in a variety of modes, including online and in person, and a variety of formats, including lectures, meetings, and field opportunities. The virtual nature of current opportunities means that costs for trustee attendance are lower, and, as a result, there is funding remaining for additional learning opportunities in 2021. The recommended Plan aligns with existing OPL policies, including the Trustee Orientation and Continuing

Education Policy, while acknowledging the reality that many 2021 opportunities for continuing education will be virtual, and that opportunities may change and evolve as the pandemic situation continues. The recommendations align with this approach, and the Plan has been designed with the required flexibility.

DISCUSSION

Each year, staff compile information regarding development opportunities for trustees. The 2021 plan includes three components: Board educationals, webinars and seminars, and meetings and conferences), as in previous years. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, most opportunities will be virtual, and some opportunities may be subject to change during the year.

Board Educationals

During 2020, staff provided one educational about Materials Delivery at the February Board meeting; three other proposed topics for educationals (Accessibility Services, Creating Leadership, and Service OPL) were deferred due to the pandemic. No field opportunities were provided in 2020, in keeping with the guidance of Ottawa Public Health and the provincial government regarding public gatherings during the pandemic. However, several trustees visited branches during the pandemic and received informal tours to learn about the Library's COVID protocols and recovery plans; staff are grateful for their support during this difficult year.

Staff recommend that the above educationals be scheduled for 2021, and that field opportunities be offered to trustees, virtually.

Webinars and Seminars

At this point, staff are exclusively recommending virtual webinars. In-person seminars may be considered in the fall, if the pandemic situation changes and relevant in-person seminars are being offered.

As 2021 marks the third year of this term of the Board, a time when trustees update the governance policies for the organization, the Plan includes webinars related to governance, specifically the "Governance Hub" suite of online learning offered by the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS). This program is designed to help all public library trustees in Ontario understand the roles and responsibilities of their positions.

The Plan also includes webinars hosted by the Education Institute (EI), a professional development and continuing education program for the library community developed by the Partnership of Provincial and Territorial Library Associations of Canada, and webinars hosted by the Urban Libraries Congress (ULC).

Meetings and Conferences

Again, given the pandemic, staff are exclusively recommending attendance at virtual meetings and conferences at this time, and may consider in-person events in the fall, if the pandemic situation changes and relevant in-person events are being offered. As a result, the recommended plan allocates spending for a very small portion (less than 1%) of the total annual budget for trustee continuing education. Note that some library associations and groups have not yet announced 2021 conferences and meetings (for example, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA)); others are not planning to host a conference or meeting in 2021 (for example, the Public Library Association (PLA)). Given the fact that per diem and travel costs will be eliminated until the pandemic situation changes, and the uncertainty regarding potential future 2021 continuing education opportunities, staff recommend this conservative approach to spending at this time.

Note that staff are not recommending that trustees attend the American Library Association Annual Conference & Exhibition, given the travel restrictions during the pandemic, and concerns regarding trustee safety, as it is currently slated to be held in person in Chicago in June 2021. If organizers of this conference decide to hold it virtually, however, staff will communicate with trustees about this additional opportunity.

Staff recommended trustee participation in two virtual conferences for 2021: the Ontario Library Association (OLA) Super Conference, and the American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting. A call for expressions of interest was circulated to trustees in November. Please see Document 1 for a table listing recommended conferences for 2021. Conferences or meetings announced after this report has been approved will be considered by staff and trustees on a first-come, first-serve basis, respecting the principles of fairness and fiscal responsibility.

Taking into consideration these principles, as well as trustee requests, staff recommend:

- Trustees Mary-Rose Brown attend the OLA Super Conference (total registration cost of approximately \$200.00);
- Vice-Chair Fisher attend the OLA Super Conference (total registration cost of \$200.00) given her role as a Member on the Large Urban Caucus for the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL);

At this point, no other trustees have expressed interest in attending the OLA Super Conference or the ALA Midwinter Meeting. The budget available would allow OPL to accommodate any other trustee interested in attending closer to the time.

Note that all budget figures are estimated in Canadian dollars.

CONSULTATION

As part of the consultation process, trustees were provided with details of the conferences (as available) and encouraged to express interest.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2021 Draft Budget includes \$38,000 for costs associated with Board initiatives. Total estimated costs per conference are noted above. Remaining funds will be allocated to registration fees for webinars, conferences, or meetings, or fees for in-person seminars, conferences, or meetings, should it become safe enough for trustees to attend in-person events later in 2021. Any residual funds will be flow through the operating budget as per normal practice, and will contribute to any surplus, or offset any year-end deficit, as applicable.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

BOARD PRIORITIES

The report aligns with OPL's value of Literacy, by cultivating the joys of learning and discovering. It also aligns with OPL Board policy 003: Trustee Orientation and Continuing Education, as well as 002-OPLB Delegation of Authority ("the DOA") and 007-OPLB Trustee Expense Reimbursement.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – OPL Board 2021 Continuing Education Plan

DISPOSITION

Pending Board approval, staff will coordinate registration fees. Travel arrangements, flights, and accommodations for 2021 travel will be coordinated if in-person conferences occur.

Participating trustees will submit reports as per Board policy. Reports will summarize key highlights and provide other relevant facts aimed at supporting information-sharing and Board development.