



# **Municipal Councillor's Public Library Handbook**

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Please note: This document is not legal advice and should be read together with the official language of the Public Libraries Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44) and regulation (R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 976). If there is any conflict between this document and the Libraries Act and Regulation 976, the Libraries Act and Regulation 976 are the final authorities.

Published by Ontario Library Service - North

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ISBN

## Introduction

Municipal councils work in partnership with public library boards to deliver library services that respond to community needs. Municipal councils are directly responsible for appointing public library boards and provide most of their funding.

The provincial government and its agencies play a significant role in providing leadership and training, and facilitate cooperation and coordination within the public library community.

As new municipal councils are elected, this handbook will offer an introduction to the significant contribution public libraries make to their community's quality of life, and the role of a public library board.

The Municipal Councillor's Handbook has been prepared to encourage understanding of the value of the public library in the community, and the relationship between municipal councils and public library boards.

## Why Public Libraries are Essential

Each library builds a unique mix of resources—collections, programming, services, etc. in response to community needs, enabling diverse people to improve their quality of life and to participate in the life of the community in meaningful ways. Their physical locations serve as community gathering places for people of all ages and walks of life to engage in lifelong learning, experience and explore new dimensions, meet other people and renew old friendships. Libraries level the playing field by providing access to resources for all and encouraging interactions between all social strata.

One of our provincial priorities is making better use of public spaces so residents have better access to services and activities. In many communities, the public library fills the valuable role of a community hub, offering services in collaboration with other community groups, and providing services that respond to community needs. This is especially true in our small, rural and remote communities where access to services, activities and entertainment is limited.

The Valuing Northern Libraries Toolkit considers the value of public libraries and their role as community hubs, building capacity for healthy, resilient people and places, especially in rural, Northern, First Nation and francophone communities. The framework is established on a social return on investment (SROI) model for library services. SROI looks at factors such as social, cultural, education, and economic benefits. The framework identifies seven areas where libraries contribute to building individual, organizational and community level capacity.

## Cultural Integrity and Regional Identity

Libraries play an important role in cultivating a sense of local identity and place. This is reflected through the library's special collections and programming related to local culture and history, the benefit of promoting local cultural and historical programs and events, and by providing advertising space to other community groups. Libraries collaborate with community partners to collect, record, and digitize local history including oral histories. Local language preservation is supported through its collections and programs, and access to multilingual collections depending on community need.

## Social Inclusion

Social inclusion and mental health are concerns across the north. Libraries offer a safe community gathering space that is open to all: the homeless, the mentally ill, the unemployed, children or teens, young families or seniors, or new residents. Libraries level the economic playing field by providing access to costly resources such as special collections, computers, internet access, and new technologies. This is especially true in small, rural and remote communities where the digital divide is more prevalent, where incomes, job opportunities, and poor access to broadband prevent people from participating fully in services and activities that are more accessible in larger urban communities. Libraries also provide access for the housebound and institutionalized.

## Cognitive and Literacy Development

Libraries provide a public space where parents can bring babies, toddlers and older children to participate in programs that develop social skills and a love of reading. Collections support the recreational and educational needs of children including access to electronic resources and an introduction to technology. This is valuable for families without access to home computers or the internet. Children can develop their tech skills and access homework assignments online at the library. Libraries support the needs of home-schooled families and often provide a space where families may meet.

## Health and Wellness

It is critical for residents to access reliable and valid health resources. These are available at the library, in print, DVD or digital format. Community members may attend health-related programs offered in partnership with other providers, such as diabetes, substance abuse, men's issues, nutrition, parenting, and dementia.

## Engaged Citizens and Safer Communities

The library is a community meeting space where people from all walks of life meet and socialize, helping to strengthen a community's social economy and overall resiliency. Through its volunteer programs, residents find something meaningful to do and develop relationships with other like-minded community members. Students earn volunteer hours and learn valuable workplace skills. Board members learn governance skills such as finance, planning, personnel and advocacy.

## Entertainment and Enjoyment

Libraries provide entertainment and enjoyment to the community through their every-changing print and electronic collections, and as a place to hang out. For remote, rural and northern communities, these may be of greater importance than in large urban communities. Seniors and other adults participate in tech classes to learn to use new technologies and social media, or participate in various workshops including writing workshops, digital photography, yoga, or how to use ukeleles.

## Economic Development

Libraries attract outside funding, spend capital dollars locally, and source local materials and labour. Libraries boost the local economy by providing direct jobs and spin-off jobs.

Libraries play a role in facilitating re-entry into the job market with residents accessing GED programs or other education support. Residents access the library's computers and software to create resumes and find and apply for work. Small and home-based businesses and tourists use the library to access office equipment such as the internet, fax, photocopiers, laminators, and various other services. Tourists visit the library to learn more about the community and what's available.

Municipal councillors may read about other public library value projects by clicking the Library Value icon.

## Ontario Public Libraries: One of the finest public access information services in the world!

In the year 2016

- 99.5% of Ontarians had access to public library service
- 93% of organized municipalities were under public library bylaws
- 1,141 public library service points delivered public library service to Ontarians
- 9,995 people were employed by public libraries
- 14,298 people volunteered at public libraries

### And Growing...

	Year 2016
Population served	10,824,494
Number of public computer workstations	7,048
Direct circulation of library materials	95,249,619
Items lent via interlibrary loan	183,750
Library visits made in person	60,967,000
Social media visits	26,800,488
Program attendance	4,512,831

**PUBLIC LIBRARIES ACT, R.S.O.  
1990, c. P.44**

For information about programs and services offered, please visit the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport website.

## Establishing a Library Board

Public libraries are governed by public library boards which are corporations established under the Public Libraries Act.

A MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARY is established by the passing of a municipal bylaw. The municipal clerk is required to promptly mail or deliver a copy of the bylaw to the Minister.

A UNION PUBLIC LIBRARY is established by the councils of two or more municipalities that agree to establish a public library board .

A COUNTY LIBRARY is established by county bylaw. Resolutions of at least two thirds of the municipalities forming part of a county are required for the establishment of a county library. When a county library is established, the municipalities which do not wish to take part are not required to do so.

## Making Appointments to the Library Board

Library boards are legal entities established under the Public Libraries Act (R.S.O. 1990, c.P.44.) and the Corporations Act. A public library board is appointed by the municipal or county council at the start of each new council term to govern the affairs of the library and to make policy. The Public Libraries Act designates the library board as the decision-making and legal authority of the library.

A PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD is composed of at least five members, appointed by the municipal council. The number of council members on a public library board is limited to one less than a majority of the board.

A UNION PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD is composed of at least five members appointed by the councils of the affected municipalities in the proportions and in the manner specified in the agreement establishing the union public library. The number of council members on a union public library board is limited to one less than a majority of the board.

A COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD is composed of at least five members appointed by the county council. The number of council members on a county library board is limited to a bare majority of the board.

A library board represents the community it serves and its members should reflect its diverse populations. Other factors to keep in mind are:

- Interest in public library service
- Experience on other boards
- Knowledge of the community
- Aptitude for planning and advocacy
- Readiness to devote time and effort
- Ability to work in a political environment

## Making Appointments to the Library Board continued

The clerk of the appointing municipality is required to advertise vacancies on the library board “by publishing a notice of them, inviting applications in a newspaper of general circulation in the municipality”. This notice provides interested citizens with the opportunity to apply for the available position(s) and for council to carefully select the best possible candidate(s).

Board appointments are made at the first meeting of council in each term, or it must do so at any regular or special meeting held within sixty days of its first meeting. The existing library board continues until new appointments are made.

The term of the board is the same as that of the appointing body.

The following persons are qualified for appointment to a public library board:

- A person who is a member of the appointing council, or
- A person who is at least eighteen years old, is a Canadian citizen, and:
  - resides in the municipality for which the board is established or the area served by the board in the case of a county library board;
  - resides in a municipality, local service board or Indian band that contracts with the library board for service;
  - is a member of a second board that has entered into a contract with the board to purchase from it library services for the residents of the second board; and
  - is not employed by the board or by the municipality or county or, in the case of a union board, by any of the affected municipalities.

For more information about public library boards in Ontario, please visit the Ontario Library Boards Association website.

## Powers and Duties of the Library Board

Section 20 of the *Public Libraries Act* outlines certain powers and duties of a library board.

A board shall:

- Seek to provide, in cooperation with other boards, a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community’s unique needs
- Seek to provide library services in the French language, where appropriate
- Operate one or more libraries and ensure that they are conducted in accordance with the Act and its regulations
- Fix the times and places for board meetings and the mode of calling and conducting them, and ensure that full and correct minutes are kept
- Make an annual report to the Minister and make any other reports or provide any information required by the Act and regulations or requested by the Minister from time to time
- Make provision for insuring the board’s real and personal property
- Take proper security for the treasurer

A board may:

- Operate special services in connection with a library as it considers necessary
- Appoint such committees as it considers expedient

In addition, a board may:

- Make rules
  - o For the use of library services
  - o For the admission of the public to the library
  - o For the exclusion from the library of persons who behave in a disruptive manner or cause damage to library property
  - o Imposing fines for breaches of the rules
  - o Suspending library privileges for breaches of the rules
  - o Regulating all other matters connected with the management of the library and library property
- Impose fees for services not defined in the Public Libraries Act as free, for use of library services by persons who do not reside in the area of the board’s jurisdiction, and for the use of parts of a library building not being used for public library purposes.

For more information about public library legislation and to read General Questions and Answers for Public Libraries, please visit the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports website Public Library Legislation.

## Responsibilities of the Library Board

### Officers of the Board

A library board must elect a chair. It must also appoint a chief executive officer (CEO), secretary and treasurer. The offices of CEO, secretary and treasurer may be held by a single person.

### Treasurer

A library board must appoint a treasurer, who receives and accounts for all the board's money; opens an account or accounts in the name of the board in a chartered bank, trust company or credit union approved by the board; deposits all money received on the board's behalf to the credit of that account or accounts; and disburses the money as the board directs.

## Responsibilities for Staff

The board's responsibility for staff is to

- Set the policies, plans and budgets within which the chief executive officer (CEO) operates the library and manages staff
- Hire the best CEO for the library
- Set the CEO's terms of employment
- Delegate authority for library operations to the CEO
- Evaluate the CEO based on performance goals, often related to the library's strategic plan

Boards ensure the library is properly run through planning and policy and by hiring a paid library expert. A major responsibility of the board is to hire a chief executive officer:

*A board shall appoint a chief executive officer who shall have general supervision over and direction of the operation of the public library and its staff, shall attend all board meetings and shall have the other powers and duties that the board assigns to him or her from time to time.*

The library board employs library staff:

*A board may appoint and remove such officers and servants as it considers necessary, determine the terms of their employment, fix their remuneration and prescribe their duties.  
A board may also provide pensions for employees.*

## Responsibility for Training

The board's responsibility for training is to

- Identify core services
- Approve a training policy
- Approve a training budget

The board approves a training policy and budget to ensure all staff as well as the CEO and board members receive ongoing training to acquire the skills needed to meet changing needs. Through the planning process, the board identifies core services and the CEO identifies core staff competencies. These core competencies drive the staff training plan. The CEO implements the board-approved staff training plan within the approved budget.

## Financial Oversight

The board's financial responsibilities are clearly laid out in the Public Libraries Act.

The board's responsibility for finances is to:

- Oversee and monitor finances and the library audit
- Determine how much money the library needs to operate and meet community needs
- Appoint the auditor
- Advocate with municipal council for needed funding
- Establish and review financial policies
- Understand the implications of a budget and financial reporting
- Demonstrate accountability to council, the province, and the community
- Act with due diligence, honestly and in good faith and in the best interests of the corporation.

Municipal governments provide the majority of operating funds for most public libraries in Ontario. In 2016, the municipal share of public library operating funding in Ontario was \$631,962,146, or 90%. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport issues an annual public library operating grant to legally-constituted public library boards. In addition, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport provides special funding to public libraries from time to time through strategic funding programs and other special purpose funding.

The board is accountable to the municipal council, the community, and the province to guarantee allotted funds are spent to meet community needs and in accordance with the budget. The board monitors the budget and is the ultimate decision maker with fiduciary responsibility.

## Financial Oversight continued

### Budget Estimates

Library boards submit estimates to their appointing council or councils annually. The estimates are submitted in the form requested by the council(s) and must include all amounts required during the year for the purposes of the board. If there is more than one appointing council the estimates must include a statement on the proportion of the estimates to be charged to each municipality. Council may, in the approval of the board's estimates or at any time at the board's request, authorize the board to apply a specified amount of percentage of the money paid to it otherwise than in accordance with the estimates as approved.

### Administrative Arrangements with Municipality

A library board may enter into an agreement with its municipality for provision of administrative functions. However, where such administrative agreements exist, directions regarding the disbursement of library funds remain the prerogative of the library board.

### Real Property

The board may, with the consent of the appointing council, or, where there is a union board, the consent of a majority of the councils involved:

Acquire land required for its purpose by purchase, lease, expropriation or otherwise

- Erect, add to or alter buildings
- Acquire or erect a building larger than is required for library purposes, and lease any surplus part of the building
- Sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land or building that is no longer required for the board's purposes

### Debentures

The sums required by a public or union library board required for the purposes of acquiring land, for building, erecting or altering a building or for acquiring books or other things required for a newly established library may, on the application of the board, be raised by the issue of municipal debentures.

### Re-imbusement of Expenses

A library board may reimburse its members for proper travelling and other expenses incurred in carrying out their duties as members.

## Other Sources of Public Library Funding

### Contracts for Service

A municipality may enter into a contract for library service with a public library board, union board or county library board, instead of establishing its own library.

Municipalities that contract for library service may receive annual operating funding from the province. To be eligible for this funding, a contracting body must complete and submit to the Ministry an annual survey issued by the Ministry along with a completed application for funding, financial information as requested and a copy of the contract.

### Grants

Other sources of library funding include: project grants from the provincial government, grants from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, special funding from municipal and other levels of government, funding from private foundations and funds generated internally by public libraries through rental charges for meeting rooms and equipment, copying fees, late charges, fund-raising, donations and bequests.

### Fees

Admission to the library and use in the library of library materials must be free of charge.

The following services must be provided to the public free-of-charge:

- Using reference and information services as the board considers practicable
- Reserving and borrowing circulating materials specified in Regulation 976: R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 976, s. 2.
  - o Books with hard, soft and paper covers
  - o Periodicals
  - o Newspapers
  - o Audio materials designed for people with disabilities
  - o Sound recordings
  - o Audio and video cassettes
  - o Tape recordings
  - o Video discs
  - o Motion pictures
  - o Film strips
  - o Film loops
  - o Micro materials in all formats
  - o Computer software, and
  - o Multi-media kits

A public library may charge people who do not reside in the area of the board's jurisdiction for services, providing their municipality, local service board or band council has not contracted for service with the library.

## Strategic Planning

The board's responsibility for planning is to:

- Establish a library mission statement
- Develop strategic plan, goals and objectives in the best interests of the community
- Identify service priorities
- Monitor and evaluate services to ensure the library is responding to community needs, and achieving its goals
- Secure funding to support the plan and library operations

The *Public Libraries Act* states that boards are to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community's unique needs. The board is responsible for planning library services that meet community needs by consulting with the community. Strategic planning defines the library's role in the community, outlines the library's future goals, and establishes objectives and actions. Many boards review and revise plans in each board appointment cycle.

### Library Environment

Library boards need to be aware of the environment in which it operates and consider implications for the local library. For example:

- Changing and increasing demands on library resources (e.g. staffing, funding, technology, infrastructure, time) impact a library's ability to offer needed services.
- Electronic formats (e-books, e-audio books, etc.), web-based services, and technology-based services are increasingly relevant in libraries and effect decisions about services and collections.
- Community members increasingly turn to library staff for help with digital devices, technology training, and for access to online resources.
- Library buildings are increasingly more collaborative, multi-functional community spaces.
- Libraries continue to cope with inadequate facilities that neither meets community needs nor legislative requirements (e.g. AODA).

### First Nation Truth and Reconciliation

On December 15th 2015, the Government of Canada released the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. This sets out a plan and strategy to acknowledge the important impact of First Nation culture, tradition and representation in Canadian society.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) has drafted a response and commitment to the (TRC) report. It encourages libraries, archives and institutions of memory to more fully become cultural centres representing the Indigenous populations served. This will impact the way libraries, archives and institutions of memory plan their facilities, collections, services and programs.

## Policy Development

A major governance responsibility of the board is to set policy. The board's responsibility for policy development is to:

- Discuss policy issues in relation to a library's philosophy and priorities
- Adopt and approve policy
- Review and revise policy on a regular basis

Policies define the library's philosophy, principles, and rules and are integrated with the library's mission. Policies provide the framework for all library activities.

## Advocacy

The board's responsibility for advocacy is to:

- Understand the board's role in advocacy
- Understand community priorities and how the library supports these priorities
- Build relationships with council members, elected officials and the community
- Communicate how the library supports community priorities

The board advocates for the library's services with the municipal council and the community, reporting on the library's effectiveness in meeting community needs. Advocacy identifies how the library helps build community capacity and advances municipal goals.

## Province-wide Organizations and Programs Providing Resources and Support for Public Libraries

### Ontario Library Service Agencies

The Northern Ontario Library Service (OLS - North) and the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) are funded by the provincial government to:

- Coordinate provincial training programs for public library workers (e.g., EXCEL) and board members and provide access to various types of training (e.g., library skills development, board development, technology).
- Provide professional library consulting to public library staff and boards.
- Provide infrastructure for a provincial database of all materials in Ontario public libraries (Information Network for Ontario - INFO) and support resource sharing between libraries.
- Provide infrastructure and support for a cooperative automated library system (Joint Automation Server Initiative - JASI).
- Provide opportunities for library staff and trustees to network and share ideas (Networking Groups, Library Committees, Trustee Councils, First Nations Gathering).
- Encourage and facilitate the sharing of resources among libraries by coordinating the selection, purchase and exchange of goods and services among libraries.
- Administer consortia purchasing initiatives on behalf of public libraries.

### Ontario Public Library Guidelines

The Ontario Public Library Guideline is a province-wide library accreditation program, developed and monitored by representatives of the Ontario public library community. Participation in the program is voluntary.

This program is administered through the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council, which reports to Ontario Library Service – North.

The purpose of the program is two-fold:

- To raise the level of public library service in a consistent way across the province; and
- To recognize, through a system of peer accreditation, the achievement of libraries which have achieved standards defined in the Guidelines.

The **Ontario Library Boards' Association (OLBA)** is a division of the Ontario Library Association (OLA) and represents public library board members (trustees) on issues relating to their areas of responsibility.

The **Federation of Ontario Public Libraries** is a membership-based organization committed to advancing the interests of Ontario public libraries across the province and with all levels of government.

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## Endnotes

Valuing Northern Libraries Toolkit. <http://home.olsn.ca/resources/valuing-northern-libraries-toolkit>

For a more detailed summary comparison please visit: Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Accessed on May 30, 2018. <http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/libraries/statistics.shtml>

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