



ONTARIO LIBRARY BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

MARJ PORIER, PRESIDENT



This past year was an interesting one, as I started out as OLBA Vice President, however following the resignation of the OLBA President for 2022/2023 in the spring of 2023, I assumed the role of President.

I am grateful for the support of the OLA Board and staff for helping me transition into this role as seamlessly as possible.

Our meetings are held once a month, on alternating Thursday late afternoon and Saturday mornings. This was established to accommodate our Board members who live in a different time zone. For those of you who aren't aware, Ontario does have two time zones, EST and CST. The time zones change about an hour west of Thunder Bay.

Good News Stories

The Board began its meetings with good news stories. These were offered by current Board members and included mention of the successes of Drag Queen Story Hour in some libraries and ribbon cuttings for two new vending machines in Oshawa. I encourage you to submit good news stories to Inside OLBA. We would love to hear from you.

Governance

The Board strongly recommends that local Library Boards review the "Cut to the Chase" document that was published by OLA. It is an excellent resource which can easily be broken up to sections so that you could spend some time at each of your monthly library meetings discussing it. If you Google Cut to the Chase, Ontario Library Association, you will find valuable information which stretches the points in the document into more detail. If your Board is not already including this in their agenda under Governance, I strongly encourage you to bring this back to your members. No matter how experienced a person is on a library board, best practices for both governance and advocacy mean that there should be a continuous review, rewording and action by the membership.

Library Days At Queen's Park

This brings me to 2023 Library Days, which took place November 14 & 15, 2023 in Toronto. As President of OLBA, I am also a member of the OLA board and I have been attending these meetings as well. Normally they are done virtually but we were fortunate to have a face to face meeting on November 13. We got a lot of business covered. It was a long day, but we all left satisfied with the work we completed. The highlight of this meeting for me was the position that OLA took on banning and restricting books in school boards, particularly books that reflect 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives or featuring racialized characters and those with diverse gender identities and the way which these have been targeted. OLA took a very strong stance and stand in solidarity with our members in defending the fundamental right for children to read and access information. We also stand with 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, racialized and all other underrepresented people whose voices have been suppressed. You can read the entire position, which was passed unanimously by the OLA Council, on the OLA website.

Library Day took place over two days. The focus of these meetings was to advocate for the public library sector's current joint priorities:

- The creation of an Ontario Digital Public Library (ODPL)
- The need to increase the First Nations Salary Supplement

- The need to increase the funding for Ontario Public Libraries Operating Grant (PLOG)

I think it is safe to say that most of these meetings went well, however there were a few that were quite negative. All and all I believe that Library Days at Queen's Park was quite useful and I look forward to next year's.

Awards

OLBA has three awards are presented at the Super Conference Gala. Nominations were received for the James Bain Award, The Les Fowlie Intellectual Freedom Award and the Joyce Cunningham Award. The nominations for the awards is a testament to the incredible work that is going on in Public Libraries across the province.

The OLA Les Fowlie Intellectual Freedom and the Joyce Cunningham Awards both went to the Durham Region Public Libraries and Durham Region Children's Aid Society for their collaboration on Drag Queen Storytime.

The OLBA W.J. Robertson Medallion was presented to Christine Row, from Mississippi Mills Public Library.

The OPLA James Bain Medallion was presented to Paul Ainslie, from the Toronto Public Library Board.

OLBA also gave three bursaries for first time attendees of the Super Conference. Two were given to board trustees who come a center where the population is 15,000 people or less. One was awarded to a board trustee from a population over 15,000 people.

Good byes and Hello's

This year we said good bye to OLA's executive director, Shelagh Paterson, who left OLA on August 31, 2023. She is missed but we do wish her all the very best as she transitions into a new and exciting chapter of her life. Assuming the role of ED is Michelle Arbuckle, a name that is familiar to many of us who have been around for a while. Michelle's transition into this position has been seamless from my perspective, and it has been a pleasure to work with her.

We also said hello and welcome to OLBA Council to Nick van Velzen, from the Hamilton Public Library Board.

We are still have vacancies who would be representing the North East and also the North West. If you are interested or know of someone who might be interested, please come and see me!

Super Conference - Boot Camp

It goes without saying that organizing and securing presenters for the 2024 Boot Camp which is IN PERSON for the first time since Pre-Covid days. We are beyond excited with this and really hope that you find this day useful. Thank you so much to Nathan Etherington, who has acted as OLBA's Super Conference planner this year and helped to organize the greater conference program and today's boot camp program.

This concludes my report. It's been an honour to serve as your president, and I look forward to many more exciting things, as we move forward with both the boot camp and advocating for Public Libraries in Ontario.