

# **OPL's Impact:**

## **Inspiring and Empowering Ottawa**

### **2024 Annual Report**



Ottawa Public  
Library



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**Message from**

# **Matthew Luloff**

**Chair of the Ottawa Public Library Board &  
Councillor for Orléans East-Cumberland**

Looking back on 2024, I am pleased with the achievements at Ottawa Public Library (OPL). This past year has been a testament to our progress as we enhanced services, expanded access, and prepared for the opening of the new Central branch at Ādisōke.

The OPL Board has worked diligently to advance the OPL Strategic Plan (2023-2028), mindful of Ottawa's evolving needs. We reaffirmed our commitment to reducing barriers and making library services more inclusive. Additionally, we advanced several strategic items that help move the organization forward, such as: approving the Asset Management Plan to support investments in collections, tools, and spaces; advising staff on a new brand strategy, and; guiding the development of Service Strategies, set to come to the Board in 2025.

Looking ahead, I'm excited for the future as we continue building a vibrant library system. One where everyone feels welcome, where diverse voices and perspectives are included, and where the community can come together to learn, grow, and thrive.

Thank you for supporting OPL. It is through your engagement and participation that we can continue to make a positive impact. Together, we're shaping a stronger, more connected Ottawa.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Luloff', with a stylized flourish at the end.



**Message from**  
**Sonia Bebbington**  
**Chief Librarian & Chief Executive Officer**

Reflecting on 2024, I am immensely proud of the strides OPL has made in serving our community.

At OPL, we provide access to books, learning, leisure, and opportunities. The Library is a cornerstone of our community; a place where ideas flourish and everyone is welcome. This year, we expanded services to better meet the diverse needs of our city: we introduced a Chromebook lending program, removed barriers by eliminating the need for a library card to access Wi-Fi at all branches and the Bookmobile, and confirmed more accessible service hours for rural branches.

Our commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, to working with the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation, and to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action remains constant, rooted in our core values and our responsibility to listen and learn. In 2024, we supported engagement with Indigenous stories and contemporary voices by delivering new collection resources in English, French, Cree, Inuktitut, and Ojibwe as well as planning varied and high-quality programming provided by members of Indigenous communities.

One of the most exciting developments is the expansion of OPL. The future Central branch at Ādisōke is coming together beautifully, and planning on the future Riverside South branch has begun. OPL is evolving to better serve our community of communities.

I am deeply grateful to the dedicated employees for their hard work, and to our clients—readers, learners, and creators—who inspire us every day.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sonia Bebbington".

# Board Members



**Councillor  
Matthew Luloff  
(Chair)**



**Kathy Fisher  
(Vice-Chair)**



**Councillor  
Jessica Bradley  
(Trustee)**



**Mary-Rose Brown  
(Trustee)**



**Alison Crawford  
(Trustee)**



**Councillor  
Rawlson King  
(Trustee)**



**Councillor  
Catherine Kitts  
(Trustee)**



**Harvey A. Slack  
(Trustee)**



**Adam Smith  
(Trustee)**

## Senior Management Team

**Sonia Bebbington**  
Chief Librarian &  
Chief Executive Officer

**Anna Basile**  
Deputy CEO,  
Corporate Services

**Craig Ginther**  
Division Manager,  
Facility and Technology Services

**Sarah Macintyre**  
Division Manager,  
Client Services

**Myra Skaronski**  
Division Manager,  
Branch Services

**Alexandra Yarrow**  
Program Manager,  
Board and Strategic Services



# Collections

“My family and I visit the library at least once a week. We often have a variety of books on hold for us: cookbooks and graphic novels for me, novels, non-fiction, and DVDs for my husband and children’s literature for my kids (picture books when they were young and now teen titles). We also borrow Switch games and CDs. We use services such as Kanopy and Mango languages. I so value the amazing collection of physical and online resources.”

## Chromebook Lending

Many people in Ottawa still don’t have easy access to a computer at home. To help bridge this gap OPL expanded its Chromebook Lending Program in early 2024.

**300 Chromebooks borrowed more than 1,000 times. High demand ensures nearly all devices are in use at any given time.**

**OPL was the first library in Canada to loan**

**Chromebooks**, and in recent years, has partnered with 49 institutions to loan both Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots. Clients can borrow Chromebooks for home use with an extended 90-day loan period and easy returns.

## Decodable Books

To support literacy in our community and spark the love of reading at a young age, OPL expanded its **Decodable Books** collection, which are designed to build confidence in beginner readers.

## Graphic Novels

Graphic novels continue to be popular for all ages, especially among children, with a 13.67% increase from 2023-2024, driven by series like *The Babysitters’ Club* and *Dogman*.

## Read-Along Books

New interactive Read-Along books were introduced to enhance early literacy for young readers. These books include audio narration that helps children follow along as they read, making learning more engaging and fun!

## Book Sanctuary

OPL joined the Book Sanctuary movement, following the lead of public libraries in Chicago, Calgary, and Toronto, to protect the right to read amid increasing challenges to freedom of expression. This reinforces OPL’s role as a space for open dialogue, learning, and the free exchange of ideas, upholding the fundamental values of literacy and inclusion in our community.





# Expertise

“After losing vision in one eye from a blood clot, I decided to ask one of our librarians how to use their audiobooks on my computer & smartphone. A one-hour appointment was arranged within that week to teach me how. This lifted my spirits so high and helped me through a difficult time.”

## Branch Highlights

- The Ruth E. Dickinson branch hosted a robotics event showcasing innovations in **robotics, smart mobility, and technology**, featuring Area X.O, InDro Robotics, Algonquin College, and local school clubs.
- The Carlingwood branch ensured every student at Our Lady of Fatima School had a **valid OPL membership**, supporting a love of reading and lifelong learning.
- A fully booked fall schedule for **school visits** brought hundreds of students into the Blackburn Hamlet branch to explore library resources and discover the joy of reading.
- To mark **National Volunteer Week (April 14-20)**, OPL recognized more than **450 volunteers**, who contributed more than **7,000 hours**, including Teen Advisory Groups.
- **Gaming E-Sports Tournament for at-risk youth:** Highly successful e-sports tournaments in priority neighborhoods at Greenboro and St-Laurent branches.
- As a public-facing organization, the Library supports **emergency-response capabilities** in branches by having AEDs onsite. Expanding on that initiative, Naloxone kits were made available to assist those responding to potential opioid overdoses, and OPL partnered with Ottawa Public Health to offer a series of Naloxone information workshops to the public.



## Local Impacts

A key element of this year's success is the new Community Development team. The team works with branches, City partners, and community groups to understand community strengths and challenges and to respond to them through library programs, expertise, collections, tools, and spaces.

- **Calm Kits** (Beaverbrook branch): Developed in collaboration with Chrysalis House, these mindfulness kits provided stress-reducing tools and were paired with an in-person guided mindfulness program with a registered psychotherapist.
- **Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre Book Club** (Content Services, Sunnyside branch and Greenboro branch): Two book clubs—one for women and one for men—were established at the OCDC, ensuring access to books and fostering literary discussion for incarcerated individuals.
- **Recreation Passes** (Rosemount branch): In partnership with Parkdale Food Centre, OPL offered free passes for clients experiencing barriers to hygiene facilities, recognizing the importance of dignity and self-care.
- **Food Literacy Lunch Kits:** Designed to support children in high-needs areas, these kits provided tools for affordable and healthy meal preparation, along with access to OPL's food literacy resources—such as cookbooks and nutrition guides—to help families cook with confidence.
- **Branch employees worked, and built relationships, with close to 200 community groups** including Odawa Native Friendship Centre, Refugee 613, Caldwell Family Centre, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, Sadaqa Food Bank, and The Dementia Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County.

## Intellectual Freedom

In 2024, OPL reinforced its commitment to intellectual freedom through key policy updates such as removing web filtering for legal content, revising its reconsideration process for programs and displays, updating policies on meeting rooms and public network access, and introducing new signage and online resources for transparency.





# Programs



“

I will never forget one visit to Ottawa Public library. It was a cold winter afternoon, and I was eager to get the kids out of the house. We sat there on the library floor staring up at the musicians, instruments in hand, singing into the microphones. They sang in Cree, English and French. Their voices carried messages of hope with sparkling eyes and a deep moving passion. I was so moved by their songs.

”

## Freedom to Read Week

Freedom to Read Week held in February each year highlights the importance of free expression and the library's role in ensuring access to diverse, lawful information in a democratic society.

- **John Ibbitson**, award-winning author and journalist, explored historical works and the “War on Words,” drawing an audience of **122 online and 72 in person**.
- **Lawrence Hill**, celebrated novelist, discussed his literary journey and censorship challenges, including the U.S. title change of *The Book of Negroes*, engaging **89 virtual attendees and 166 in person**.
- During the week, a **video series** was available which featured diverse perspectives on free expression through short-form content.



## One eRead Canada

In April, OPL partnered with the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) and Library Archives Canada (LAC) for **One eRead / Un livrel Canada**, the country's largest bilingual digital book club, marking its first in-person/hybrid edition since 2019. Readers nationwide accessed Dimitri Nasrallah's *Hotline* without waitlists, fostering discussions on belonging, identity, and resilience.



## Solar Eclipse 2024

OPL distributed more than **10,000 free solar eclipse glasses**, **with informational handouts** – providing free access to eye protection to safely experience the eclipse. The purchase of the glasses was supported by FOPLA - Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association. The solar eclipse social media post reached **40,082 people on Facebook**.

## Library Month “Joy of Reading”

OPL’s celebratory Library Month campaign promoted the love of books and reading!

With a **Golden Ticket** activity, library clients could discover golden tickets hidden in branches, redeemable for limited-edition book bags.

Highlights included a sold-out keynote with comedian and author **Steve Patterson**, drawing **450 attendees**, and a creative, bilingual author event with **Marie-Louise Gay** that engaged both children and adults.

## Awesome Authors

The 2024 Awesome Authors contest received **645 submissions**. This annual contest encourages young people aged 9 to 18 to develop their creative writing skills.

# Out in the Community

## OPL’s Participation in Capital Pride

Employees and volunteers walked alongside the Bookmobile to connect with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and to continue the conversation on intellectual freedom.

## Salon du livre de l’Outaouais

Employees showcased OPL’s French-language collections, connecting with authors, publishers, and hundreds of readers of all ages.

## Ottawa ComicCon

Employees at OPL’s booth at Ottawa ComicCon promoted collections, online resources like Hoopla and ToutApprendre, and Imagine Space, drawing **530 interactions** throughout the event.







## Indigenous Programs

For **National Indigenous History Month**, OPL offered **eight programs** (six in English, two in French) featuring interactive music workshops, Indigenous language exploration, and traditional crafts. Highlights included:

- **Abenaki artist Mali**

**Obomsawin's** virtual concert, still available on OPL's YouTube page.



<https://bit.ly/OPLMaliconcert>



- In partnership with Manotick and Area Centre for Arts and Wellness, OPL introduced **Powwow** workouts for seniors, blending culture and movement.
- On June 11, OPL and the National Arts Centre hosted **Oji-Cree/nehiyaw, Two-Spirit author Joshua Whitehead** to discuss *Making Love with the Land*, aligning with National Indigenous History Month and International Pride Month programming.
- Summer Solstice celebration saw the **Bookmobile at Mādahòkì Farm**, engaging visitors and promoting Ādisōke and OPL's Indigenous collection.

In September, OPL and Library and Archives Canada hosted three **Algonquin Storytelling and Basket Making workshops** with the Brascoupé sisters, three local Indigenous artists whose art will be featured in Ādisōke.

For the **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR)**, OPL launched the annual **NDTR Learning and Action Space**, featuring in-branch activities and Canadian Geographic's Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada map. On September 30, OPL, in partnership with the Ottawa International Writers Fest and Library and Archives Canada, hosted an author talk with **Tanya Talaga** on her book *The Knowing*, which explores her family's connection to the history of Indigenous children sent to residential schools and Indian hospitals.



# Tools

“The Imagine Space is truly my happy place. Discovering this space has changed my life. It’s a place where ideas flourish, projects come to life, and connections are forged. As an artist, I’m continually amazed by the opportunity to bring my visions to life with the laser cutters.”

## Simplified Wi-Fi Access: No Library Card required

OPL removed the **library card requirement** for Wi-Fi access. Visitors and clients can now connect to Wi-Fi easily and enjoy **seamless internet access** across all branches and at Bookmobile stops.

## Creative Energy in the Imagine Space

- The **Epilog Helix laser cutter** was the most booked tool, with more than **1,000 hours of use**, followed closely by the **MakerBot 3D printers**.
- Tools supporting media digitization—such as **VHS conversion stations, film digitizers, and image scanning workstations**—were also in high demand, reflecting a strong community interest in preserving personal archives.
- Other frequently used tools included the **Cricut Maker, embroidery and sewing machines, and digital editing stations**, all contributing to a vibrant culture of creativity and learning across branches.







# Spaces

“Although we had internet in our home, whenever I wanted to work on my assignments, there was nowhere to sit with my laptop aside from the couch. You wouldn’t think a highschooler would need something as simple as a table and chair, but at the time, it was the biggest impact the library had on my day-to-day life.”

## Branch Anniversaries

- **Cumberland Anniversary:** OPL celebrated **25 years** of serving the Cumberland community in the current location with **collections, programs, and unique services** like the musical instrument lending and VHS conversion. Almost 900 community members participated.
- **Stittsville Anniversary:** **886 visitors** joined us in celebrating **50 years** of the Stittsville branch with a day of festivities including a puppet show featuring “Rock the Arts.”

## Facility Enhancements

The in-branch experience continues to improve thanks to several upgrades made over the past year:

- **Modernized elevators** at the Rideau and Nepean CentrepoinTE branches, **new roofing** at the Alta Vista branch, and **improved parking** and exteriors at the Carlingwood and Main branches.
- **Better Accessibility:** A new universal washroom is now available at the Stittsville branch.
- **A More Welcoming Space:** New shelving in children’s areas, fresh carpets, paint, and landscaping, plus a refreshed service hub at the Vernon branch.
- **Enhanced Comfort:** Expanded mobile security and fire safety updates to keep spaces secure and inviting.

## Future-Focused Spaces

**Riverside South branch (planned opening 2028):** Planning continued for OPL’s Riverside South branch to serve the south Nepean community. Employees worked with colleagues at the City of Ottawa, initiating the process to engage architects for design of the joint library and community centre.

**Central branch at Ādisōke (coming 2026):** 2024 saw the completion of the building envelope at Ādisōke, home of Ottawa’s future flagship library. **The interior spaces are taking shape, while our employees are working full steam ahead to prepare the services, programs, and collections that will animate these spaces.**

# How You Used Your Library: Key Metrics

In 2024, OPL experienced remarkable growth across key service areas, reflecting the community's continued engagement with OPL—both physical and digital.



## People Came Through OPL's Doors — and Website

**3,538,950**

### In-person visits

A 5% increase over 2023, showing a steady return to branches and the Bookmobile.

**17,565,806**

### Website visits

A 17% surge in online activity, highlighting the growing demand for digital services and access.



## Cardholder Reach: Biggest Year Yet

**265,327**

### Active Cardholders (1 year)

The most active cardholder (1 year) ever recorded. An 8% increase from 2023—driven by Ottawa's rising population and OPL's expanded programming.

With a city population of 1,094,340, nearly **1 in 4 residents now hold an OPL card**—that's 24.3% of Ottawa choosing to be part of OPL's story.



## Reading by the Millions: Borrowing & Circulation

**11,569,445**

### Total items borrowed

That's a 5% rise over 2023, proving once again: reading never goes out of style.

**8,205,895**

### Physical items

**3,363,550**

### Digital content

Strong circulation numbers reflect OPL's hybrid approach to collections, meeting diverse client needs.







## Programs & Participation

**12,061**

**Total programs delivered**

**239,069**

**Total attendance**

**225,275 (↑ 25.5%)**

**Branch program attendance**

OPL continues to foster vibrant, in-person connections through programming that educates, inspires, and brings the community together.



## Staying Connected: Technology & Digital Access

**312,130 (↑ 12%)**

**Public workstation sessions**

**8,053**

**Chromebook sessions**

**599,259**

**Wi-Fi sessions**

OPL continues to bridge the digital divide, providing essential technology access to thousands across the city.

**In every branch, at every age,  
and on every platform — Ottawa  
is reading, learning, and  
connecting like never before.**

## 2024 Social Media Recap

Engagement across social media platforms continued to grow in 2024, with notable increases in follower counts:

- **YouTube** followers increased from 1,285 to 1,516
- **Instagram** followers rose from 6,734 to 10,569
- **Facebook** followers grew from 9,825 to 10,702
- **X (formerly Twitter)** saw a slight decline, from 12,187 to 12,025

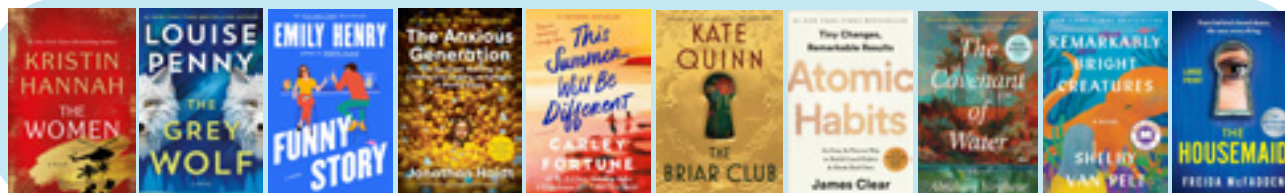
Overall, the **total number of followers** across all platforms increased from **30,031 to 34,812**—an overall growth of **16%**.



# Top checkouts: What Ottawa was reading

The list below reflects the most popular books across OPL branches this past year, offering a snapshot of what the community was reading and enjoying in 2024.

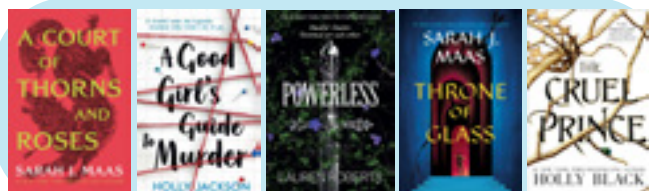
## Adult English



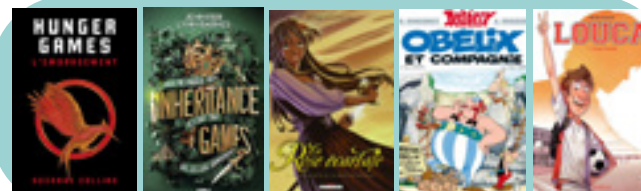
## Adult French



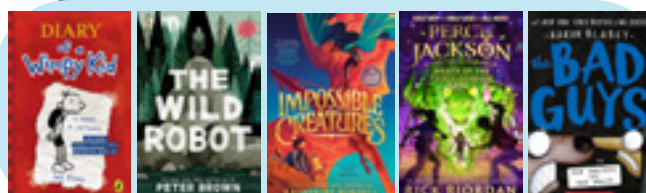
## Teen English



## Teen French



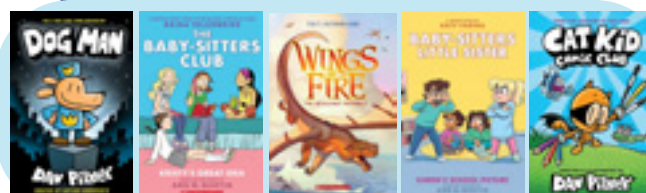
## Children's English Fiction and Non-Fiction



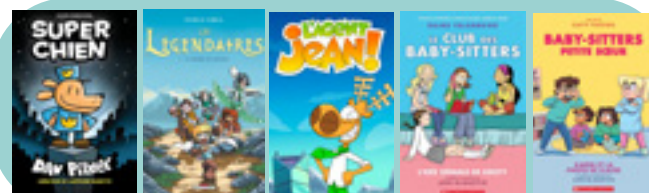
## Children's French Fiction and Non-Fiction



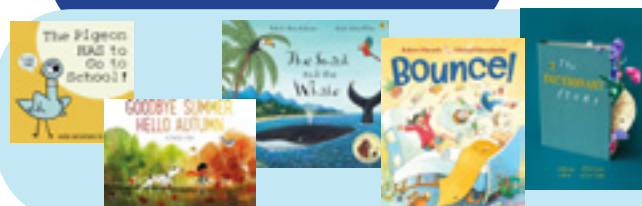
## Children's English Graphic Novels



## Children's French Graphic Novels



## Children's English Picture Books



## Children's French Picture Books





# Demonstrating the Value of OPL

## Client and Community Feedback

**“ It’s a great third space, where you don’t have to spend any money. ”**

**- Carlingwood branch client**

**“ I use printers and computers. The printer is a nice excuse to go to the library. ”**

**- Canterbury Community Association representative**

**“ The library doesn’t make you feel like a burden; it makes you feel like a human. ”**

**- Spectrum LGBTQ+ Community Youth Group representative**

**“ The library is proof of civilization, I have lived in a place without a library, and I don’t recommend it. ”**

**- Hunt Club bookmobile client**

### **The Library Saved My Life**

**“ I have used libraries for my entire life....I love books...I had some serious eye problems nearly 3 years ago at age 75 and I am not able to watch television, read books, perform computer duties or research or do any eye movement for more than 2-3 minutes at a time... ”**

**I discovered audio books and thanks to the assistance I received from the Nepean CentrepoinTE branch, I got set up and am rarely seen without my air buds! This wonderful option has saved me from mental boredom, allowed me to accept my limitations and made my housework very enjoyable. I also used to take my granddaughter to the children’s library for reading time and just perusing the books...The children’s librarian was so welcoming to everyone... she is always smiling and friendly. ”**

**Thank you, Ottawa Public Library.**



## Message from FOPLA President & CEO Kathleen O'Connell Renaud

In 2024, FOPLA stayed true to what we've always believed: when a community comes together, remarkable things happen.

Since 2003, thanks to donations, memberships, and the dedication behind our 30 used bookstores, FOPLA has contributed over **\$4.7 million** to the Ottawa Public Library. Every dollar goes back into spaces, programs, and moments that connect people—young and old—to learning, creativity, and one another. This past year, over **23,000 volunteer hours** helped us raise **\$143,800** to support OPL. That kind of commitment is something special—and it's what makes our work possible.

One of our proudest moments came in May, when we announced a **\$750,000 gift to Ādisōke**, home of the new Central branch. This gift will help preserve public art from the Main branch and bring to life welcoming community spaces in the new building—spaces that will belong to all of us. We also renewed our **Memorandum of Understanding** with OPL, reaffirming a partnership built on trust and a shared love for what libraries make possible.

Throughout the year, we were proud to support library programs that reflect the heart of our city:

- **Author visits, youth writing contests, summer reading prizes, and Library Month events** that brought joy to thousands.
- A **city-wide eclipse glasses giveaway** that lit up faces with wonder.
- Local initiatives like **music and art workshops, story mats, Rubik's Cubes, chess clubs**, and more—small touches that make a big difference at the branch level.

And in a meaningful new step, we awarded our first **FOPLA scholarships** at the University of Ottawa and Algonquin College to support future public librarians.

As we look to 2025, we carry this work forward with care, energy, and gratitude—for our volunteers, Board, staff, and our partners at OPL and the City of Ottawa. Thank you for being part of this community effort. It matters more than ever.

**Kathleen O'Connell Renaud, MLIS**

President & CEO

Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association



**F O P L A**  
**A A B P O**

Learn more about FOPLA  
scholarships here:  
<https://bit.ly/3EkKtbo>





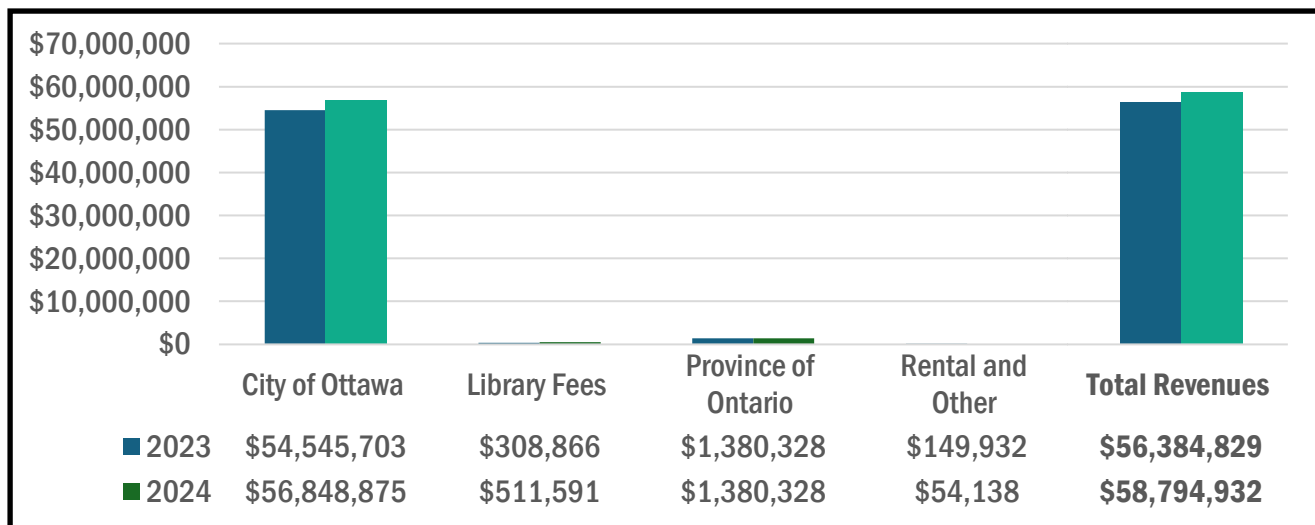
# Statement of Revenue and Expenditures

## (unaudited)

At the end of the 2024 fiscal year, OPL closed its financial books with a surplus of \$1.86M. Library services experienced increased revenues and spending across almost all categories. OPL's complete financial statements (audited) are released in September each year and can be found on OPL's website.

As always, a special thank you to the Friends of the Ottawa Public Library (FOPLA), the Ottawa Community Foundation, and numerous corporate and private donors whose efforts and financial support helped to further offset expenditures.

### Revenues



### Expenditures

