

COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTMENT REPORTING

Appointment:	Edmonton Public Library Board
Classification:	Other ▾
Councillor(s):	Councillor Karen Principe
Reporting Period:	November 1, 2022 - April 30, 2023

Mandate

The (EPL) Board provides governance for Edmonton's best used and most loved service. An award-winning library system, EPL continues to push the boundaries for modern library services. EPL connects Edmontonians to a lifetime of learning, engagement and possibility ensuring everyone has access to the services and resources they need to thrive.

Board responsibilities include approving and developing library governance policies, approving operating and capital budgets, and contributing to the strategic plan for innovative, effective and efficient library service delivery. In addition to governance, some of its primary functions are lobbying and advocacy to ensure resources are available to fulfill the mission and vision of EPL as well as the current capital campaign needs of the Milner Revitalization project. We strengthen neighbourhoods and communities by creating connections. We go beyond traditional and physical boundaries to foster relationships and build dynamic, responsive library services.

The EPL board consists of one member of City Council and nine public members.

EPL's Community-Led Service Philosophy is a framework for EPL to build relationships, and identify and meet customer needs. Our focus is on anyone facing barriers to using our services. This philosophy is all about improving services and finding ways to meet evolving community needs.

We connect, consult and collaborate with individuals and groups to understand the needs of our communities to inform the direction of library work and policies.

Background

A little history of EPL:

Picture this: March 14, 1913

“The first public library to open in Edmonton was the Strathcona Library on the south side of the newly amalgamated city. Of course, some people on the north side of the river would argue about official opening dates.” Pg. 20, Just Getting Started, Todd Babiak, 2013

People on the northside of the river, not to be outdone by Strathcona (the junior partner in amalgamation), opened a temporary library above a meat and liquor store at the corner of 104 Street and Jasper Avenue just hours before the opening of the Strathcona Library. Interestingly, one of the issues of this location was not monetary but rather if the floors were able to withstand the weight of the books and the safe.

In 1978 a controversy ensued when local artist, Robert Dmytruk, displayed his artwork, (which some considered “gross and vulgar”), in the library. Council ultimately decided to allow the exhibition to remain open as it was a right of freedom of expression. Currently, EPL still navigates the issue of intellectual freedom.

Edmonton was the first Canadian city to immobilize a fully integrated computerized circulation system and catalogue in 1979.

The City and EPL have a long-term relationship that is mutually beneficial. The board helps ensure the accountability of the City funds received by EPL. They are also active in raising funds from other sources including fundraising. EPL continues to provide accountability and exceptional service.

Shared priorities and advocacy areas

EPL, with the support of the EPL board, are committed to providing many forms of service to residents of Edmonton. From books, to online materials, to internet access, to mental health support, the board helps support the mission of EPL.

EPL are responsible stewards of public funds. They are continually looking for and implementing efficiencies in the organization.

EPL is a hub for newcomers to Edmonton where they are welcomed and are able to access much needed resources. EPL recently created new content in Ukrainian for newcomers to access these resources.

EPL has three outreach workers who serve individuals in need of housing, addictions support, identification and more.

Epl2go Literacy Vans provided services to underserved areas of our city. Four vans delivered 413 classes and events to over 6,399 attendees.

Report on activities, projects, and outcomes

The board contributes to the strategic planning of EPL. They are continually looking for ways to improve service and remain relevant. Not only does EPL stay up to date with current trends, they lead the way in current trends, such as the kitchen, makerspace and gaming area at the Stanley A. Milner branch.

Recently many members of council attended library branches across the City to acknowledge the extension of Sunday hours.

EPL Facts:

- 21 locations
- 10.2 million visits
- 9,530 classes and events presented with a total attendance of 426,279

Here are some 2022 highlights:

- 3,478,257 in-person visits
- 262,351 Edmontonians used their library card
- more than 5.4 million physical items borrowed
- over 5.5 million eResources downloaded
- 70% increase in new memberships from 2021

EPL Milestone in 2022: Edmonton is the first Canadian city to join UNESCO's network Of top learning cities in the world

Current projects are the schematic design for the relocated and expanded Riverbend Branch and the branch at Lewis Farms Recreation Centre.

Upcoming events and milestones

The following are just a few of the upcoming events.

- Edmonton Jewish Film Festival continues until May 18th, Stanley A. Milner Branch
- The Kitchen: Strawberry Eclairs, Stanley A. Milner Branch- May 20th
- Life Skills: Plant Support, Stanley A. Milner Branch- May 21st
- Level Up Your Career: NPower Canada Launching Tech Careers- Online
- Financial Literacy: Saving Strategies-Easy Concept, Difficult Reality, CastleDowns-May 28th
- Walking Tour of the Tawatina Bridge with lead artist David Garneau, Stanley A. Milner Library-June 1st
- Financial Literacy: Building Wealth in Canada, Clareview Branch June 5th
- Financial Literacy: Ten Healthy Habits of Financial Management, Millwoods Branch- June 6th
- Financial Literacy: Tips and Secrets Smart Canadians Know, Abbotsfield Branch- June 8th
- Financial Literacy: How to Teach Kids about Money, Riverbend Branch- June 13th
- Financial Literacy: The Journey Out of Debt, Highlands Branch- June 14th
- Forward Thinking Speaker Series: Jann Arden: My Life, Northern Jubilee Auditorium- June 20th
- Forward Thinking Speaker Series: Christine Sinclair: Scoring Success, Edmonton Convention Centre- November 19th
- Book Sales, Stanley A. Milner Library- June 9th, 10th, 11th- September 8th, 9th, 10th
- Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn at branches across the city

2023 marked 110 years since the beginning of the public library in Edmonton.

Evaluation

It is recommended that the City of Edmonton continue to work with EPL to advance municipal priorities and areas of shared interest including how to advocate for the City's interests.