

## REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

# 2025 Oxford County Library Business Plan and Budget

**To:** Warden and Members of County Council

**From:** Director of Corporate Services

## RECOMMENDATION

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1. That the recommendation of the Oxford County Library Board dated October 15, 2024, that County Council approve the draft 2025 Oxford County Library Business Plan and Budget to provide a levy of \$5,744,951, as adjusted for minor interdepartmental charges, be referred to 2025 budget deliberations.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

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- 2025 Library levy \$5.7 million – \$521,209 increase over 2024 (as adjusted for minor interdepartmental charges)
- Four goals and objectives to carryout an organizational review to optimize use of staff resources to meet current and future service needs; search for a more user friendly ecommerce solution; creation of a communications strategy focused on improving user experience and community engagement; and, in collaboration with Oxford County Archives and Strategic Communications and Engagement, facilitate county-wide recognition and celebrations of Oxford County Library's 60-year, Oxford County's 175-year and Oxford Archives 25-year anniversaries aligning in 2025
- Staffing impact – 2.0 FTE temporary positions for Ox on the Run pilot project; and an increase of 0.8 FTE – 0.5 to support library program planning and delivery at various branches; and 0.3 to continue to support the summer reading program throughout the County

## IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

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Upon County Council's approval, a County of Oxford by-law will be enacted to authorize the Oxford County Library Board special levy to be applied to the Towns of Tillsonburg and Ingersoll and the Townships of Blandford-Blenheim, East-Zorra Tavistock, Norwich, South-West Oxford and Zorra.

## Financial Impact

The draft budget proposes a \$521,209 increase (as adjusted for minor interdepartmental charges) in the levy to be collected from property owners within the Area Municipalities that participate in the County library system. This represents a 10.0% increase over 2024 levy.

## Communications

The County’s Communications and Strategic Engagement Team will facilitate the 2025 Business Plan and Budget communications strategy, including the Library Business Plan and Budget.

The communications plan includes public engagement through *SpeakUp Oxford!*. The 2025 Business Plan and Budget as released on November 13, 2024 and presentations delivered to Council at each of the budget meetings will be posted on the *SpeakUp Oxford!* site. The site also provides dates and times for each of the Council meetings with links to recordings if individuals are not able to attend the live meetings.

## 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Oxford County Council approved the *2023-2026 Strategic Plan* on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendation in this report supports the following strategic goals.

### Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
<b>Promoting community vitality</b>	<b>Enhancing environmental sustainability</b>	<b>Fostering progressive government</b>
Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being		Goal 3.1 – Continuous improvement and results-driven solutions Goal 3.2 – Collaborate with our partners and communities Goal 3.3 – Attract, retain and engage staff Goal 3.4 – Financial sustainability

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

## DISCUSSION

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### Background

At the regular meeting of the Board held September 17, 2024, the Board considered the draft 2025 Library Business Plan and passed the following resolution:

“That the Library Board approves the 2025 Business Plan goals and objectives as set out in Attachment 1 to Report 2024-39.”

On the basis of the approved 2025 Library Business Plan Goals and Objectives, the Board was presented with a draft 2025 budget at their October 15, 2024 meeting. In accordance with the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990*, the Board adopted the following resolution:

“That the Board receive Report 2024-44 entitled “2025 Library Budget” and recommends that County Council approve the 2025 Oxford County Library Business Plan and budget to provide a levy of \$5,767,668, subject to possible minor adjustments to interdepartmental charges.”

Subsequent to the Board’s October 15, 2024 resolution, further review and updates to the County draft budget resulted in an reduction to the Library’s interdepartmental charges by \$22,717, effectively reducing the proposed Library levy to \$5,744,951.

### Comments

The content of the 2025 Library Business Plan is incorporated in the County of Oxford 2025 Draft Business Plan and Budget information package which is to be presented to Council on November 20 and November 25, and further deliberated on December 11, 2024. The information package can also be found on the County’s website at [SpeakUp Oxford!](#)

In summary, the 2025 draft budget proposes a levy requirement of \$5,744,951 (\$5,223,742–2024) for libraries, representing an increase of \$521,209 or 10.0% over 2024 (21.8% increase - 2024). The total budget (gross expenditures) is \$6,483,237 (\$6,088,694 – 2024) which is a \$394,543 increase from 2024 or 6.5%. The proposed budget increase of \$521,209 is largely the result of:

- \$222,855 increase in salaries and benefits;
- \$137,400 in development charge exemptions;
- \$92,477 in interdepartmental charges with \$60,741 being for IT and \$24,108 for facilities; and
- \$173,819 related to the extension of the Ox on the Run, further explained below.

There was a new initiative approved in the 2023 Draft Business Plan and Budget – *Year Round Ox on the Run Mobile Outreach Pilot*, that was planned to be a two-year pilot project approved as part of the 2023 budget. The 2024 budget included a \$185,899 provision for second year’s operational costs, including 2.3 temporary FTEs, funded by the Library General reserve.

At the Board’s August 21, 2024 meeting, the Board received Report 2024-35 entitled “Ox on the Run Pilot Extension”, and in response, passed the following resolution:

“That the Library Board receives Report 2024-35, Ox on the Run Pilot Extension, for information and discussion:

And further, that the Library Board approves the extension of the Ox on the Run Pilot through to the end of December 2025.”

As such, the draft 2025 budget contains a provision of \$173,819 to extend the program to the end of 2025. This includes 2.0 FTEs. It is important to note, that if the Board were to determine the program be permanent in 2026, in addition to the operating costs proposed for 2025, consideration will be given to replacing the temporary near end-of-life vehicle, which will require a capital outlay and ongoing funding for vehicle replacement costs.

### **2025 Capital Projects**

The capital budget of \$329,900 for 2025 is a \$224,100 decrease from the 2024 capital budget.

The 2025 capital project budget is comprised of:

- \$15,100 for Ingersoll branch representing the County’s share in heating distribution system repair, roofing repair and investigation and design for future meeting pod project;
- \$15,000 for accessible washroom door installations in the Norwich Branch;
- \$12,000 for thermal windows in the Thamesford Branch;
- \$20,000 for public use computer technologies;
- \$1,000 for maker space and assistive technologies;
- \$257,800 for annual investment of collection materials; and
- \$9,000 for replacing furniture for public and staff use.

Funding sources for the 2025 capital budget includes \$325,100 from reserves and \$4,800 from Zorra Township’s share of the Thamesford branch capital projects.

### **2024 Forecast Surplus**

The 2024 year-end library operating budget forecast is positioned for a surplus of \$80,684 as of the date of this report – refer to Table 1 for details.

Table 1 – 2024 Forecast Year-End Surplus

Revenue/Expense	Explanation	Amount
General revenues	Additional user fees and charges, investment income and donations	\$17,300
Salaries and benefits	Administration vacancy	21,600
Materials	Deficit in advertising/promotion, supplies and program expenses, hardcopy and digital books, donation withdrawals fully offset by donation revenues noted above	(16,000)
Facilities	Savings from building rents and security costs	6,500
Facilities	Missed rent invoiced back from Sept 2021	(72,110)
Fleet	Library delivery van (excluding Ox on the run)	2,740
Development Charge	Net development charge revenues and funding exemptions	120,760
Other	Miscellaneous savings and deficits	(106)
<b>Forecast Year-End Variance</b>		<b>\$80,684</b>

### Reserves

In accordance with the 6.2 Reserve Policy, the draft 2025 budget proposes to allocate the 2024 projected surplus to the Library General (stabilization) reserve. This provision will result in a projected year end reserve balance of approximately \$209,200 over the reserve’s target balance.

### Full-time Equivalent Analysis

The Library 2025 Business Plan and Budget proposes changes with a net effect of 0.8 additional FTEs and continuation of 2.0 temporary FTEs as described in below:

- **0.3 FTE** Library Summer Student to continue to support the summary Reading Program;
- **0.5 FTE** Library Programming Support to support planning and delivery of programming at various branches; and
- **2.0 FTE** Ox on the Run – extension of pilot program to December 31, 2025.

### Debt Repayment

There are no debt obligation requirements in the 2025 budget and none proposed in the 10-year capital plan at this time.

## CONCLUSIONS

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The 2025 Draft Oxford County Library Business Plan and Budget aligns with the Board's approved 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

## SIGNATURES

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### Departmental approval:

Original signed by

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Lynn S. Buchner, CPA, CGA  
Director of Corporate Services

### Approved for submission:

Original signed by

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Benjamin R. Addley  
Chief Administrative Officer