



**Michelle Arbuckle** (she/her) is the Executive Director for the Ontario Library Association. Reporting to the OLA Board of Directors, Michelle's key responsibilities are government relations, advocacy, partnership development, the implementation of the strategic plan, and supporting the exceptional OLA staff team. Michelle is also the Chair of the Book and Periodical Council and since 2018 has been chairing the BPC's Freedom of Expression Committee and overseeing the planning and execution of the annual Freedom to Read Week campaign.



**Sonia Bebbington** is Chief Librarian/Chief Executive Officer with the Ottawa Public Library system, who has worked in all areas of the library profession throughout the more than 22 years of her career. She has worked for the last 12 years at the Library of Parliament, where, as the Director General, Information and Document Resources Services (IDRS), she led the development, management, preservation, and access to Library of Parliament collections. She was named executive lead of the Library of Parliament's involvement in the ongoing work related to the Long-Term Vision and Plan for the Parliamentary Precinct in 2019. She lives with her family in Ottawa, the city she has called home for 25 years.



**Brendan de Caires** is Executive Director of PEN Canada, a nonprofit that promotes literature, defends freedom of expression and helps exiled writers to establish new lives in Canada. De Caires has headed PEN Canada's programs and special projects for a decade, editing and co-authoring country studies of Mexico, Honduras, India and Guatemala. In 2013, following the publication of *Honduras: Journalism in the Shadow of Impunity*, he joined a PEN delegation to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington D.C. for a special session on impunity in Honduras. In 2017, after collaborating on PEN International's Universal Periodic Review of freedom of expression in Guatemala, he coordinated a week-long security training workshop for 16 indigenous female journalists in Guatemala City. Born and raised in Georgetown, Guyana, de Caires attended Stonyhurst College in Lancashire and read English Language & Literature at the University of Oxford. He has worked as an editor in newspaper, trade and magazine publishing, and as a book reviewer for publications in Canada, the United States and the Caribbean. In 2009 he was a regional judge for the Commonwealth Writer's Prize.



**Johanna Gibson-Lawler** is an Instructional Coach for School Libraries with the Greater Essex County District School Board in Windsor. Johanna is the Past President of the Ontario School Library Association (2023) and has also served as a councillor for the Southwest Region for two terms previously. Advocacy for strong school libraries is Johanna's jam and as a result, she started the ETFO provincial Library Standing Committee where through this committee's work, ETFO has taken a strong stand in support of specialist teachers, including Teacher Librarians at each and every school in Ontario through ETFO's Building Better Schools document. Equity work has been a constant and continual lens Johanna uses as she supports Teacher Librarians and school libraries throughout her Board. Dealing with book challenges, shadow banning, weeding of collections and building equitable collections has been a huge part of her work.



**Kasey Meehan** is the Freedom to Read Program Director at PEN America, leading our initiatives to protect the right of students to freely access literature in schools. Previously, Kasey served as the Associate Director of Postsecondary Policy at a mission-driven education research organization in Philadelphia, Research for Action. Kasey's research centers students, educators, and school leaders' experiences in identifying strategies for reform and capturing emerging best practices and strives to connect research to policy and program change. Kasey holds a BA from the University of Pennsylvania and a MPA from the Fels Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, along with a Certificate in Politics.



**Danny Ramadan** is a Syrian-Canadian author and LGBTQ-refugees advocate. His latest novel, *The Foghom Echoes* won the Lambda Award for Gay Fiction, and was nominated for the BC & Yukon Book awards, and the city of Vancouver Book Award. *The Clothesline Swing* is translated to multiple languages. His award-winning children's books *The Salma Series* continues to receive accolades. He is expected to release his memoir *Crooked Teeth* in 2024. Since his arrival to Canada, Ramadan has raised over \$300,000 for LGBTQ+ identifying refugees. Ramadan graduated with an MFA in Creative Writing from UBC, and received an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from Adler University.