



Canadian Federation of Library Associations  
Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques

The CFLA-FCAB Board of Directors acknowledges receipt of the *Open Letter to the CFLA Board on Intellectual Freedom* received on August 23, 2021.

We thank those who drafted and signed the letter for expressing their views in an open and constructive manner. CFLA encourages discussion and dissent as an integral part of the decision-making process. It is only in encouraging free and open dialogue and debate that we can discover and refine the ideas that should guide our future progress.

As the letter acknowledges, the balance between intellectual freedom and inclusion continues to be a matter of debate within our profession. Due to the COVID pandemic, a planned 2020 National Forum on exactly that topic had to be cancelled. It is our hope that circumstances will permit us to plan a national event to explore these issues in the near future, in order to have a constructive and nuanced conversation.

However, the Board stands behind the advice of its Intellectual Freedom Committee and the assertions of the statement in question. It is our contention that the statement is consistent with both CFLA-FCAB's *Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries* and its *Position Statement on Diversity and Inclusion*. The standard that has been established by the courts for the abridgement of freedom of expression is very high, and we believe this standard applies to challenged materials in libraries. Moreover, we believe that libraries can serve their communities through targeted partnerships, programming, and collection development without restricting other materials or thought that might provide an alternate point of view.

The Board and the Committee are aware that there are many challenges launched by users and community members to materials and programs that libraries provide access to, and that not each one can be commented on. The Board has chosen to comment on situations in which the decision of one or more libraries to retain the challenged work, or make its facilities available to a controversial speaker, faced significant pushback and media attention. In some of these situations, the libraries in question sought confirmation of their approach and, when warranted, CFLA-FCAB provided it. In others, CFLA-FCAB responded to high-profile challenges occurring in multiple libraries and receiving national attention. Going forward, the Committee is developing criteria for when, why and how it responds to intellectual freedom challenges.

Again, we are aware that our position on this particular issue is not unanimous within the Canadian library community. However, unanimity is often not possible. Instead, CFLA-FCAB's governance model relies on a board nominated by member associations to represent the interests of the broad library community, with advice and input from representative committees of experts.

Thank you again for your input and your interest in this matter.