

RCMP Confirms Censorship Attempts Were Unwarranted at BC School Libraries

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Libraries continue to defend students' freedom to read in the face of increased censorship tactics.

A recent [RCMP investigation](#) found that items in Chilliwack, BC school libraries – while they may be deemed inappropriate or concerning to some people – do not contain child pornography. The investigation was in response to a complaint from a member of a Canadian-based group which is actively trying to have certain titles – primarily those with LGBTQA2S+ content – removed from libraries.

The findings were announced during [Freedom to Read Week](#), an annual celebration organised by the Book & Periodical Council which encourages Canadians to think about and reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom. Libraries defend Canadians' intellectual freedom, which includes facilitating access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion. School libraries uphold this core value by making a wide range of books, representing diverse opinions, views and lived experiences, available to students.

"Over the past two years, libraries have been under increasing pressure to censor materials and programs, particularly those with LGBTQA2S+ content," Wendy Wright, Chair of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations/Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques' (CFLA-FCAB) Intellectual Freedom Committee stated.

The Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) and the Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University (CFE) monitor attempts to restrict access to library materials, programs, and services, providing guidance and support for Canadian libraries facing challenges. Several libraries have received notices from organised groups incorrectly referring to certain books as "child pornography" and trying to intimidate libraries into removing them by stating they are breaking the law. Other groups petition Town Councils to defund the libraries if they refuse to remove the books in question. These tactics align with those used by more than 50 organised groups in the United States in recent years which have contributed to their record high in book bannings and challenges.

Libraries have procedures in place for members of the public to file Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials, which groups are encouraged to use rather than attempting to circumvent the process. “Libraries facing challenges to materials should know that they are not alone and are encouraged to reach out for support,” says Wright. “The IFC provides an [Intellectual Freedom Toolkit](#) with information and resources to assist Canadian libraries in defending the public’s right to access a broad range of information and ideas.”

“There is a long and ugly history of those with special interests trying to censor what books are available in school libraries,” said James L. Turk, Director of the [Centre for Free Expression](#) (CFE). “This undermines the integrity of the public educational system and the quality of education for our children.” Turk added that the CFE welcomes requests for advice and assistance from teachers and schools facing such organised challenges to their curriculum and school libraries.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA-FCAB) is the united, national voice of Canada’s library community. See the [Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries](#) to learn more about this core library responsibility.

For more information, contact Wendy Wright, Chair, CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Committee, ifcchair@cfla-fcab.ca

Submitted by the CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Committee