



## STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

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# Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials – 2015 Annual Report

<b>Date:</b>	June 27, 2016
<b>To:</b>	Toronto Public Library Board
<b>From:</b>	City Librarian

### **SUMMARY**

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The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the process for dealing with requests for the reconsideration of materials in the Library's collections and to provide a summary of the six complaints received in 2015.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There is no financial impact arising from the information in this report.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this Financial Impact Statement and is in agreement with it.

### **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

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The Library provides a process for members of the public to identify concerns about books and other material in the Library's collection. These customer complaints are dealt with in the context of the Materials Selection Policy and the principles of intellectual freedom, both of which were approved by the Board at its meeting on June 26, 2000. Subsequently, the Board approved a revision of the policy in December 2007 and, in June 2012, endorsed two Ontario Library Association statements on intellectual rights, which are now appended to the policy. The relevant section of the policy is restated here.

*The library believes that a vital society encourages members of its community to actively participate in an open exchange of ideas and opinions. Material selectors consequently strive to provide the widest possible range of resources within Toronto Public Library collections.*

*The content or manner of expressing ideas in material that is purposely selected to fill the needs of some library users, may, on occasion, be considered to be offensive by other library users. The library recognizes the right of any individual or group to reject library*

*material for personal use, but does not accord to any individual or group the right to restrict the freedom of others to make use of that same material.*

Library users who object to materials located in a library collection are asked to complete a written request for reconsideration of the materials. Request forms are available for this purpose at local library branches.

The procedures for the reconsideration of library materials are intended to ensure that the concerns of the customer are dealt with in a timely manner and with sensitivity.

Typically, complaints are received at the branch level. Staff then have the opportunity to discuss the customer's concerns with them and to provide them with a copy of the Materials Selection Policy. This discussion often satisfies the customer and no further action is required. Customers wishing to pursue their complaint fill out a form detailing their concerns, which is sent to the Collection Development Manager, who forwards it to the Materials Review Committee. A letter of acknowledgement is sent to the customer explaining the process.

The Materials Review Committee is chaired by the Collection Development Manager and is drawn from a group of experienced public service librarians based on the subject of the complaint. These librarians have a mixture of expertise in adult, children's and teen materials in a variety of formats and the Manager may also call in other experts, for example, language specialists, as needed. The committee researches the disputed title by considering reviews, the author's reputation, coverage of the subject in the collection, its popularity, historical importance, etc., all within the context of the Materials Selection Policy. The decision on the disposition of the item is communicated in writing by the Director, Collections & Membership Services. If the customer wishes to dispute the decision, they may do so to the City Librarian.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN**

The report on the Requests for Reconsideration for 2015 supports the Strategic Plan goal of building a diverse collection in a variety of formats in response to changing community needs.

## **COMMENTS**

Challenges to titles in the collection received by the Materials Review Committee in 2015 and the actions taken by the Library are listed in Attachment 1.

There were complaints about six titles. All were in English: three adult books, one teen book, one adult video and one children's video. The adult books and video were retained in the adult collection; the teen book was transferred to the adult collection; the children's video was transferred to the adult collection.

In general, the volume of complaints received relative to the population served is very low, reflecting the Toronto public's appreciation of the breadth of TPL's collection and

its understanding of the application of intellectual freedom in a library setting.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Materials Review Committee – Reconsideration of Materials Summary  
– 2015