



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Intellectual Freedom and Equity Statements

Date: December 5, 2022

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present two new Toronto Public Library (TPL) Statements: an Intellectual Freedom Statement and an Equity Statement (Statements), included as Attachments 1 and 2. The Statements provide definitions, commitments, goals and principles related to the work of TPL. These two Statements are mutually reinforcing.

Statement development happened in accordance with TPL's Policy Development Framework. TPL staff reviewed similar statements published by other public libraries, library and public sector organizations and TPL partner organizations, and consulted with internal and external stakeholders while drafting the Statements. Further, the Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University reviewed the Statements.

The Statements reinforce [TPL's Vision, Mission and Values](#) and help to expand the understanding of library values among customers and staff. The goals outlined in the

Statements provide direction and accountability for collaborative community work the library will continue to prioritize. Further, they promote commitments to perspectives and approaches that staff will implement in their work at the library and with the communities we serve.

The Statements' principles enhance the customer experience by outlining library environment expectations and obligations. The library will work to empower all staff with tools to promote and support the principles. The library will share the Statements along with a process for library customers wishing to engage in the process to challenge collections and services. TPL intends to develop additional Statements with the next being the development of a Reconciliation Statement in consultation with Indigenous communities planned for Q1 2023. TPL will report to the TPL Board annually on challenges and progress on Statement goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the Intellectual Freedom Statement as included in Attachment 1; and
2. approves the Equity Statement as included in Attachment 2.

Implementation Points

The Statements will come in effect upon Board approval.

Annual reporting to the TPL Board on Intellectual Freedom Challenges will continue. Reporting on progress on the goals outlined in the Equity Statement will be integrated into the annual Enterprise Balanced Scorecard and reported to the TPL Board beginning in 2023.

Communications plans will be developed and implemented in 2023 to promote and support the Statements' principles and goals, and to provide information about TPL's processes for how library customers may engage the library to challenge collections and services.

In implementing the Statements, TPL will continue to engage with staff and the community to ensure appropriate tools are in place for support of principles and when working on annual goals. Federal, provincial and local laws, and TPL's Vision, Mission and Values set the foundation for the work of the library, and implementation of the

Statements provides further opportunity to align staff and community inclusion in collections and services.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

Implementation of the Statements will enable TPL to advance its strategic priorities by further demonstrating the library's focus on equity, increasing diversity and inclusion and the library's commitment to Intellectual Freedom. The Statements will facilitate work in each of TPL's five strategic priorities and their enablers. Progress on Statement goals will be measured and integrated into business planning and reporting processes.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Statements will have a positive impact on improving services for Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups and on improved workplace approaches for TPL staff as outlined in the seven goals in the Equity Statement and five principles in the Intellectual Freedom Statement.

DECISION HISTORY

On April 25, 2022, the TPL Board approved the [Toronto Public Library Policy Development Framework](#). The framework outlines the legislative framework and requirements underpinning TPL's policies, and the relationship between different policy documents, including Statements. Statements codify, define, and explain the values that guide the delivery of public library service and the advocacy efforts of the public library sector and the library profession. The Intellectual Freedom Statement and Equity Statement are TPL's first Statements created under this new Library Policy Development Framework.

In TPL's Policy Development Framework, Statements are reviewed in the context of the Library's strategic plan and are reviewed every four years. Statements also enhance transparency and accountability by making a public statement by which the Library Board can be held accountable.

At the June 27, 2016 Board meeting, as part of the approval of revisions to the [Materials Selection Policy](#), the Board approved the replacement of the [Canadian Library Association's Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom](#) with the updated and revised 2015 version. The Materials Selection Policy is explicit that in adopting this Policy, the Board endorses the Canadian Library Association's [Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom](#), and the Ontario Library Association's [Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual](#). As of August 2016, the Canadian Library Association was renamed to the Canadian Federation of Library Associations.

As a member of the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC), the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) and the Urban Libraries Council (ULC), TPL has joined North American public library systems to show strong commitment to ending structural racism with CULC's [Statement on Race & Social Equity](#), FOPL's [Statement of Solidarity with the Black Community Against Systemic Racism](#), and ULC's [Statement on Race and Social Equity](#). Public libraries use these statements as a baseline for building progressive policies, activities and collaborative relationships to advance equity.

COMMENTS

The Statements recognize TPL's priority of providing the vital ingredients for a democratic society with a focus on equity including the following outcomes:

- facilitating and defending access to information;
- supporting an informed citizenry and empowering everyone to engage in civic life;
- increasing programming and spaces dedicated to civic engagement and exchange of ideas;
- continually improving our capacity and work culture;
- strengthening partnerships and building a broader spectrum of collaborations and non-traditional partnerships; and
- understanding and breaking down barriers to access and increasing inclusion to ensure that everyone who wants to use the library feels welcome and represented in our spaces and is able to access collections and services.

Intellectual freedom and equity are core to the work of everything the library does. In addition to the strategic plan, the statements are to become a foundation to policies, practices, principles, goals and strategies for staff, community engagement and services.

Tools and training will be developed for staff to help champion the Statements, to help build initiatives into annual work plans, and to help support this work with the communities we serve. Transparent processes for challenges, annual reporting of challenges and progress reporting on goals will ensure that all staff and stakeholders are aware of how the library is upholding its values and Statements.

TPL intends to develop additional Statements with the next being the development of a Reconciliation Statement in consultation with Indigenous communities planned for Q1 2023. This will further codify TPL's commitment to the important role TPL plays in reconciliation as first initiated in TPL's [Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives](#) approved at the TPL Board's April 18, 2017 meeting.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Intellectual Freedom Statement
Attachment 2: Equity Statement

Intellectual Freedom Statement

Intellectual freedom is a fundamental principle and a core value for public libraries, endorsed by national and international library associations including the International Federation of Library Associations, Canadian Federation of Library Associations and the Ontario Library Association. The modern concept of intellectual freedom is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

The American Library Association defines intellectual freedom as “the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question cause or movement may be explored.”

At Toronto Public Library (TPL), intellectual freedom means supporting and facilitating the free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society, and respecting each individual’s rights to privacy and choice. Intellectual freedom is at the core of the library’s mission, to preserve and promote universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment through our collections and services.

Intellectual Freedom & Equity

This commitment to intellectual freedom is also noted in TPL’s Equity Statement ([hyperlink to Equity Statement](#)), as equity and intellectual freedom are mutually reinforcing.

Part of TPL’s commitment to equity is providing a public space where people feel free to share controversial and challenging ideas in an environment that encourages and values a diversity of thoughts, ideas and opinions. TPL welcomes diversity and supports equity and inclusion by welcoming everyone, without judgement, to pursue their interests at the library, provided they do not violate [TPL’s Rules of Conduct](#), the Ontario Human Rights Code, or Canada’s Criminal Code.

TPL’s commitment to freedom of expression is consistent with [TPL’s Vision, Mission and Values](#), as adopted by the Toronto Public Library Board and our obligations as a publicly funded government institution to offer services equitably to everyone, within the limits of the law. Ensuring that TPL spaces and services provide freedom of expression to all, without censorship, ensures that all voices can be heard, including and especially the voices of equity-deserving groups. At the same time, it means that

individuals who may utilize the library's services may come across information or ideas they find offensive.

TPL will actively promote the following Intellectual Freedom principles:

1. TPL is committed to equity and reconciliation, and strives to offer a welcoming, inclusive environment while upholding the principles of freedom of expression and human rights.
2. TPL will help ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment by providing information and services where ideas and opinions can be freely exchanged, including those that are unconventional and unpopular.
3. TPL will be a true force for democracy by providing universal access to knowledge, ideas and opinion that represent and amplify the voices of the communities it serves and meets the changing needs of Torontonians.
4. TPL will safeguard and defend each individual's privacy and dignity to decide what they want to read, view, listen to, or services they want to access.
5. TPL will meet its obligations under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code that guarantee everyone the fundamental freedoms of freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication, within the limits prescribed by law.

TPL will provide library staff with the tools required to uphold the principles of Intellectual Freedom, including a transparent and accessible process for the inclusion and challenging of library collections and services.

If a customer wishes to appeal a decision based on Intellectual Freedom, they may do so by writing, indicating those areas or points with which they disagree, to the City Librarian at 789 Yonge Street, Toronto M4W 2GB, or by email to citylibrarian@tpl.ca

[More Information on Freedom of Expression:](#)

- Official Freedom to Read (Canada) website: www.freedomtoread.ca
- Canadian Federation of Library Associations website: <http://cfla-fcab.ca/>
- American Library Association website: www.ala.org
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
<https://www.ifla.org/>

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Equity Statement

Toronto Public Library (TPL) is committed to creating and maintaining work and public service environments where everyone is welcomed, included and supported, and that are grounded in tolerance and mutual respect, so that library customers, partners, staff and the public can freely and equitably access or deliver library services which meet the changing needs of Torontonians.

Equity is about understanding, acknowledging and removing barriers that prevent the full participation of any individual or group. It focuses on making fair treatment, access, opportunity, advancement and outcomes possible for all.

TPL's intersectional and inclusive commitment to equity extends to everyone regardless of race, ethnic group, nationality, immigration status, socioeconomic status, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, language, religious affiliation, beliefs, age or any other prohibited grounds.

TPL recognizes in our work and approaches that reconciliation and justice are not the same as achieving equity and Indigenous Peoples are not seeking equity but rather seeking to have their distinct Aboriginal and Treaty Rights recognized and protected.

Part of TPL's commitment to equity is providing a public space where people feel free to share controversial and challenging ideas in an environment that encourages and values a diversity of thoughts, ideas and opinions. TPL welcomes diversity and supports equity and inclusion by welcoming everyone, without judgement, to pursue their interests at the library, provided they do not violate [TPL's Rules of Conduct](#), the Ontario Human Rights Code, or Canada's Criminal Code. This is noted in TPL's Intellectual Freedom Statement ([hyperlink to Intellectual Freedom Statement](#)) and reinforced in this Equity Statement.

To fulfil these commitments, TPL will actively pursue the following Goals:

- Improve relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to better understand our obligations and responsibilities, and to take active steps towards reconciliation;
- Eliminate racial and social equity barriers in library services, policies and practices by using an Equity Lens in their review and development;

- Ensure TPL's workforce represents and reflects the diversity of Toronto's population, through recruitment, hiring, and development practices, and by ensuring that TPL provides a welcoming and respectful working environment for all;
- Increase awareness of unconscious and systemic biases and the need for continued development of equity, reconciliation, cultural, and human rights and inclusion competencies through educational opportunities for leaders and staff;
- Increase accessibility in the design and delivery of employment practices, services, collections, and physical and online spaces to reflect the diverse needs and voices of our city, including those required of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act;
- Ensure spaces, collections, and services reach, engage and reflect equity-deserving groups and help them express and amplify their voices; and
- Advocate for and actively break down barriers to information, information literacy and platforms for expression.

December 5, 2022

Intellectual Freedom & Equity Statements

Toronto Public Library Board Meeting
December 5th, 2022

Brian Daly, Pam Ryan & Lisa Radha Vohra



TPL Statements - Purpose

- Two new Toronto Public Library Statements: an Intellectual Freedom Statement and an Equity Statement
- Statements reinforce [TPL's Vision, Mission and Values](#) and help to expand the understanding of library values among customers and staff
- TPL's new Policy Development Framework define that Statements codify, define, and explain the values that guide the delivery of library service and the advocacy efforts of the public library sector and the library profession
- The Intellectual Freedom Statement and Equity Statement are TPL's first Statements created under this new Library Policy Development Framework
- Statements are to be reviewed every 4 years

TPL Statements - Outcomes

The Statements recognize TPL's priority of providing the vital ingredients for a democratic society, with a focus on equity, including the following outcomes:

- facilitating and defending access to information;
- supporting an informed citizenry and empowering everyone to engage in civic life;
- increasing programming and spaces dedicated to civic engagement and exchange of ideas;
- continually improving our capacity and work culture;
- strengthening partnerships and building a broader spectrum of collaborations and non-traditional partnerships; and
- understanding and breaking down barriers to access and increasing inclusion to ensure that everyone who wants to use the library feels welcome and represented in our spaces and is able to access collections and services.

Intellectual Freedom Principles

TPL will actively promote the following Intellectual Freedom principles:

1. TPL is committed to equity and Reconciliation, and strives to offer a welcoming, inclusive environment while upholding the principles of freedom of expression and human rights.
2. TPL will help ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment by providing information and services where ideas and opinions can be freely exchanged, including those that are unconventional and unpopular.
3. TPL will be a true force for democracy by providing universal access to knowledge, ideas and opinion that represent and amplify the voices of the communities it serves and meets the changing needs of Torontonians.

Intellectual Freedom Principles cont...

4. TPL will safeguard and defend each individual's privacy and dignity to decide what they want to read, view, listen to, or services they want to access.
5. TPL will meet its obligations under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code that guarantee everyone the fundamental freedoms of freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication, within the limits prescribed by law.

Equity Statement Goals

TPL will actively pursue the following Goals:

1. Improved relationships with Indigenous communities to better understand our obligations and responsibilities, and to take active steps towards Reconciliation;
2. Elimination of racial and social equity barriers in library services, policies and practices by using an Equity Lens in their review and development;
3. Ensure TPL's workforce represents and reflects the diversity of Toronto's population, through recruitment, hiring, and development practices, and by ensuring that TPL provides a welcoming and respectful working environment for all;

Equity Statement Goals cont...

4. Increased awareness of unconscious and systemic biases and the need for continued development of equity, reconciliation, cultural, and human rights and inclusion competencies through educational opportunities for leaders and staff;
5. Increased accessibility in the design and delivery of employment practices, services, collections, and physical and online spaces to reflect the diverse needs and voices of our city, including those required of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act;
6. Ensure spaces, collections, and services reach, engage and reflect equity-deserving groups and help them express and amplify their voices; and
7. Advocate for and actively break down barriers to information, information literacy and platforms for expression.

Implementation Points

- The Statements will come in effect upon Board approval
- Annual reporting to the TPL Board on Intellectual Freedom Challenges will continue. Reporting on progress on the Equity Statement goals will be integrated into the annual Enterprise Balanced Scorecard and reported to the TPL Board beginning in 2023.
- Communications plans in 2023 will promote and support the Statements' principles and goals and provide information about TPL's processes for how library customers may engage the library to challenge collections and services.
- Tools and training will be developed for staff to help champion the Statements, to help build initiatives into annual work plans, and to help support this work with the communities we serve.



Questions?