



Canadian Federation of Library Associations
Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques

January 15, 2019

Ms. Christina De Castell
Chief Librarian
Vancouver Public Library
Via email: Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca

RE: Feminist Current Event at VPL

Dear Ms. De Castell,

I am writing to you today, on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations –Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB)'s Board of Directors with respect to last week's discussions regarding community use of public library space.

CFLA-FCAB supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹, which include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. CFLA-FCAB affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly.²

Discussions of restricting access and filtering information available to the public, once associated with countries governed by totalitarian regimes, are now creeping into local communities in Canada, where libraries are finding themselves not only defending the core values of librarianship³ but democratic society as a whole.

A democratic society, by definition provides equal protection of human rights, civil rights, civil liberties and political freedoms. These are the fundamental guidelines within which libraries operate.

Within this democratic society also lies the critical underpinnings of restrictions to anti-democratic rhetoric, hate speech, and racism. These forms of promotion and discussion do not form part of free speech, are regulated by laws and

¹ UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

² CFLA-FCAB *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries* <http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/statement-on-intellectual-freedom-and-libraries/>

³ American Library Association, *Core Values of Librarianship* <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>

policies, and are not supported by libraries.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and foster free expression and the right to safe and welcoming places and conditions. To this end, libraries make available their public spaces and services to individuals and groups without discrimination⁴, while taking measures to ensure these spaces are free from hate propaganda.

We believe that VPL has embraced these principles in their decision to rent public space to Feminist Current and that they have policies in place that attend to these principles.

We would like to recognize that VPL will be reviewing its *Meeting Rooms & Facilities Policy* to ensure that the information contained is the most current and will help library staff and management in their decision making process moving forward.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations – Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB) is the national voice of Canada's library communities, representing provincial and territorial library associations across the country, as well as national and provincial sector-specific associations. We represent public, academic, and research libraries and the professionals who work in them. CFLA-FCAB exists to advance library excellence in Canada; champion library values and the value of libraries; influence national and international public policy impacting libraries and their communities; promote initiatives to advance reconciliation and understand Indigenous knowledge issues; and, foster collaboration and alignment on copyright across library communities.

Sincerely,



Alix-Rae Stefanko
Chair

cc. Katherine McColgan, Executive Director

⁴ CFLA-FCAB *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries* <http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/statement-on-intellectual-freedom-and-libraries/>