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Library Board Report

To: Newmarket Public Library Board
From: Todd Kyle, C.E.O.
Date: October 21, 2020
RE: **Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Policy**

Background:

As a result of concerns raised by residents in 2019, the Library Board asked staff to look into policy considerations related to diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination. In November 2019, the Board endorsed the York Region Inclusion Charter. In early 2020, all Library staff completed online training on the topic of LGBTQ+ inclusion. Further development of specific policy as well as a review of all Library policies with an inclusion lens was delayed due to the COVID emergency. At the same time, development of a Diversity and Inclusion Lens by the Town of Newmarket's Diversity and Inclusion Working Group was also delayed.

However, the recent concern regarding racism globally, and the actions of Council to address anti-Black racism in particular, has given new urgency to the Library's work in this area. To that end, staff have drafted a new Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Policy (attached). While this Policy indicates that all other library policies are to be interpreted in consistence with it, it is recommended that a full review of all Library policies not be embarked on until the Diversity and Inclusion Lens is completed and released, likely in 2021. At the same time, however, the Town is embarking on an inclusion review of all forms used in conducting Town business, and the Library has been invited to participate and intends to do so.

Discussion:

The attached draft Policy attempts to steer a course that mitigates barriers to participation based on human rights grounds, while at the same time respecting rights to intellectual freedom. It attempts as much as possible to base the resolution of conflicts on evidence and on Canadian law. Sources for the draft include similar policies at other Ontario public libraries.

Conclusion:

The following motions are recommended:

THAT the Library Board receive the report on Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Policy;

AND THAT the Library Board approve the policy as drafted.

Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Policy (draft)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Library services, programs, resources and staffing practices meet the goals of:

- Creating a welcoming environment for all those it serves and for its employees, regardless of heritage, education, beliefs, race, income, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or physical or mental abilities;
- Fostering an environment of empathy, respect, understanding and acceptance of differences consistent with a recognition of universal human rights;
- Affirming the rights of users and employees to intellectual freedom, including the freedom of constructive and respectful dissent.

Policy Statements

The Library takes the following principles into consideration in planning and decision making in all areas of activity, including but not limited to staffing, collections, training and service development:

- The Library respects the rights of all individuals to access information, participate in programming, and engage with the community regardless of race, citizenship, income level, education, gender, gender identity/expression, and sexual orientation, including those experiencing disability, addiction, mental illness, or homelessness.
- The Library recognizes the right of users to enjoy services free from attempts by others to impose values, customs or beliefs.
- The Library understands that an acceptance of differences can sometimes place individual and collective values in conflict.
- The Library strives to develop inclusive services and programs in partnership with others in the community and approaches such partnerships with a spirit of humility, respect, and trust.

- The Library welcomes exhibits, displays, and programs that celebrate the diverse groups in the community it serves, including seasonal displays celebrating religious or cultural traditions.

Where there are demonstrated barriers to participation, the Library strives to mitigate or eliminate these barriers to the best of its ability. In instances where values may be in conflict, the Library is guided by rigorous evidence and by Canadian law in its approach and response.

The Library endorses and complies with:

- the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- the Ontario Human Rights Code
- the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA-FCAB) Statement on Diversity and Inclusion
- the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- the Inclusion Charter of York Region

It is noted that this Policy may impact on the interpretation of other Policies of the Library. Policies that shall be interpreted in consistence with this Policy include, but are not limited to:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Collection Development Policy
- Programming Policy
- Room Rental Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Community Information Policy
- Dress Code Policy
- Membership Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Workplace Harassment Policy

[Appendix: CFLA-FCAB Position Statement on Diversity and Inclusion](#)

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA-FCAB) believes that a diverse and pluralistic society is central to our country's identity. Libraries have a responsibility to contribute to a culture that recognizes diversity and fosters social inclusion.

Libraries strive to deliver inclusive service. Canada's libraries recognize and energetically affirm the dignity of those they serve, regardless of heritage, education, beliefs, race, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental capabilities, or income.

Libraries understand that an acceptance of differences can place individual and collective values in conflict. Libraries are committed to tolerance and understanding. Libraries act to ensure that people can enjoy services free from any attempt by others to impose values, customs or beliefs.