

May 1, 2023

Dear Caledon Mayor and Counsellors:

We are writing to all Caledon Counsellors about the Education Ministry's directive to the Peel School Board to purge all school libraries of many books in their collections. The wide swath encapsulated in the Ministry's culling criteria included, laudably, books that are considered racist, but also books that are older than a certain age, books that have newer editions, books that have not been taken out in the last 5 years, and more. Librarians are asked to gather and remove all books that fit these descriptions. We understand the task is huge, requires complete shutdowns of normal library access by students, may require all teachers to contribute time to help read through entire collections looking specifically for racist texts, and ultimately will result in severely pared down collections. One fear is that with much smaller remaining collections, libraries will basically be expected to run themselves, and therefore teacher-librarians will no longer be necessary. And we have heard it is the Peel Board's decision to landfill the entire purged stockpile!!!

We want this process HALTED immediately. We'd like the following to be part of a public discussion and more thoughtful, environmentally sustainable actions to be taken and prioritized with these books!

There are so many problems in this whole process. Regarding the racist and offensive texts, we are in complete agreement that these should be discarded, and taken out of circulation: shredding and/or recycling would do a great job to that end, rather than landfill. But should this be the fate of the other books whose only flaw is they've aged? We believe these books can have any number of better fates including donations to families, other libraries or schools where there is need of any resources, used book sales (generating funds for the schools) or even as donation for an OCAD art installation: let's get CREATIVE! Wholesale dumping into landfills will come at a cost to future generations as well as financial costs to Peel taxpayers now. Is this how we want our tax dollars to be spent?

In addition to the above, aged books are not necessarily irrelevant books. Students benefit from books used for projects while in the library. Teachers choose books for story time. Both instances do not require a sign out. This is of course a loss for reading as well as for the environment.



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Peel District is the apparently the first school board to be instructed by the Ministry to dispose of books under this directive. Schools have been told to have their collections ready on a day when the garbage trucks are scheduled for pick up. We have heard numbers from three Peel District schools: one that has been forced to lose over half of their collection - 5000 books- from their small school. Two others are having to dump between 25,000- 28,000 books into landfill. Pilot schools have been sending books to dumpsters EVERY WEEK this year!!

As mentioned above, one sustainable alternative could be to recycle. Based on enquiries at a local recycling centre, the cost for recycling a skid of books would be about \$1000. Stan Cameron, Caledon's Peel Board trustee, is asking the Peel District School Board to recycle or shred rather than send them to landfill.

We ask you, our Caledon Counsellors and our Mayor, to request the Peel District School board's Director, Rashmi Swarup, immediately halt the program and then review the Board and the Ministry's approach. Consider allowing non-offensive, non-racist books to be donated, or sold as used books, and that those that are offensive be recycled or shredded.

If you have any questions please let us know.

Thank you for your help with pushing for better approaches on these discarded library books for the Peel District School Board and all the other school boards, going forward, likely representing million(s) of books in total.

Sincerely,

ecoCaledon

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