

May 4, 2023

Mayor Groves and Members of Council
Town of Caledon
6311 Old Church Road
Caledon, ON L7C 1J6

Dear Mayor Groves and Members of Council:

At the request of Councillor Sheen, the following insights have been compiled in response to recent correspondence to Council received from ecoCaledon.

While I understand that the weeding or deselection of library materials may be concerning to some, this practice is a key aspect of managing library collections. I do appreciate Mr. MacRae's concerns regarding the environmental impact and agree that recycling is preferred to simply disposing of these materials. However, it is my understanding and experience that the cover of a hardcover book must first be removed prior to recycling the interior pages. This is a time consuming and manual task that may have informed the Ministry's approach. Additionally, the coordination of book sales is also a significant undertaking and often results in a large inventory of items that do not sell. Caledon Public Library (CPL) makes use of a service called [Better World Books](#) to dispose of materials that are not sold by the Library or the Friends of CPL. BWB is an online bookseller who collects discarded library materials. They provide the Library with boxes and shipping at no cost. It is not clear if this program is available to school libraries.

Without further information regarding how the referenced criteria will be applied, it's difficult to speak to the specifics noted in Mr. MacRae's email. That being said, it is common practice to weed materials that have not been used within a set period of time and 5 years is not an unreasonable term. The removal of books that were published prior to a certain date or for which there is a new edition is also common. This is a means of ensuring the accuracy of available information and preventing the dissemination of misinformation. For example, an encyclopedia of technology that was published in 2001 no longer offers any value to students or library customers. Shelf space is limited, so the deselection of materials is also necessary to make room for new titles.

The following excerpt from CPL's [Collection Development Policy](#), informs our efforts to weed the collection:

Collection maintenance

In order to maintain an active collection of quality material, Caledon Public Library will regularly de-select items based on some or all of the following criteria:

- *Worn and damaged items;*
- *Items that contain outdated material;*
- *Duplicates that are no longer needed due to reduced demand;*
- *Items that are no longer circulating;*
- *Materials that are no longer relevant to the needs of the community;*
- *Items which are available elsewhere, including other libraries and online; or,*

- *The number of items in the collection on a particular subject.*

Deselection guidelines will be applied to all library materials including donations and works by local authors. Deselection or removal of digital materials that have been made accessible through a consortium agreement may not be possible due to electronic access configurations. Weeded or deselected materials will not automatically be replaced. Missing and withdrawn materials are selectively considered for replacement based on the criteria for selection outlined in this policy. Withdrawn materials will generally be sold in-branch or by the Friends of Caledon Public Library, donated to another organization or recycled.

Upon initial consideration, the removal of items that are considered racist would seem obvious and easy to support, but who determines where this line is drawn? How might classic novels, that accurately reflect our shared, though often unpleasant history, be viewed through this lens? This is a difficult aspect of collection management, one that librarians struggle with on a regular basis, though always with the goal of ensuring that titles within our collection are not broadly considered to be harmful to a specific group, demographic or people. Some decisions are clear cut while others are more ambiguous. Should *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or *Gone with the Wind* be removed from school and/or public libraries?

One additional question to consider is if the Ministry of Education will be providing the school boards with directed funds to replenish the weeded collections. Our experience at the shared library in R.F.Hall, helped me to understand that school libraries are often holding on to outdated and underused materials as they are not provided with the necessary funds to purchase much needed new titles.

I hope that Council finds this information helpful. I am happy to share further insights as needed.

Sincerely,



Colleen Lipp
CEO/Chief Librarian
Caledon Public Library

cc: Laura Hall, Director, Corporate Services and Town Clerk
Caledon Public Library Board