

File No.: 04-1000-20-2024-456

November 1, 2024

s.22(1)

Dear s.22(1)

Re: **Request for Access to Records under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the "Act")**

I am writing regarding your request of July 22, 2024 under the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*** for:

**Record of communications, specifically emails (between listed VPL managers, administrators\*, and trustees) memorandums, reports, presentations (i.e. PowerPoints), staff intranet posts, and video recordings pertaining to VPL board trustee and leadership communications about, and public complaints made against:**

- 1. VPL staff expressing antisemitic views;**
- 2. VPL staff expressing pro-Hamas or pro-Palestine views;**
- 3. VPL staff displaying watermelon symbols or keffiyehs; and**
- 4. Concerns or complaints about the "Still Here" exhibit by Nora Stakaya Pape at the Britannia library branch.**

**Date range: June 5, 2024 to July 18, 2024.**

**\*As identified on the following website <https://www.vpl.ca/contact/administration>.**

All responsive records are attached\*. Some information in the records has been severed (blacked out) under s.13(1), s.15(1)(l), s.22(1), and s.22(3)(d) of the Act. You can read or download these sections here:

[http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/96165\\_00](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/96165_00).

\*Please note, two responsive video files have been withheld under s.22(3)(d) of the Act. Staff can confirm that the videos relating to an internal VPL Leadership Team meeting are reflected in the PowerPoint presentation slides found within the responsive records provided (see pages 151 to 166 of 196).

Under Part 5 of the Act, you may ask the Information & Privacy Commissioner to review any matter related to the City's response to your FOI request by writing to: Office of the Information

& Privacy Commissioner, [info@oipc.bc.ca](mailto:info@oipc.bc.ca) or by phoning 250-387-5629.

If you request a review, please provide the Commissioner's office with: 1) the request number (2024-456); 2) a copy of this letter; 3) a copy of your original request; and 4) detailed reasons why you are seeking the review.

Yours truly,

*[Signed by Cobi Falconer]*

**Cobi Falconer, MAS, MLIS, CIPP/C**  
**Director, Access to Information & Privacy**

If you have any questions, please email us at [foi@vancouver.ca](mailto:foi@vancouver.ca) and we will respond to you as soon as possible. You may also contact 3-1-1 (604-873-7000) if you require accommodation or do not have access to email.

Encl. (Response Package)

:aa

From: "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>

To: "Erin Watkins" <Erin.Watkins@vpl.ca>

"Reed, Jade" <jade.reed@vpl.ca>

"Cheng, Alicia" <Alicia.Cheng@vpl.ca>

Date: 7/17/2024 9:33:30 AM

Subject: Code of Conduct - Political symbols

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FYI – Carol's highlights

#### Code of conduct

5.6 An employee may engage in any Political Activity so long as it does not impair, or is not perceived as impairing, the employee's ability to perform their duties in a politically impartial manner. This precludes employees from displaying slogans or symbols supporting a particular party or candidate while at work where their duties may reasonably require them to interact in person with the public or where their duties require them to supervise, schedule or assign work to others.

5.1 Staff members enjoy broad political freedoms and should be able to engage in democratic politics with few restrictions. However, such broad freedoms must be exercised so as not to call into question their ability to perform their employment duties in a professional and impartial manner.

#### Endorsement and advocacy

##### 3. General Guidelines

- VPL may support policy positions or recommendations that advance public
  - library services.
  - As a City agency, VPL may endorse or support the advocacy efforts of the City of Vancouver.
  - VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services.
  - VPL will not extend its goodwill and brand to the endorsement of partisan activities, including support for a political party or candidate.

Sophie Middleton (she/her)  
Acting Director | Central Library and Public Service  
Vancouver Public Library  
350 West Georgia St.

t: 604.331.4004 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x m k y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

From: "Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>

To: "Directors Group" <s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca>

Date: 7/18/2024 3:03:49 PM

Subject: directors-group: VPL - DGR - Chief Librarian & CEO Video Call Q&A - 2024-07-17

Attachments: t0SQ3I4G.tr5

VPL - DGR - Chief Librarian & CEO Video Call Q&A - 2024-07-17.DOCX

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Hi all,

Here are edited additional Q&A from the video call. Please review and suggest edits if you wish, before we merge these into the other document. If any other questions have come up, please add them.

Christina

-----< Content Manager Record Information >-----

Record Number: DOC/2024/194748

Title: VPL - DGR - Chief Librarian & CEO Video Call Q&A - 2024-07-17



## CHIEF LIBRARIAN & CEO VIDEO CALL

JULY 16, 2024

### Q&A:

**1. Is the Reading Tree accessible?**

The Reading Tree has a climbing oriented feature and designed to support risky play. The tree does not have universal access but the children can be lifted up to climb the tree but the bottom of the tree is accessible for wheelchairs.

**2. I have heard that staff were asked not to wear watermelon pins because they are a national symbol of Palestine. Does this policy prohibit all national symbols that might be worn by staff?**

Pins that have political symbol and representing personal beliefs are not appropriate to wear in the workplace. For poppies and peace signs, it's quite rare to hear someone saying they're political or polarizing, although this happens with poppies from time to time. The City participates in and hosts Remembrance Day services, so there's clarity that they would be an acceptable symbol if someone chose to wear one. When in doubt, refer questions to your manager.

**3. I would appreciate some clarification on how this policy is implemented and enforced, as it seems a bit ambiguous to myself and other staff members. Can you please provide more information on how management ensures that we adhere to these policies without bias (allowing displays about Ukraine, for example, but not about conflicts in other countries) and follow the correct procedures in handling challenges to materials and respecting staff's Charter rights?**

VPL normally will only take positions on issues that are related to library services, and all positions and advocacy must be Board-approved. The Library cannot be used as a platform for our personal beliefs. Our policies outline our position on raising voices in our community that have been suppressed, and that we do this through our displays, programs and collections, to provide information and education. Also bear in mind that VPL's Code of Conduct identifies expectations for staff to maintain trust and respect for VPL as a civic institution. We have an obligation to serve everyone in our community, no matter what their beliefs, background, religion, or criminal history are, as long as they behave respectfully to each other and staff in our spaces, to provide information for them to make their own decisions, and to not take sides on issues in our work at VPL.

**4. Christina, every year the library distributes Every Child Matters buttons to the staff to wear. Is it OK for staff to wear these buttons year round? Can you clarify?**

It is absolutely fine to wear orange shirt and orange pins associated with the September 30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation which the Library promotes.

- 5. Regarding staff electronic communications, I know we need to consider Freedom of Information requests, but are there also concerns about how our digital footprints could be exploited by hacking groups?**

We definitely have concerns about hacking groups that could exploit our digital materials, and we are working on strengthening our cybersecurity.

- 6. Does the policy include National flags, ie. the Canadian Flag?**

It is appropriate to display Canadian flags, however, we will investigate if it appropriate to display other countries national flags.

- 7. The VPL addressed the BLM movement and responded with these overdue EDI processes. If we had a racist board, would this policy allow the board to quash support and result in silence from the VPL? Is there recourse for staff to advocate within the library to encourage support for political causes?**

The Board has made a decision thru policy that the library does not take a position on political causes. The Board has the power to change our policies and staff could make a delegation to attempt influencing the Board, however, library board meetings are not a public forum and the Board follows an agenda. Any advocacy/delegations should be about library services and linked to the agenda.

- 8. In 2022, kits branch hosted an exhibit which included Ukraine self-defense images against Russia. Was this not political? How was this linked to library services?**

I don't know enough about the exhibit to comment, however, the Endorsement and Advocacy Policy did not exist prior to 2020 and was updated in 2022. For displays in branches, I ask that staff be cautious in adding commentary on displays. When we display a book in collection, our role is to educate.

- 9. Q from Ben W: Since it seems that the library holds an official endorsement of supporting human rights, I wonder if vague expressions of support for this topic could be allowed? For example wearing a pin that is opposed to apartheid, racism, etc**

The lib does not make political statements on broad concepts and a peace symbol pin is example that is generic and will not be perceived as political. Pins are meant to spark conversation and raise awareness and pins about personal beliefs do not belong to the workplace. It is totally fine to wear CUPE 391 pins and lanyards.

- 10. Will members of the leadership team (Branch Heads and Supervisors) be asked to have conversations with staff when enforcing this policy? What are the steps that follow when a staff person refuses to adhere to this policy?**

If someone is not following policy, we are asking you to talk to your manager if you are unsure. The starting step is awareness and conversation and then we move to the regular disciplinary process.

**11. Could you speak to how VPL will address the budget shortfall and being over budget?**

The reason why we are over budgeted is because we have offered overtime to keep branches open and this is not sustainable, and anything related to the Collective Agreement salaries has been incorporated in our budget. The Board has discussed the budget scenarios to address the gap between revenue and expenses, which can be eliminated either through increased property taxes or reduced expenses. In previous years, reduced expenses means closing branches.

**12. To follow up on something Karen raised--can staff wear flags from countries other than Canada if they are from there or if we can speak the language of the country?**

Yes you can wear these flags so patrons would know that you speak the language.

**13. I am just curious about this watermelon pin. I have many pieces of fruit related jewelry. how do I know if any of these have any secret political meaning? don't want to offend anyone with my ignorance.**

The watermelon pin represents conflict with Gaza and used as a political symbol.

**14. Is triage on closing branches on Sundays a long term plan, are there repercussions for who we're responsible to for funding on keeping open to public?**

The decision of closing branches was discussed with the Board to ensure large branches and high need neighbourhoods are open regular hours. We will also provide an update to Council on the branch closures.

**15. Is there a similar or comparable COV policy?**

City of Vancouver also has a Code of Conduct Policy similar to ours.

**16. Are these religious symbols (crosses as jewellery, etc etc) permitted to wear in the library?**

Yes.

**17. Q from Ben W: What should we do if outside organizations are using library spaces for political advocacy? For example room bookings or art gallery showings**

Please refer to our policy "Political Use of Library Space" about the use of library spaces or participation in events that are related to a political party. We do not have art galleries at VPL so we should follow our own policy. We have had challenges at the Britannia Community Services Centre art gallery located in the Britannia Branch but we do not curate materials in the art gallery. We will be following up with BCSC regarding supporting the development of guidelines for future exhibits.

From: ["Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)

To: ["VPL Leadership Team"](#) s.15(1)(l)

Date: 7/15/2024 12:27:40 PM

Subject: Endorsement & Advocacy policy FAQ

Attachments: Endorsement-Advocacy-Policy-FAQ-2024-07-15.pdf

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Hello everyone,

Tomorrow during my video call, which will be recorded, I'll be talking about the Endorsement & Advocacy policy. The presentation will be generally the same as the one at the July Leadership Team meeting. Following the Leadership Team meeting, we heard via managers that you would appreciate an FAQ to support conversations on this topic.

I've attached an FAQ based on the questions asked during the meeting, and questions that came via managers in follow up conversations with you. You can use this to support conversations in your units and with individuals. Please do continue to pass on the questions that are arising. We'll update this and re-send it if new questions arise tomorrow, and consider what is needed on the Hub.

Christina

Christina de Castell  
Chief Librarian & CEO  
Vancouver Public Library  
t. 604-331-4007

Vancouver Public Library is on the unceded homelands of the [x-m k-y m \(Musqueam\)](#), [S wxwú7mesh \(Squamish\)](#), and [s lilw ta \(Tsleil-Waututh\)](#) Nations. We acknowledge that our work requires sincere action towards decolonization.



## Endorsement and Advocacy Policy – FAQs for VPL Leadership Team

### Q. What is the Policy about?

The *Endorsement and Advocacy Policy* provides a framework for responding to requests from organizations, groups, or individuals seeking VPL endorsement of their work or position on an issue, as well as for proactive efforts made by VPL related to public positions.

The intent of this policy is to ensure that we maintain public trust and uphold our responsibility as public sector employees by thinking carefully about public positions. It provides guidelines on what we will and will not take a public position on.

*Definitions of terms used in the policy:*

*Endorsement* involves VPL taking a position on an issue in a reactive or passive manner, most often as a one-time contribution to an effort being led by others that is related to library services or aligns with VPL's values.

*Advocacy* entails much more proactive, deliberate, and sustained efforts to influence an outcome that is of strategic importance to the Library.

The general guidelines outlined in the Policy are:

- VPL may support policy positions or recommendations that advance public library services.
- As a City agency, VPL may endorse or support the advocacy efforts of the City of Vancouver.
- VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services.
- VPL will not extend its goodwill and brand to the endorsement of partisan activities, including support for a political party or candidate.
- VPL's purchase of products from vendors should not be considered an endorsement of that product or service.

The Policy requires that endorsement requests be approved by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and that advocacy be approved by the Board.

VPL's *Code of Conduct* relates to the *Endorsement and Advocacy Policy*, as it identifies expectations for staff to maintain trust and respect for VPL as a civic institution. We have an obligation to serve everyone in our community, no matter what their beliefs, background, religion, or criminal history are, as long as they behave respectfully to each other and staff in

our spaces, to provide information for them to make their own decisions, and to not take sides on issues in our work at VPL.

**Q. Why was the policy changed?**

The initial policy (developed in 2015 and updated in 2022) only addressed endorsement and did not consider communications for the purpose of advocacy around funding or policy, which have historically included the participation of trustees.

The Board asked for a clearer policy around advocacy due to the increasing number of situations when private organizations and corporations take positions on issues, and the expectation that VPL might take positions on issues affecting our communities, or those being discussed by library associations. As endorsement and advocacy are related, the existing Endorsement policy was expanded to include endorsement.

**Q. Why are we talking about it now?**

While the Policy was updated and approved by the Board last year, we've recently had quite a few requests related to taking positions, making statements etc. on a variety of topics that made it clear that many people aren't aware of the policy or needed to understand it better.

**Q. Why is it important?**

Over the past 12-18 months, we have seen an increase in very polarizing issues and public positions. There have been an increasing number of requests from staff for VPL to publicly support issues, organizations, or positions. It is important that we all understand the policies guiding our decisions.

There have also been more conversations on the Hub about issues that are not about delivering library services and risk not complying with our Code of Conduct. This Policy and our Code of Conduct govern what we communicate both publicly and on our internal channels. Although they are internal forums, Hub posts and our emails are ultimately public. All information is subject to Freedom of Information requests (FOI) and should be limited to work purposes.

VPL limits what we advocate on to things that directly impact VPL services, such as issues that affect the public's access to information through libraries. Historic examples include copyright, internet-related laws, and digital licensing.

VPL is a public and government funded institution, with a purpose of providing library service to everyone in the community. It needs to be a place that is welcoming for everyone in the community and serves everyone, and that maintains public trust. This policy helps ensure that

we are thoughtful about how staff and the Board allow VPL's reputation, resources and power to be used. When we make a public statement or endorse an organization's activities, it means that we are prepared to invest public resources, through our staff time, in that issue or activity. This is a significant decision, as it is public money from tax dollars locally and provincially that provide approx. 96% of our funding.

Principles underlying the Policy:

- VPL is a respected civic institution and must carefully consider the implications of its endorsement or advocacy activities.
- VPL will not advance interests that are in conflict with Library policies.
- VPL works in partnership with the broader library sector, and will leverage its position as a large urban public library system to enhance the capacity of public libraries in BC and across Canada.

#### **Q. Who/what does the policy apply to?**

The Policy applies to efforts made by the Library Board and/or staff presented on behalf of VPL, whether directed at elected officials, government staff, or the public. It does not apply to Board or staff members' personal activities or those undertaken as part of participation as an individual in professional associations. Endorsement requests covered include things such as:

- A letter of support or reference letter for a grant or funding application, or award nomination
- Adding VPL's name to a list of signatories in support of a position
- A quote or a comment for inclusion in a press release or other communiqué
- Asking VPL to distribute or post information or documents on behalf of the requestor or via social media

Branches may receive endorsement requests such as a Neighbourhood House or community organization asking for a letter of support from VPL for their grant application. Staff should send these requests to their manager. The manager will send this request to their director and the Chief Librarian & CEO for approval.

It can be tricky to assess whether participating in library association activity falls under the policy, and staff should talk to their manager if needed to interpret or ensure compliance.

#### **Q. Why does VPL take a position/advocate on some things and not others? How is it decided?**

VPL normally will only take positions on issues that are related to library services, and all positions and advocacy must be Board-approved. The Library cannot be used as a platform for our personal beliefs. VPL's [Strategic Plan](#) and [Inclusive Library Services](#) policy outline our position on raising voices in our community that have been suppressed, and that we do this through our displays, programs and collections, to provide information and education.

When deciding whether to take a position, the Board looks at what our endorsement and advocacy activities are designed to do, which is articulated in the Policy Goals:

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL

#### Endorsement

- VPL may endorse activities of organizations it partners with in delivering VPL services
- Must be approved by the Chief Librarian & CEO

#### Advocacy

- VPL may undertake advocacy activities to advance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services, addressing areas such as:
  - Policy positions and legislation on issues such as copyright, intellectual freedom, and privacy;
  - Issue areas linked with libraries including literacy, education, and human rights;
  - Funding for library services.
- Advocacy activities will be recommended by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and must be approved by the Library Board.

#### **Q. Why does VPL take a position/advocate on Indigenous issues and 2SLGBTQ+ issues, and not other human rights issues?**

When we publicly advocate on something, or make an obvious effort to promote something, it is because the Board has an established and documented position through the Strategic Plan and its associated activities.

This is true for both Truth & Reconciliation/UNDRIP and gender-related rights, whereas other human rights linked issues are not specifically addressed by our policies. In the Strategic Plan, Belonging & Connection pillar, for "What we Heard" you'll see that it indicates "active support of IBPOC and LGBTQ2+ communities" as emerging from consultation with community for the Strategic Plan. It also references that Truth & Reconciliation (TRC) over-arches our priorities at the beginning. For TRC and UNDRIP, VPL's position through the Board began with the Calls to Action, followed by the UNDRIP legislative changes, and Board reports are on the website under Progress to Date: <https://www.vpl.ca/truth-reconciliation>. For gender/2SLGBTQ+ issues, this stems from the legislative change to include gender identity and gender expression in the



Canadian Human Rights Act in 2017, which led to the City and VPL establishing strategies and action plans. This report has background:

<https://www.vpl.ca/sites/default/files/TGV2SInclusionPlanning2020.pdf>

**Q. Are there examples of where endorsement and advocacy issues may have been a challenge in the past?**

The Board has reviewed a number of requests that were challenging in the past 10 years. Requests the Board discussed, but determined weren't directly about library services, included supporting \$10 a day childcare and transit passes. These affected access to our services, but weren't directly about our services. These required a lot of discussion, and are part of why the Board revised the policy. Issues that the Board has agreed to participate in advocacy on include copyright and digital licensing.

An example of personal values and beliefs being applied to our services in a way that is not okay was when a staff member put a note in a Horizon record about a book, then weeded the book, because they had concerns about the author's background. We need to help staff understand that we are obligated as public servants to set aside our personal beliefs when we are delivering library services.

**Q. Does the Chief Librarian & CEO make the final decision on endorsements, and the Board on advocacy? If the Board tells us to do something, do we have to do it?**

Yes, endorsement requests are decided by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and the Board decides if we will participate in advocacy. The Board governs VPL, and if the Board directs us to do something, we have to execute their decision. We can provide comment through our reports, but it is ultimately their decision.

We all have choices, and sometime if we disagree, the choice is whether to continue working for VPL. With situations happening in the United States around book censorship, we've seen some Chief Librarians resign when the Board has provided direction that they do not agree with.

**Q. What is an example of an endorsement?**

Endorsement is when an individual or organization asks for VPL's support of something they're doing, such as a grant they are applying for, or when they would like us to write a letter of support. We often do this for existing partners, like immigrant serving or family serving agencies. When the manager or director gets the request, we will look at what we have done with them in the past and what this endorsement supports. Depending on

the circumstance, when it goes to the Chief Librarian & CEO, she may check in with the Board Chair.

**Q. In terms of letters of endorsement, is there a timeline for turnaround on those requests, particularly if they are time-sensitive (like a grant deadline)?**

Please allow approximately a week for consideration. You can make it easier by providing a draft letter from the organization of what they would like us to say or drafting the letter yourself, so that once we have confirmed that VPL can support the organization, the director who is delegated to approve it, or the Chief Librarian & CEO, can edit as needed and sign. There's also a request for endorsement form to fill out. If we can't meet the turnaround time sometimes it means we can't provide the endorsement.

**Q. Is VPL Chat also open to FOI requests?**

Yes. All tools used for work are subject to FOI requests, and you must only use work tools for work conversations. Everything we do at work is subject to FOI. This transparency and accountability is how government creates trust for government/ publicly funded institutions in Canada.

**Q. Can you describe the risks to VPL if internal communications (e.g. Hub) were made public through an FOI request? For instance, if staff members were debating or advocating for a political issue on the Hub, what could happen to the library if this became public?**

There are lots of possibilities, and it is hard to anticipate. For context, libraries have historically been well supported by both left and right leaning political parties. With increasing polarization, particularly in the United States, we can see this is changing. Staff conversations about political issues positioned as representing VPL views could compromise our support on the basis of our alignment with or against those political issues. Our budget is decided by elected officials who are often aligned with political parties, and members of the public also speak for or against civic organizations during budget deliberations. Normally we can rely on those public speakers being in support of the library. If they were not, it could affect the funding that supports the library and all of our jobs.

This is why a Hub post sometimes has comments restricted, especially when it's veering outside of our Code of Conduct, or we post a message asking staff to end discussion of

an issue on the Hub. We do this when we see risks of non-compliance with our policies, and discussions that could be problematic for the staff member's or the Library's reputation.

**Q. I'm sometimes recognized as a library worker by members of the public when I'm outside the library. How should I respond when asked "What is the library's position on 'x'?"**

Generally you can say: "The library doesn't take a position on political issues. We're here to make sure everyone can make their own informed opinion." Sometimes the library will have a position, and if we do it's written down in a policy or a Board report. Looking at the Inclusive Library Services Policy and our Strategic Plan can help. You can paraphrase from our policy or from a VPL document if it's an issue that the Board has taken a position on. If it isn't Board approved, then there is no library position. It is always OK to say "I don't know."

**Q. How do we know what symbols are acceptable and what is not (e.g. Gaza pins vs. orange shirts, poppies, peace signs)?**

Work isn't a place for displaying symbols about your personal beliefs, regardless of what those are, which is why this comes up in our policies. For poppies and peace signs, it's quite rare to hear someone saying they're political or polarizing, although this happens with poppies from time to time. The City participates in and hosts Remembrance Day services, so there's clarity that they would be an acceptable symbol if someone chose to wear one. When in doubt, it is always safer to avoid wearing symbols, and to refer questions to your manager if you are concerned about staff or patrons displaying symbols that could be seen as political.

**Q. How can we navigate difficult conversations about these issues – e.g. when a display is not within guidelines, or when someone is wearing a political symbol that resonates with the public opinion, or with the specific local community for a branch?**

VPL's leadership team should be familiar with and be prepared to ensure that staff follow our policies. This is why we are taking time to talk about some policies that we've seen may not be as well understood.

Explaining the role of the library as a place to learn about the background and history of issues, and better understand their complexity, would be a good place to start. If that doesn't work, you may need to simply state that it's a policy of the Library and the City, so we need to follow it. Often it is a matter of bringing awareness, so that should be your first step. If someone is refusing to stop doing something that violates policy, a private one on one conversation may be

needed to ensure they fully understand the implications and next steps you'll need to take. It may require exercising judgement and checking with your manager if you are unsure.

Some of the issues that come up around advocacy intersect with intellectual freedom principles, and our obligations come from the core concept in Article 19 of the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

VPL is expected to be a place where people can come and get their questions answered without judgement or bias, and it's our responsibility as staff to ensure that people can exercise their right to form their own opinion through seeking and receiving information and ideas.

s.13(1)

s.13(1)



s.13(1)



**From:** ["Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)  
**To:** ["Watt, Lianne" <Lianne.Watt@vpl.ca>](mailto:Lianne.Watt@vpl.ca)  
**Date:** 9/9/2024 10:32:54 AM  
**Subject:** FOI 2024-456: Presentation links and speaking points for Leadership Meeting  
**Attachments:** Endorsement Advocacy overview for leadership july 2024.pptx

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Chrysalyn Tolentino (she/her/hers)  
Executive Assistant  
Office of the Chief Librarian & CEO | Library Board  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4003 | e: [chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca)

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From: Christina de Castell  
Sent: July 3, 2024 11:49 AM  
To: Goretti McLean <[Goretti.McLean@vpl.ca](mailto:Goretti.McLean@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Presentation links and speaking points for Leadership Meeting

Hi Goretti,

Here's the deck with notes, although I do tend to go o -script.

Christina

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From: Goretti McLean <[Goretti.McLean@vpl.ca](mailto:Goretti.McLean@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 11:26 AM  
To: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: Presentation links and speaking points for Leadership Meeting

Hello Christina,

Thank you for such an informative leadership meeting!

If you can send me your presenta on and any speaking points that could support today's minutes, it would be much appreciated.

Thank you,  
Goretti

Goretti McLean  
O ce Coordinator (Ac ng) Directors Group  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4001 | e: [goretti.mclean@vpl.ca](mailto:goretti.mclean@vpl.ca)

*Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.*



# Endorsement & Advocacy Board Policy

Overview for VPL Leadership Team

July 3 2024



I'm going to talk briefly about this policy, which was updated by the VPL Board in January 2023. Previously it was known as the Endorsement policy. The Board identified that we needed to have clearer policy around advocacy due to the increasing situations when private organizations and corporations take positions on issues, and the expectation that VPL might take positions on issues affecting our communities, or issues that are being discussed by library associations. After considering a separate policy, we concluded that endorsement and advocacy were related, and added the advocacy policy to the existing Endorsement policy.

We're in a time when trust in government and democratic institutions is compromised, and we have a role in ensuring that people's trust in libraries isn't compromised at the same time. We've been fortunate that libraries have been among the most trusted institutions for a long time, and this policy is intended to help us maintain that trust.

We are public sector employees, and delivering public service is valuable and requires trust. I know that this belief in public service and contributing our community is a common thread for everyone who works at VPL, and the intention of this policy is to ensure that we maintain that trust in ourselves and VPL as an institution by thinking carefully about public positions.

It's not about what you do on your own time, outside of work, when you are not representing yourself as an employee of VPL.

## Policy Objective

To provide a framework for responding to requests from organizations, groups, or individuals seeking VPL endorsement of their work or position on an issue, as well as for proactive efforts made by VPL related to public positions.



The initial policy was developed in 2015; an updated policy was approved by the Board in October 2022. The previous policy only addressed endorsement and did not consider communications for the purpose of advocacy around funding or policy, which have historically included the participation of trustees, and may be undertaken in alignment with positions taken by library associations or affiliated organizations.

## Definitions

*Endorsement:* The expression of approval or support through any medium, often one-time, for an individual or organization's activity, position, or contribution.

*Advocacy:* Proactive planned, deliberate, and sustained effort to influence decisions on an issue of strategic importance.



The terms are sometime used interchangeably, but can be considered to be along a continuum,

Endorsement involves VPL taking a position on an issue in a reactive or passive manner, most often as a one-time contribution to an effort being led by others that is related to library services or aligns with VPL's values. Advocacy entails much more proactive, deliberate, and sustained efforts to influence an outcome that is of strategic importance to the Library.

## Goals of Endorsement or Advocacy

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL



## Scope

*Applies to any activities related to a public position or issue that, if acted upon, have the potential to engage VPL staff, patrons or trustees, or impact the reputation of VPL in the community.*

- Includes: efforts by Library Board and/or staff presented on behalf of VPL
- It's not: personal activities or those as part of professional associations



This policy applies to efforts made by the Library Board and/or staff that are presented on behalf of VPL, whether directed at elected officials, government staff, or the public.

It does not apply to Board or staff members' personal activities or those undertaken as part of participation as an individual in professional associations.

Endorsement requests covered include things such as:

A letter of support or reference letter for a grant or funding application, or award nomination

Adding VPL's name to a list of signatories in support of a position

A quote or a comment for inclusion in a press release or other communiqué

Asking VPL to distribute or post information or documents on behalf of the requestor or via social media

## Policy Statements - Principles

- VPL is a respected civic institution and must carefully consider the implications of its endorsement or advocacy activities.
- VPL will not advance interests that are in conflict with Library policies.
- VPL works in partnership with the broader library sector, and will leverage its position as a large urban public library system to enhance the capacity of public libraries in BC and across Canada.



Key things are implications and conflict with Library policies. When we make a public statement or endorse an organization's activities, it means that we are prepared to invest public resources, meaning our staff time, in that issue or activity. This is a significant decision, as it is public money from tax dollars locally and provincially that provide our funding.

It's also about maintaining trust in public institutions. We are a place where everyone is welcome, as long as they behave respectfully towards each other and staff. This means no matter what background, religion, criminal history or beliefs, we provide service to them.

## Policy Statements - Goals

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL



We limit what we advocate on to areas that advance these specific goals, and this is expanded in the policy. An example of a public position or policy is something that is directly related to VPL, such as issues that affect the public's access to information through libraries. Historic examples include copyright, internet-related laws, and digital licensing.



## General Guidelines

- VPL may support policy positions or recommendations that advance public library services.
- As a City agency, VPL may endorse or support the advocacy efforts of the City of Vancouver.
- VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services.
- VPL will not extend its goodwill and brand to the endorsement of partisan activities, including support for a political party or candidate.
- VPL's purchase of products from vendors should not be considered an endorsement of that product or service.



## Endorsement Requests

- Endorsement of activities that further VPL's priorities and goals and do not unduly burden VPL's financial or human resources will generally be provided. Eg:
  - Initiatives that protect or advance information rights in Canada;
  - A policy or submission statement issued by a library organization; or
  - Activities that seek to enhance access or engagement with library services or information in Canada.
- VPL may endorse activities of organizations it partners with in delivering VPL services
- Must be approved by the Chief Librarian & CEO



## Advocacy

- VPL may undertake advocacy activities to advance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services, addressing areas such as:
  - Policy positions and legislation on issues such as copyright, intellectual freedom, and privacy;
  - Issue areas linked with libraries including literacy, education, and human rights;
  - Funding for library services.
- Advocacy activities will be recommended by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and must be approved by the Library Board.



Before VPL makes any public statements, it requires approval by the Board.

## Why is this important?

- Increasing requests from staff for VPL to publicly support issues, organizations, or positions
- Increasing conversations on the Hub about issues that are not about delivering library services and risk not complying with our Code of Conduct
- The Hub and our email are ultimately public, although they are internal forums. All information is subject to FOI and should be limited to work purposes.



This policy and our code of conduct govern what we communicate both publicly and on our internal channels.

- We are a govt funded organization and do not take positions on issues that do not direct affect library services and access to library services
- We are employees of a public sector, government funded organization. We're here to serve everyone in our community, and cannot choose to serve some community members and not others. We don't choose which communities we support, through our collections or when delivering our services. We're here to represent everyone.
- The Hub is a forum for **work related** communications
- Respectful communication is a core value at VPL

## Code of Conduct: 1.3 Responsibility

Staff must act responsibly, within the law and within the authorities of the Library Act. They are to observe the Code of Conduct. This means disclosing actual or potential conflict of interest relating to their public duties and taking steps to resolve the conflict for the protection of the public interest; following the letter and spirit of policies and procedures; and ***exercising all conferred power strictly for the purpose for which the powers have been conferred.***



We have an obligation to not use the library as a platform for our personal beliefs.

## 1.4 Leadership

Staff must demonstrate and promote the key principles of the Code of Conduct through their decisions, actions and behaviour. Their behaviour must **build and inspire the public's trust and confidence in local government.**



## 1.5 Respect

Staff must conduct public business efficiently, with decorum and with proper attention to the Library's diversity. They must treat each other and others with respect at all times. This means not using derogatory language towards others, respecting the rights of other people, treating people with courtesy and recognizing the different roles others play in local government decision making



## Policy Goals

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL



Staff who do not ensure approval by the Chief Librarian & CEO for endorsement or advocacy activities they undertake as representatives of VPL, or otherwise fail to comply with this policy, may face disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

We are public sector employees, and delivering public service is valuable and requires trust. I know that this belief in public service and contributing our community is a common thread for everyone who works at VPL, and the intention of this policy is to ensure that we maintain that trust in ourselves and VPL as an institution by thinking carefully about public positions.



From: "Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>  
To: "Watt, Lianne" <Lianne.Watt@vpl.ca>  
Date: 9/9/2024 11:02:54 AM  
Subject: FOI 2024-456: Video call updates

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Chrysalyn Tolentino (she/her/hers)  
Executive Assistant  
Office of the Chief Librarian & CEO | Library Board  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4003 | e: [chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca)

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From: Maryn Ashdown <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>  
Sent: July 11, 2024 10:16 AM  
To: Christina de Castell <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>; Kimberley Constable <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>  
Subject: RE: Video call updates

Hi Christina, I'm sharing notes from Kim, as she had a challenging follow up conversation with the NE branch leadership (regular meeting). They discussed the BRI situation with watermelon pins and art, and had a broader discussion about the philosophy of this topic.

- People are confused between what symbols are acceptable and what is not (e.g. gaza pins vs. orange shirts, poppies, peace signs). They want to understand why we pick and choose topics and symbols that we do publicly advocate for (this isn't about advocating for library-specific things, more about social issues like TRC and LGBTQ+2S).
- People are looking for more guidance and understanding of how to navigate the difficult conversations arising from these issues – e.g. when a display is not within guidelines, or when someone is wearing a political symbol that resonates with the public opinion, or with the specific local community for a branch
- People are interested in understanding why we're talking about the advocacy policy now – need context (maybe around what's happened at VPL and in the world to make us feel we need to have this discussion)
- People don't understand why we advocate for gender rights and TRC specifically, and not other human rights linked issues
- Leadership team need clear direction and support to have difficult conversations with their teams. This includes managers – who may want a follow up discussion as they will be supporting staff in navigating grey areas
- Our leadership team may need support in understanding that we're asking them to exercise judgement in what is a balanced and nonpartisan display/program/etc, vs. what is outside of our policy. They may need support as they start work in this area.
- Some of these questions intersect with the incoming intellectual freedom training – we may need to be clear that IF is aimed at patrons to support their right to access all information without judgement or partisanship.

### Maryn Ashdown

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia  
t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
She/Her/Hers

*Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the x̱m̱ kw̱ y̱ m̱ (Musqueam), S̱ w̱ w̱ i̱ 7̱ mesẖ Ú̱ x̱ w̱ i̱ m̱ i̱ x̱ w̱ (Squamish) and S̱ i̱ ḻ i̱ w̱ ṯ a̱ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations*

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From: owner-exempt-mgrs-incl-DGR s.15(1)(l) On Behalf Of Christina de Castell  
Sent: July 10, 2024 5:00 PM  
To: Exempt Managers Including DGR s.15(1)(l)  
Subject: exempt-mgrs-incl-dgr: Video call updates

Hello everyone,

If you have updates for your units that you'd like me to share on the video call next week, please send them to me by end of day Monday. Bullet points are great.

Christina

Christina de Castell  
Chief Librarian & CEO  
Vancouver Public Library  
t. 604-331-4007

Vancouver Public Library is on the unceded homelands of the [x-m k- y m \(Musqueam\)](#), [S wxwú7mesh \(Squamish\)](#), and [s lilw ta \(Tseil-Waututh\)](#) Nations. We acknowledge that our work requires sincere action towards decolonization.

**From:** ["Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)  
**To:** ["de Castell, Christina" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)  
**CC:** ["Green, Alyssa" <Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca>](mailto:Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca)  
["Ibey, Dawn" <Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca>](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)  
["Nelson, Carol" <carol.nelson@vpl.ca>](mailto:carol.nelson@vpl.ca)  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 5:22:24 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

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Hi Christina,

I have not received any further correspondence from [s.22\(1\)](#) and I am happy to send another message [s.22\(1\)](#) with the critical information. Tim has written an excellent letter below for your review, I have added your points in red.

Dear [s.22\(1\)](#)

Thank you for taking the time write. I am the Head of the Britannia Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. While the gallery space is within our building, the selection and exhibition of the art in the space is the responsibility of the Britannia Community Services Centre. **We have sent your email to the Centre's leadership team. They may be reached at:**

- Cynthia Low, Executive Director: [Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)
- Amanda Lye, Arts & Culture Programmer: [Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca)
- Britannia Art Gallery Curation: [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com)

Though the gallery is another unit within the broader civic complex at Britannia, I acknowledge the discomfort experienced by library patrons due to the content on display in a shared physical space. **Moving forward we will be working with Britannia Community Services to share policy and learning to support planning potential future exhibits**

Gallery exhibits are displayed on a monthly basis, and the past month's content was removed on schedule this past Sunday, June 30.

What is our responsibility and what is distressing to me, is the report of library staff wearing political symbols. All persons working for the library are subject to the [Code of Conduct Policy](#) and the [Endorsement and Advocacy Policy](#). The display of political symbols contravenes the spirit of the advocacy policy and several clauses of the code of conduct, most notably:

Re advocacy:

- *VPL may undertake advocacy activities to enhance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services.*

Re conduct:

- *1.5 Respect – staff must conduct public business efficiently, with decorum and proper attention to the Library's diversity.*

Contraventions of the staff policy will be addressed immediately. The concerns you've shared and those shared in the group letter have been shared with our site partners and I expect communication to be forthcoming. For my part and as the head of this branch library, the words you've shared are deeply resonant and I extend my deep gratitude to you for sharing.



Sincerely,

Tim

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: **s.15(1)(l)** | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam),  
Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 5:09 PM  
**To:** Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
**Cc:** Alyssa Green <[Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca](mailto:Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca)>; Dawn Ibey <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Carol Nelson <[Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca](mailto:Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Sophie,

Did you receive any further messages from this patron in follow up? **s.13(1)**

**s.13(1)**  
Here are some points that should be in the reply that you send next (which I understand Tim is working on).

**s.13(1)**

Once this is drafted, it may be worth also sending the same message to this group below, or something similar, as a follow up to the first message. I can review it if you'd like.

Christina

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**From:** Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 4:23 PM  
**To:** Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Christina,  
Also please note that the complaint went to City Council.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm ([Musqueam](#)),  
Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliłwətał ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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From: Sophie Middleton  
Sent: July 3, 2024 9:28 AM  
To: 'CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca' <[CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca)>  
Cc: Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Dawn Ibey <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Cynthia Low <[Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)>  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Rachel,  
I responded to the patron as below last week and also requested the gallery exhibit curators to respond to the patron's concerns. In addition I forwarded the email to Cynthia Low at Britannia Community Center and Amanda Lye, Arts and Culture Programmer, as the Library does not manage the gallery space. I have included my correspondence with Cynthia.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm ([Musqueam](#)),  
Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliłwətał ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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From: Sophie Middleton  
Sent: June 28, 2024 3:42 PM  
To: [s.22\(1\)](#)  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Dear [s.22\(1\)](#)  
Thank you very much for contacting us to let us know about your concerns. I have forwarded your email to the curators of the exhibit Jess Sung and Iris Hougbo at [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com) to respond. Information about the community gallery can be found on their website: <https://www.britanniaartgallery.org/>. The exhibit is being replaced in two days.

Best regards,  
Sophie Middleton

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: **s.15(1)(l)** | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓əm (Musqueam),  
Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

**To Whom It May Concern,**

We, a group of **s.22(1)** are writing to express our deep concern regarding the imagery currently displayed as a painting hanging at our local public library, Britannia Library, which depicts a person wearing a Keffiyeh covering their face next to an Indigenous person.



From: "Alyssa Green" <Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca>  
To: "de Castell, Christina" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>  
CC: "Ashdown, Maryn" <maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca>  
Date: 7/3/2024 4:42:21 PM  
Subject: FW: Letter of concern

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Hi both,

Two emails were sent to VPL with concerns about the art gallery at BRI. Additionally, it was flagged the Jewish community groups have been expressing concerns about the art gallery and staff wearing pro-Palestinian apparel, and these groups have said they are going to the media with their concerns.

Sophie has responded to the first email that went to VPL and the Council email address. Tim has responded to the below email. All has been well handled, and I appreciate Christina giving direction.

This is just FYI and wrapping it up for now.

Regards,

Alyssa Green (she/her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services Southwest Area

Vancouver Public Library

T: s.15(1)(l) E: [alyssa.green@vpl.ca](mailto:alyssa.green@vpl.ca)

Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the x\u695?m\u601? |ÈK\u695?\u601?y\u787?\u601?m (Musqueam), S\u7733?wx\u817?w"27mesh (Squamish), and s\u601?lilw\u601? ta\u620? (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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From: owner-nsms s.15(1)(l) @vpl.ca> On Behalf Of Timothy McMillan

Sent: July 2, 2024 8:50 AM

To: Neighbourhood Services Managers s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca>

Cc: Maryn Ashdown <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>

Subject: nsms: FW: Letter of concern

Importance: High

Good morning all,

s.22(1) I thought it best to share the below with the full brain-trust.

A new art installation was set-up in the gallery on Sunday so the below must refer to a piece in last month's exhibit: Still Here by Nora Stakaya Pape. As you know, the gallery space and its shows are not our responsibility. Amanda Lye is the centre's head of Arts and Culture and the gallery falls under her purview. I'll note that there was an outcry earlier this year over an art display in the windows of the fitness centre/swimming pool due to the artist's statement including "from the river to the sea, Palestine must be free." The upshot was that Cynthia Low as Executive Director had to address the challenge personally.

Before sharing with Cynthia and Amanda, if they have not already received or are aware, I will wait for input from this group. Ultimately, they will have to address the issue relating to the gallery. There is a second issue that is relevant to us: staff wearing watermelon pins, which the complainant identifies as political symbols.

s.22(3)(d)

Tim

---

From s.22(1)

Sent: June 29, 2024 9:12 PM

To: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; directors s.15(1)(l)

Subject: [External] Letter of concern

Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by s.22(1) earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library. s.22(1) I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my s.22(1) children to and have loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.



When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons). How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

s.22(1)  
s.22(1) letter:

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

1. **Exclusion from Public Life :**

Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

1. **Lack of Political Neutrality :**

The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

1. **Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship :**

Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

1. **Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols :**

Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

1. **Impact on Community Harmony :**

Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely,



**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "de Castell, Christina" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 4:32:21 PM  
**Subject:** FW: Letter of concern

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Hi Christina,

Here is the second letter, Tim will have a reply drafted for my review in a few minutes and will speak to staff right away. Part of the delay was s.22(1) and I got confused and overlooked the 2nd letter yesterday in my response. My apologies for this.

Best,

Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she / her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)

Vancouver Public Library

t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x\u695?m\u601?;Èk\u695?\u601?y\u787?\u601?m ( [Musqueam](#) ), S\u7733?wx\u817?w?27mesh ( [Squamish](#) ), and s\u601?lilw\u601?ta\u620? ( [Tsleil-Waututh](#) ) Peoples

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**From:** Timothy McMillan <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>

**Sent:** July 3, 2024 9:33 AM

**To:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>

**Cc:** Maryn Ashdown <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>; Kimberley Constable <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>

**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

**Importance:** High

RE Chrysalynj's message re email to council

Regarding the second email complaint from patron s.22(1) the gallery is the purview of the Centre, though Ij'm concerned that the distinction is immaterial to patrons; the layout of the branch naturally gives it the appearance of being part of the library. Second to the concerns expressed regarding the showj's content, there is a concern raised about staff wearing watermelons, which the patron identifies as political symbols.

I would like to respond to this second email complaint from patron s.22(1) but would like guidance on how to address their concerns regarding watermelons.

Unusually, the group complaint that was sent to Council, DGR, and me was not received in my email.

TYVM

T

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**From:** Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>

**Sent:** July 2, 2024 2:23 PM

**To:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>

**Cc:** Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>

**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

Hi Tim,

Thanks for your response. I responded to the letter last week letting them know that the installation was coming down on Sunday and that I forwarded the letter to the curators of the installation for response. I appreciate your flag that it should also go to Amanda and Cynthia, I will follow up on that today.

Best,

Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she / her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)

Vancouver Public Library

t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x\u695?m\u601?;Èk\u695?\u601?y\u787?\u601?m ( [Musqueam](#) ), S\u7733?wx\u817?w?27mesh ( [Squamish](#) ), and s\u601?lilw\u601?ta\u620? ( [Tsleil-Waututh](#) ) Peoples

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**From:** owner-nsms <s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca> On Behalf Of Timothy McMillan

**Sent:** July 2, 2024 8:50 AM

**To:** Neighbourhood Services Managers s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca >

Cc: Maryn Ashdown < [Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca) >

Subject: nsms: FW: Letter of concern

Importance: High

Good morning all,

s.13(1) I thought it best to share the below with the full brain-trust.

A new art installation was set-up in the gallery on Sunday so the below must refer to a piece in last month's exhibit: Still Here by Nora Stakaya Pape. As you know, the gallery space and its shows are not our responsibility. Amanda Lye is the centre's head of Arts and Culture and the gallery falls under her purview. I'll note that there was an outcry earlier this year over an art display in the windows of the fitness centre/swimming pool due to the artists' statement including "from the river to the sea, Palestine must be free." The upshot was that Cynthia Low as Executive Director had to address the challenge personally.

Before sharing with Cynthia and Amanda, if they have not already received or are aware, I will wait for input from this group. Ultimately, they will have to address the issue relating to the gallery. There is a second issue that is relevant to us: staff wearing watermelon pins, which the complainant identifies as political symbols.

s.22(3)(d)

Tim

From s.22(1)

Sent: June 29, 2024 9:12 PM

To: Timothy McMillan < [Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca) >; directors s.15(1)(l)

Subject: [External] Letter of concern

Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by s.22(1) earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library. s.22(1) I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my s.22(1) children to and have loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.

When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons). How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

s.22(1)

s.22(1) letter:

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

1. **Exclusion from Public Life :**

Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

2. **Lack of Political Neutrality :**

The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

3. **Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship :**

Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish

people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

**1. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols :**

Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

**1. Impact on Community Harmony :**

Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely,

**From:** "Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "Stephanie Hall" <shall@westvanlibrary.ca>  
"InterLINK AAG" s.15(1)(l) @mailman.interlinklibraries.ca>  
**Date:** 7/15/2024 5:13:03 PM  
**Subject:** RE: [External] [Interlinkaag] policy on staff wearing political pins and other symbols  
**Attachments:** Dress and Appearance in the Workplace Policy.pdf

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Hi Steph,

How timely, we have this issue too (but much broader than pins alone) and I've been addressing it over the past couple of weeks along with related issues connected to not using the library as a platform for your personal views. The issues spread over a remarkable diversity of unrelated personal views. We have four relevant policies:

- Code of Conduct - <https://www.vpl.ca/policy/code-conduct> - sections 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 – general on our obligations as public servants, based on City policy
- Endorsement and Advocacy - <https://www.vpl.ca/policy/endorsement-advocacy> - establishes that positions need Board approval
- Inclusive Library Services - <https://www.vpl.ca/policy/inclusive-library-services> - helps to support explaining what's a library position, e.g. raising marginalized voices
- Dress and Appearance, attached. The statement that I consider relevant is at the top, "Consistent with our mission and values, we should present ourselves in a way that reinforces the role of the library as a welcoming non-partisan, and neutral community service that is patron-centred and available to the whole community, and in a manner that reinforces that community members can trust that they will receive competent and unbiased assistance from staff."

Of course this also gets into what an employee's freedom of expression rights are, and these definitely have limitations at work. Our original Dress & Appearance policy was challenged on that and something was struck out as a consequence (I wasn't involved and can't remember what). I found it helpful to do a bit of background reading on employee expression in advance, although it didn't come up in the initial questions from staff. I've also just drafted an extensive FAQ and given a presentation to our Leadership Team, but given these are based on our policies I'm not sure they'd be helpful. Ask if you want them.

Christina

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**From:** Interlinkaag s.15(1)(l) @mailman.interlinklibraries.ca> On Behalf Of Stephanie Hall via Interlinkaag  
**Sent:** July 15, 2024 4:42 PM  
**To:** Administrators-InterLINK s.15(1)(l) @mailman.interlinklibraries.ca>  
**Subject:** [External] [Interlinkaag] policy on staff wearing political pins and other symbols

Hello, AAG.

We had a recent patron complaint around a staff member wearing a pin that they considered political and relating to an international conflict. I'm wondering if any of you have well developed policy around library staff attire in respect to political neutrality /

non-partisanship when providing public service, etc. We have some pieces of the puzzle in place, but this situation has highlighted a possible gap.

Although there is a specific complaint right now, if we update our policy it needs to apply generally and fairly across changing situations. We also have some elements of our strategic framework and values that some consider political (climate, reconciliation), so that's an area that is explicitly supported by the board (everyone can wear an orange shirt, etc.).

Would love to review a few good policy examples.

Steph

**Stephanie Hall**  
**Director, West Vancouver Memorial Library**

1950 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, BC V7V1J8  
604.925.7424 [shall@westvanlibrary.ca](mailto:shall@westvanlibrary.ca)  
[westvanlibrary.ca](http://westvanlibrary.ca)





<b>SUBJECT: Dress and Appearance in the Workplace</b>	
<b>CATEGORY: Human Resources</b>	<b>POLICY CODE: VPL-DGR-HR-012-2016</b>

## Objective

Employees are to come to work in clothing that is appropriate for the workplace.

At the Vancouver Public Library, we take pride in our organization and this is reflected in the way in which we present ourselves. Consistent with our mission and values, we should present ourselves in a way that reinforces the role of the library as a welcoming non-partisan, and neutral community service that is patron-centred and available to the whole community, and in a manner that reinforces that community members can trust that they will receive competent and unbiased assistance from staff.

This policy provides guidance to staff regarding appropriate dress and appearance in the workplace that balances individuality with acceptable attire for a professional public service work environment.

All employees are expected to ensure that their work attire complies with the Vancouver Public Library’s commitment to provide a free place for everyone to discover, create and share ideas and information.

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff.

## Policy Statements

### **1. General**

The Library provides a work environment that enables employees to dress comfortably in the workplace; however, employees are asked to be cognizant that, regardless of whether their job responsibilities involve direct interaction with the public, working out in the community or in a closed department, VPL is a place of business and employees are expected to dress accordingly.

Employees are expected to use common sense and good judgment in selecting suitable attire for the workplace, particularly when interacting with the public or when representing the library in the community. While VPL does not require formal business attire, employees are to come to work in clothing which is presentable and appropriate for the workplace as this contributes to a welcoming atmosphere for our public and builds trust and confidence in our services.

Clothing is to be neat, clean and tidy and not torn or frayed. Hats should be limited to being worn by staff whose work may involve being outside, such as maintenance work.

## **2. Accountability**

Supervisors and managers are responsible for modeling appropriate dress and advising their staff on clothing appropriate to the conditions, location and type of work being done.

Employees who are uncertain about acceptable attire for work should speak with their supervisor or manager.

## **3. Footwear and Gloves in the Workplace**

### **3.1. Footwear**

Employees who regularly perform materials handling work, such as shelving, and who regularly use book trucks or trolleys in their work, are required to wear sensible, closed toed shoes. Open-toed shoes or sandals are not appropriate footwear for this type of work. Workplace-appropriate footwear is to be worn by all employees, regardless of the tasks being performed.

### **3.2. Gloves**

As there is no requirement from an occupational health and safety perspective to wear gloves while handling and/or shelving materials, VPL does not supply gloves. Employees who choose to wear gloves are encouraged to buy gloves that provide some grip in order to assist with the prevention of RSI (repetitive strain injury). With appropriate medical documentation, the employer will supply gloves to employees who require them for medical reasons. First aid gloves may be provided to employees who require gloves temporarily due to a condition or injury that requires protection. The employer will supply gloves for the protection of materials, such as special collections.

## **4. Personal Care Products in the Workplace**

In accordance with the joint OH&S Committee's Clean Air policy, employees are asked to consider their co-workers and keep the use of scented personal care products to a minimum. Personal care products may cause allergic reactions and discomfort in some staff and contribute to the overall accumulation of pollutants in the air.

## **5. Safety Wear**

Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that workplace attire is worn that is appropriate to the task being performed and that meets or exceeds the WorkSafeBC Occupational Health & Safety Regulation requirements (safety footwear, safety eyewear, etc.)

## **Non-compliance Consequences**

Staff not adhering to the Library's standard of dress and personal appearance will be advised. As a result of continued non-compliance, an employee may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

It is understood that unionized employees may grieve any disciplinary action under the applicable collective agreement.

## **Policy Administration Roles & Responsibilities**

<b>Director, Human Resources</b>	Oversees and updates the policy as required.
<b>Directors Group</b>	Approves the policy. Is accountable for monitoring of, and adherence to this policy.
<b>Managers Group</b>	Is responsible for monitoring of, and adherence to, this policy. Oversees the day-to-day implementation of the policy and procedures.

## **Related Policies**

- Code of Conduct (Board Policy)
- Respectful Workplace Policy (Board Policy)

## **Approval History**

<b>ISSUED BY:</b>	<b>Directors Group</b>	<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	<b>Directors Group</b>	<b>DATE:</b>	<b>2015/08/20</b>	
<b>REVISED BY:</b>	<b>Directors Group</b>	<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	<b>Directors Group</b>	<b>DATE:</b>	<b>2016/02/11</b>	<b>FORMAT UPDATE ONLY</b>
<b>REVISED BY:</b>	<b>Directors Group</b>	<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	<b>Directors Group</b>	<b>DATE:</b>	<b>2017/07/13</b>	<b>UPDATE TO CONTENT</b>

<b>DATE OF NEXT REVIEW</b>	<b>2021/07/13</b>	<b>REVIEW CYCLE</b>	<b>5 Years</b>	
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## **Related Procedures**

- OH&S Committee's Clean Air policy
- The Footwear and Gloves in the Workplace Memo from the Directors Group can be found at: VanDocs #DOC/2014/345065



**From:** "Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "Lim, Sze Wann" <Sze-Wann.Lim@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/15/2024 3:08:30 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Endorsement & Advocacy policy FAQ

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BlackBerry Hub+ Inbox for Android

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**From:** Sze-Wann.Lim@vpl.ca  
**Sent:** July 15, 2024 2:10 p.m.  
**To:** Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca  
**Subject:** RE: Endorsement & Advocacy policy FAQ

Hi Christina,

s.13(1)

s.13(1)

**Sze Wann Lim**  
Circulation Supervisor  
Vancouver Public Library | Mount Pleasant Branch  
1 Kingsway

t: 604-665-3514 | e: [sze-wann.lim@vpl.ca](mailto:sze-wann.lim@vpl.ca)

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[Instagram](#) | [vpl.ca](http://vpl.ca)

Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh)

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**From:** owner-vpl-leadership-team s.15(1)(l) On Behalf Of Christina de Castell  
**Sent:** July 15, 2024 12:28 PM  
**To:** VPL Leadership Team s.15(1)(l)  
**Subject:** vpl-leadership-team: Endorsement & Advocacy policy FAQ

Hello everyone,

Tomorrow during my video call, which will be recorded, I'll be talking about the Endorsement & Advocacy policy. The presentation will be generally the same as the one at the July Leadership Team meeting. Following the Leadership Team meeting, we heard via managers that you would appreciate an FAQ to support conversations on this topic.

I've attached an FAQ based on the questions asked during the meeting, and questions that came via managers in follow up conversations with you. You can use this to support conversations in your units and with individuals. Please do continue to pass on the questions that are arising. We'll update this and re-send it if new questions arise tomorrow, and consider what is needed on the Hub.

Christina

Christina de Castell  
Chief Librarian & CEO  
Vancouver Public Library  
t. 604-331-4007

Vancouver Public Library is on the unceded homelands of the [x-m k-y m \(Musqueam\)](#), [Skwxwu7mesh \(Squamish\)](#), and [s lilw ta \(Tseil-Waututh\)](#) Nations. We acknowledge that our work requires sincere action towards decolonization.

**From:** ["Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)  
**To:** ["Nelson, Carol" <carol.nelson@vpl.ca>](mailto:carol.nelson@vpl.ca)  
**Date:** 7/15/2024 12:02:19 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Endorsement and Advocacy Policy FAQ  
**Attachments:** Endorsement and Advocacy Policy FAQ.docx

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I did some editing, but forgot to turn on track changes. Is there anything you want to do with this first, or should I send it out?

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From: Kimberley Constable <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>  
Sent: July 15, 2024 11:09 AM  
To: Carol Nelson <Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca>; Christina de Castell <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>  
Subject: RE: Endorsement and Advocacy Policy FAQ

Hi Carol,

This is a great summary and set of FAQs. I agree that it would be helpful to share it ahead of tomorrow's call so people can come with a higher baseline of understanding to inform further questions. Thanks for looping me in.

Kim Constable  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Northeast)  
Vancouver Public Library

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From: Carol Nelson <[Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca](mailto:Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 15, 2024 10:19 AM  
To: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: Endorsement and Advocacy Policy FAQ

Here is a combo of background and questions that came up during the leadership call. It may help to send this out in advance of tomorrow's call so that supervisors and managers have additional context.

Kim – if you have a chance to look at this as well, it would be helpful to have your thoughts.

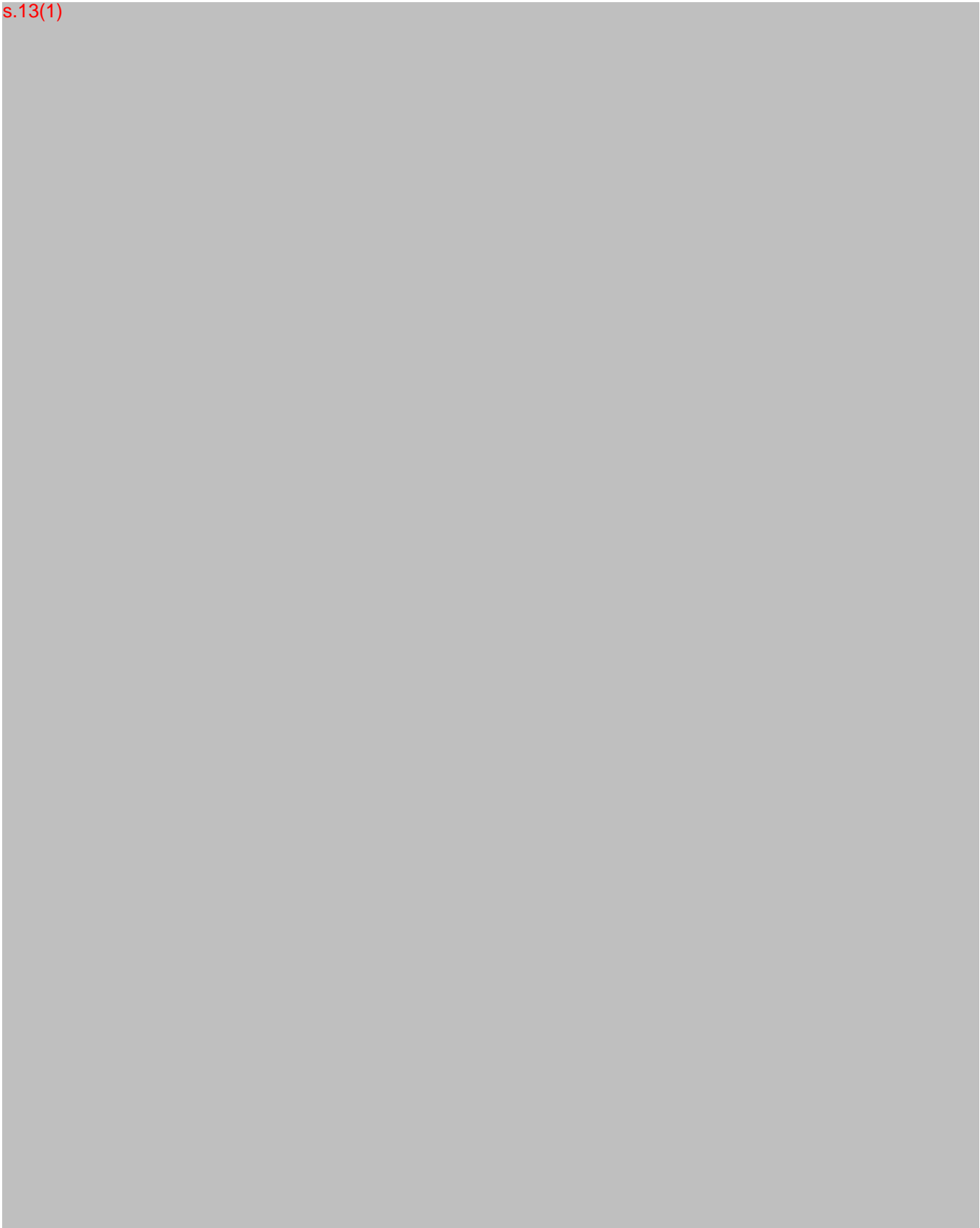
Thanks

Carol

s.13(1)



s.13(1)



s.13(1)



s.13(1)

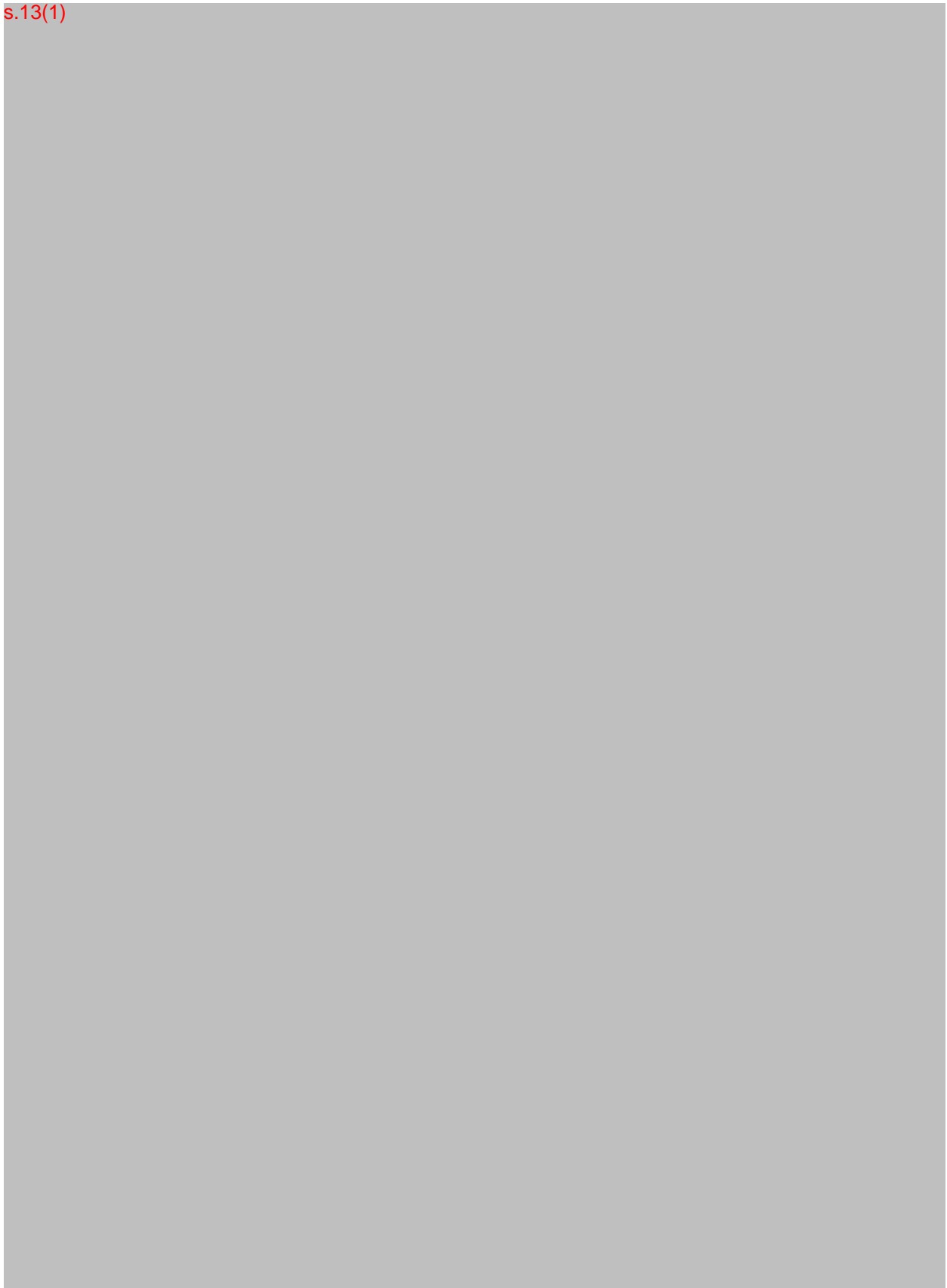


s.13(1)

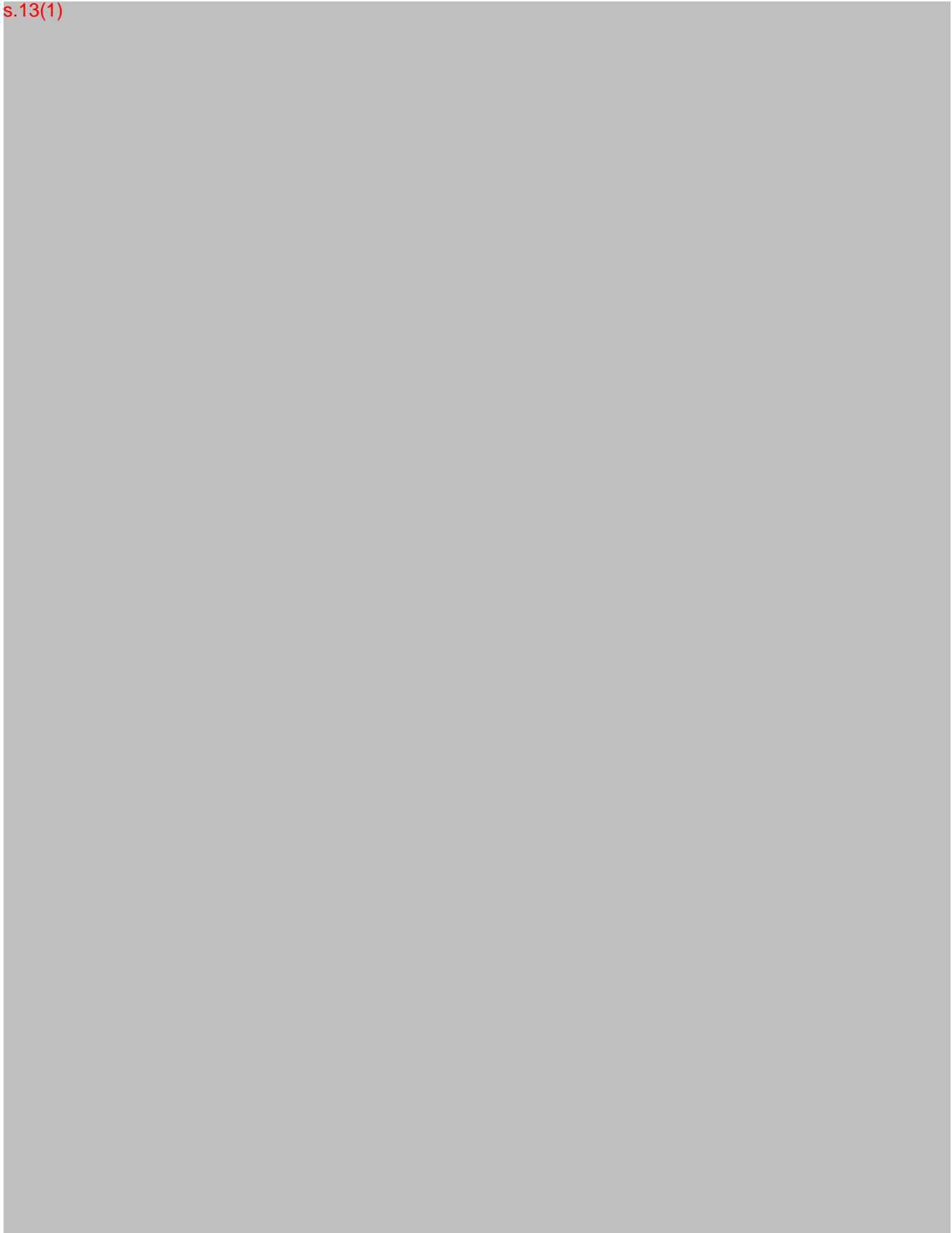




s.13(1)



s.13(1)



s.13(1)



**From:** ["Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)  
**To:** ["Ashdown, Maryn" <maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca>](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
**Date:** 7/8/2024 4:42:17 PM  
**Subject:** Leadership minutes - Endorsement & Advocacy  
**Attachments:** Endorsement Advocacy overview for leadership july 2024.pptx

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Hi Maryn,

Here's the summary and the Q&A from the minutes, and I've attached the slides with my notes.

Christina shared the revised Endorsement and Advocacy Policy approved by the VPL Board in January 2023, which was updated due to an increase in requests for advocacy by VPL. The Endorsement policy was first developed in 2015, and advocacy aspects were incorporated in the existing policy given the related nature of the content. She discussed that VPL is a public and government funded institution, with a purpose of providing library service to everyone in the community. It needs to be a place that is welcoming for everyone in the community and serves everyone, and that maintains public trust. This policy helps ensure that we are thoughtful about how staff and the Board allow VPL's reputation, resources and power to be used. She also noted that the policy does not apply to staff's participation in advocacy in their personal capacity, when it is not connected to their role at VPL. She noted that library association activity can be tricky to separate, and invited staff to talk to their manager if help is needed to interpret or ensure compliance with the policy.

She clarified the definitions of endorsement and advocacy, where endorsement is showing support for other organizations, and that advocacy is more proactive and sustained work to address issues. She gave examples of when VPL will participate and not participate; and how staff should handle requests. The policy requires that endorsement requests be approved by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and that advocacy be approved by the Board. Branches may receive endorsement requests related to their neighbourhoods, for example, a Neighbourhood House or community organization asking for a letter of support from VPL for their grant application, and that staff should send these requests to their manager. The manager will send this request to their director and/or Christina for approval.

Christina also talked about VPL's Code of Conduct and its relationship to the Endorsement and Advocacy policy, and the ways that it identifies expectations for staff to maintain trust and respect for VPL as a civic institution. She confirmed that VPL will only take positions on issues that are related to library services, and that these must be Board approved. The Library cannot be used as a platform for our personal beliefs. She noted that VPL's Strategic Plan and Inclusive Library Services policy outlines our position on raising voices that have been marginalized, and that we do this through our displays, program and collections, to provide

information and education. She reminded staff that we have an obligation to serve everyone in our community, no matter what their beliefs, background, religion, or criminal history are, as long as they behave respectfully to each other and staff in our spaces, to provide information for them to make their own decisions, and to not take sides on issues in our work at VPL.

The Code of Conduct also applies to the Hub and internal communications, and discussions on the Hub are subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. FOI is a way that staff in publicly funded institutions are held accountable for the responsibility we have by being funded through taxpayers. VPL's budget is 93% funded through municipal taxes, and has funding through provincial taxes on top of that. Political conversations do not belong on work communication tools. Christina also noted that she will plan a video call to go over this policy and questions with all staff.

[Link to presentation](#)

Q: Is it correct that the final decision on endorsement is the Chief Librarian & CEO, and the final decision on advocacy is the Board? If the Board tells us to do something, do we have to do it?

A: Yes, endorsement requests are decided by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and the Board decides if we will participate in advocacy. The Board governs VPL, and if the Board directs us to do something, we have to execute their decision. We can provide feedback, but it is ultimately their decision. We all have choices, and sometimes if we disagree, the choice is whether to continue working for VPL. With situations happening in the US around book censorship, we've seen some Chief Librarians resign when the Board has provided direction that they do not agree with.

Q: What is an example of an endorsement?

A: An endorsement is when an individual or organization comes us to ask for VPL's support of something they're doing, such as a grant they are applying for, where they would like us to write a letter of support. We often do this for existing partners, like immigrant serving or family serving agencies. When I get the request, I will ask what we have done with them in the past and what this endorsement supports. Depending on the circumstance, I may check in with the Board Chair before providing the endorsement.

Q: In terms of letters of endorsement, is there a timeline for turnaround on those requests, particularly if they are time-sensitive (like a grant deadline)?

A: You should allow approximately a week. You can make it easier by

providing a draft letter from the organization of what they would like us to say or writing the letter yourself, so that once I've confirmed that VPL can support the organization, I can edit as needed and sign. There's also a request for endorsement form to fill out. If we can't meet the turnaround time sometimes it means we can't provide the endorsement.

Q: Can you give us any specific examples where this may have been a challenge in the past?

A: Some endorsement and advocacy requests that have gone to the Board have been challenging. Requests the Board discussed, and determined weren't directly about library services, included \$10 a day childcare and transit passes. These affected access to our services, but they weren't directly about our services. These required a lot of discussion, and are part of why the Board revised the policy. Examples of issues that we do participate in advocacy on include copyright and digital licensing.

An example of personal values and beliefs being applied to our services in a way that is not okay was when a staff member put a note in a Horizon record about a book then weeded the book because they had concerns about the author's background. We need to help staff understand that we are obligated as public servants to set aside our personal beliefs when we are delivering library services.

Q: I'm interested to hear more about the risks to the library if internal communications (e.g. Hub) were made public through an FOI request. For instance, if staff members were debating or advocating for a political issue on the Hub. What could happen to the library if this became public?

A: There are lots of possibilities, and it is hard to anticipate. For context, libraries have historically been well supported by both left and right leaning political parties. With increasing polarization, this is changing. Staff conversations about political issues interpreted as representing library views in media could compromise our support on the basis of our alignment with or against those political issues. Our budget is decided by elected officials aligned with political parties, and members of the public also speak for or against civic organizations during budget deliberations. Normally we can rely on those public speakers being in support of the library. If they were not, it could affect the funding that supports all of us.

This is why a hub post sometimes has comments restricted, especially when it's veering outside of our Code of Conduct, or we post a message asking staff to end discussion of an issue on the

Hub. We do this when we see risks of non-compliance with our policies, and discussions that could be problematic for the staff members or the Library's reputation.

Q: Is VPL Chat also included in the list of internal communications open to FOI requests?

A: Yes. All tools used for work are subject to FOI requests, and you must only use work tools for work conversations. Everything we do at work is subject to FOI. This transparency and accountability is how we create trust for government/publicly funded institutions in Canada.

Q: I am sometimes approached by members of the public when I'm outside the library who recognize me as a library worker. How should I respond when they ask me, "What is the library's position on 'x'?"

A: Generally you can say: "The library doesn't take a position on political issues. We're here to make sure everyone can make their own informed opinion." Sometimes the library will have a position, and if we do it's written down in a policy or a Board report. For example, you could all look at the Inclusive Library Services Policy and our Strategic Plan to help you with your answer. You can paraphrase from our policy or from a VPL document, if it's an issue that the Board has taken a position on. If it isn't Board approved, then there is no library position. **It is always OK to say "I don't know."**

Q: Will your video call be available for all staff?

A: Yes, I will hold an all staff call on this topic.

## Other Updates

Christina reminded staff that the **Pride Parade** is August 4<sup>th</sup>. The posting is on the [hub](#) if anyone is interested in participating and staff are still needed for the VPL tables. Sam Mills, Branch Head of Dunbar, noted a number of events related to the library that will be happening. More information is found [here](#).

Christina reported that all capital requests submitted to **City Council** last week made it through the first round, and will be decided on July 23. These include: increased funding for Oakridge; replacement furniture for Central; ongoing budget for Central revitalization; increased funding for branch renovations; IT server room's backup power and cooling; and an interim solution for the Marpole Branch.

Lastly, Christina thanked staff for participating in the **EDI Staff Engagement** and [their](#) input on the actions. The reports will be shared over the summer. She thanked the project team's hard work to lead the feedback sessions and analyze the results, and recognized in addition the emotional labour involved: Pat Chong, Manager of Policy & Planning; Emily Aspinwall, Assistant Manager of Circulation;

Nichole Holdbak, Planning Analyst; and Sze Wann Lim, Supervisor of Mount Pleasant.

Goretti McLean  
Office Coordinator (Acting) Directors Group  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4001 | e: [goretti.mclean@vpl.ca](mailto:goretti.mclean@vpl.ca)

*Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.*



# Endorsement & Advocacy Board Policy

Overview for VPL Leadership Team

July 3 2024

# Policy Objective

To provide a framework for responding to requests from organizations, groups, or individuals seeking VPL endorsement of their work or position on an issue, as well as for proactive efforts made by VPL related to public positions.

# Definitions

*Endorsement:* The expression of approval or support through any medium, often one-time, for an individual or organization's activity, position, or contribution.

*Advocacy:* Proactive planned, deliberate, and sustained effort to influence decisions on an issue of strategic importance.

# Goals of Endorsement or Advocacy

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL

# Scope

*Applies to any activities related to a public position or issue that, if acted upon, have the potential to engage VPL staff, patrons or trustees, or impact the reputation of VPL in the community.*

- Includes: efforts by Library Board and/or staff presented on behalf of VPL
- It's not: personal activities or those as part of professional associations

# Policy Statements - Principles

- VPL is a respected civic institution and must carefully consider the implications of its endorsement or advocacy activities.
- VPL will not advance interests that are in conflict with Library policies.
- VPL works in partnership with the broader library sector, and will leverage its position as a large urban public library system to enhance the capacity of public libraries in BC and across Canada.

# Policy Statements - Goals

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL

# General Guidelines

- VPL may support policy positions or recommendations that advance public library services.
- As a City agency, VPL may endorse or support the advocacy efforts of the City of Vancouver.
- VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services.
- VPL will not extend its goodwill and brand to the endorsement of partisan activities, including support for a political party or candidate.
- VPL's purchase of products from vendors should not be considered an endorsement of that product or service.



# Endorsement Requests

- Endorsement of activities that further VPL's priorities and goals and do not unduly burden VPL's financial or human resources will generally be provided. Eg:
  - Initiatives that protect or advance information rights in Canada;
  - A policy or submission statement issued by a library organization; or
  - Activities that seek to enhance access or engagement with library services or information in Canada.
- VPL may endorse activities of organizations it partners with in delivering VPL services
- Must be approved by the Chief Librarian & CEO

# Advocacy

- VPL may undertake advocacy activities to advance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services, addressing areas such as:
  - Policy positions and legislation on issues such as copyright, intellectual freedom, and privacy;
  - Issue areas linked with libraries including literacy, education, and human rights;
  - Funding for library services.
- Advocacy activities will be recommended by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and must be approved by the Library Board.

# Why is this important?

- Increasing requests from staff for VPL to publicly support issues, organizations, or positions
- Increasing conversations on the Hub about issues that are not about delivering library services and risk not complying with our Code of Conduct
- The Hub and our email are ultimately public, although they are internal forums. All information is subject to FOI and should be limited to work purposes.

# Code of Conduct: 1.3 Responsibility

Staff must act responsibly, within the law and within the authorities of the Library Act. They are to observe the Code of Conduct. This means disclosing actual or potential conflict of interest relating to their public duties and taking steps to resolve the conflict for the protection of the public interest; following the letter and spirit of policies and procedures; and ***exercising all conferred power strictly for the purpose for which the powers have been conferred.***

# 1.4 Leadership

Staff must demonstrate and promote the key principles of the Code of Conduct through their decisions, actions and behaviour. Their behaviour must **build and inspire the public's trust and confidence in local government.**

# 1.5 Respect

Staff must conduct public business efficiently, with decorum and with proper attention to the Library's diversity. They must treat each other and others with respect at all times. This means not using derogatory language towards others, respecting the rights of other people, treating people with courtesy and recognizing the different roles others play in local government decision making

# Policy Goals

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL

From: ["Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)  
To: ["de Castell"](mailto:deCastell@vpl.ca)  
[Christina](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)  
Date: 7/3/2024 5:31:46 PM  
Subject: Re: BRI Issue

---

Yes, it can go tonight. I don't have any changes, it covers what's needed. If the first message was also sent to Tim, [s.13\(1\)](#)

Sent via BlackBerry Hub; Inbox for Android  
From: Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca  
Sent: July 3, 2024 5:26 p.m.  
To: Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca  
Subject: BRI Issue

Hi Christina,  
Would you like the email from Tim to go tonight? [s.22\(3\)\(d\)](#)

Best,  
Sophie

Sophie Middleton (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: sophie.middleton@vpl.ca

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x?m??k??y??m (Musqueam), S?  
wx\_wú7mesh (Squamish), and s?lilw?ta? (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples



**From:** ["Chrysalyn Tolentino" <Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca>](mailto:Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca)  
**To:** ["Ibey, Dawn" <Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca>](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)  
**CC:** ["Middleton, Sophie" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 10:46:44 AM  
**Subject:** RE: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

---

TY!

Chrysalyn Tolentino (she/her/hers)  
Executive Assistant  
Office of the Chief Librarian & CEO | Library Board  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4003 | e: [chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca)

---

From: Dawn Ibey <Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 10:42 AM  
To: Chrysalyn Tolentino <Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca>  
Cc: Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi CT.  
Just so you know this matter is closed.  
-d

---

From: Council Correspondence <[councilcorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:councilcorrespondence@vancouver.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 10:32 AM  
To: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Dawn Ibey <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Cynthia Low <[Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)>  
Subject: RE: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Sophie,

Thanks for sharing your response and providing the update, I've now closed this case from my end.

Best regards,

Rachel Chan  
Council Correspondence Coordinator  
City Clerk's Department | City of Vancouver  
604-873-7266  
[rachel.chan2@vancouver.ca](mailto:rachel.chan2@vancouver.ca)

---

From: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: Wednesday, July 3, 2024 9:28 AM  
To: Council Correspondence <[councilcorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:councilcorrespondence@vancouver.ca)>  
Cc: Ashdown, Maryn <[maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Ibey, Dawn <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Low, Cynthia <[Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)>

---

Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Rachel,

I responded to the patron as below last week and also requested the gallery exhibit curators to respond to the patron's concerns.

In addition I forwarded the email to Cynthia Low at Britannia Community Center and Amanda Lye, Arts and Culture Programmer, as the Library does not manage the gallery space.

I have included my correspondence with Cynthia.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)

Vancouver Public Library

t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam [[musqueam.bc.ca](http://musqueam.bc.ca)]), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish [[squamish.net](http://squamish.net)]), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh [[twnation.ca](http://twnation.ca)]) Peoples

---

From: Sophie Middleton

Sent: June 28, 2024 3:42 PM

To: s.22(1)

Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Dear s.22(1)

Thank you very much for contacting us to let us know about your concerns.

I have forwarded your email to the curators of the exhibit Jess Sung and Iris Hougbo at [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com) to respond.

Information about the community gallery can be found on their website: <https://www.britanniaartgallery.org/> [[britanniaartgallery.org](http://britanniaartgallery.org)].

The exhibit is being replaced in two days.

Best regards,  
Sophie Middleton

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)

Vancouver Public Library

t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam [[musqueam.bc.ca](http://musqueam.bc.ca)]), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish [[squamish.net](http://squamish.net)]), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh [[twnation.ca](http://twnation.ca)]) Peoples

**To Whom It May Concern,**

We, a group of s.22(1) are writing to express our deep concern regarding the imagery currently displayed as a painting hanging at our local public library, Britannia Library, which depicts a person wearing a Keffiyeh covering their face next to an Indigenous person.



The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

1.

**Exclusion from Public Life:**

- Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

2.

**Lack of Political Neutrality:**

- The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

3.

**Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

- Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

4.

**Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

- Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

5.

**Impact on Community Harmony:**

- Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community



engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

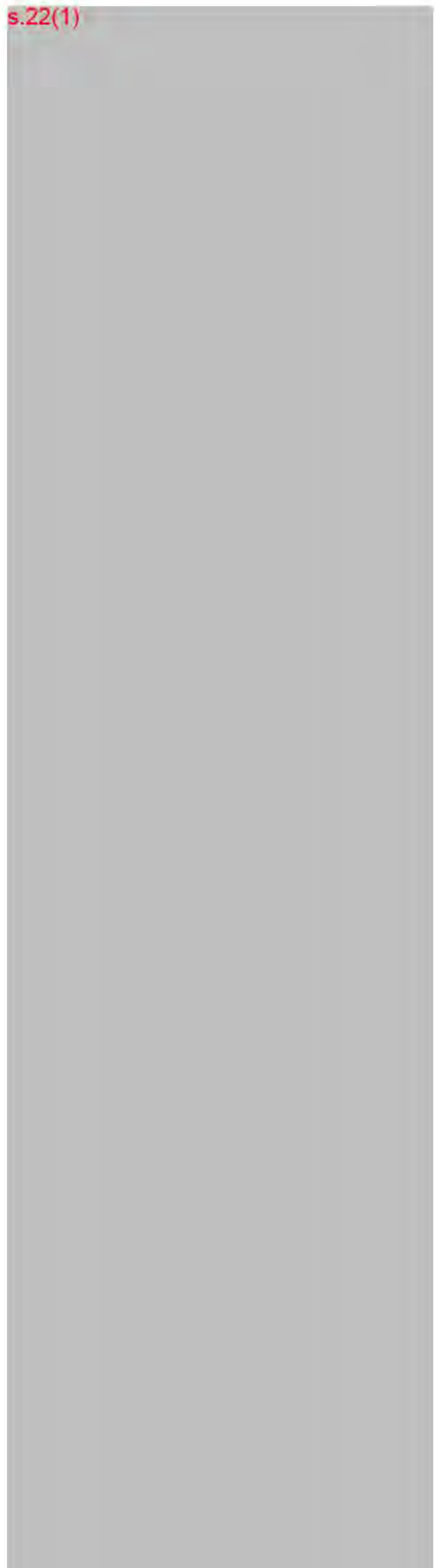
We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely,

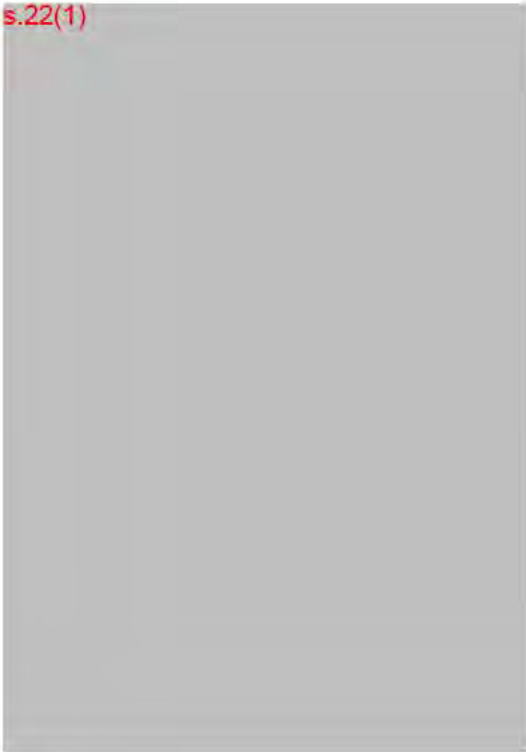
s.22(1)



s.22(1)



s.22(1)



On behalf of a larger group of concerned s.22(1)



s.22(1)



**From:** ["Timothy McMillan" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)  
**To:** s.22(1)  
**CC:** ["McMillan, Timothy" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)  
**Date:** 7/4/2024 9:04:30 AM  
**Subject:** FW: Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

---

Dear s.22(1)

Thank you and the co-signatories for taking the time to write with regards to the recent exhibit at the Britannia Art Gallery. I am the Head of the Britannia Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. While the gallery space is within our building, the selection of artists and the exhibition of content in the space is the responsibility of the Britannia Community Services Centre (BCSC). Recognizing the impacts you've shared, library staff sent your email to the Centre's leadership team last week.

- Cynthia Low, Executive Director, BCSC: [Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)
- Amanda Lye, Arts & Culture Programmer: [Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca)
- Britannia Art Gallery Curation: [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com)

Though the gallery is another unit within the broader, multi-party civic complex at Britannia, it is important for me to acknowledge the distress experienced by you, the co-signatories, and other community members due to the content on display in our shared physical space. Moving forward the library will work closely with Britannia Community Services to share policy and learning to support the planning of potential future exhibits.

The gallery's exhibits are displayed on a monthly basis, and the past month's content was removed on schedule this past Sunday, June 30.

For my part and as the head of this branch library, the words you and the co-signatories have shared are personally resonant and I extend my sincere thanks to you for bringing them to me.

Tim

**Timothy McMillan** (he/him)  
Branch Head | Britannia Branch  
Vancouver Public Library  
T: 604.665.3914 | E: [timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

I am grateful to live and work on the unceded homelands of the x m kw y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations

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From: s.22(1)  
Sent: Friday, June 28, 2024 7:50 AM  
To: s.15(1)(l) McMillan, Timothy <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: s.22(1)



s.22(1)

s.22(1) Sim, Ken <[Ken.Sim@vancouver.ca](mailto:Ken.Sim@vancouver.ca)>; [yung@vancouver.ca](mailto:yung@vancouver.ca); s.22(1)

Subject: Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library

**To Whom It May Concern,**

We, a group of s.22(1) are writing to express our deep concern regarding the imagery currently displayed as a painting hanging at our local public library, Britannia Library, which depicts a person wearing a Keffiyeh covering their face next to an Indigenous person.



The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.



Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

- Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

**2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**

- The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

**3. Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

- Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

**4. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

- Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

**5. Impact on Community Harmony:**

- Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely, s.22(1)  
s.22(1)

s.22(1)



On behalf of a larger group of concerned s.22(1)

**From:** "Timothy McMillan" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "Middleton, Sophie" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**CC:** "Kimberley Constable" <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/4/2024 10:15:40 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Good to go

---

I have submitted emails to the initial complainant and to the second, bcc-ing you, Alyssa, and Kim as well for reference next week. My full contact information was included in my signature as always. Should I receive further correspondence, I will update.

T

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**From:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 5:48 PM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** FW: Good to go

Hi Tim,

The second email can go later this week not tonight, sorry that wasn't clear!

Best,

Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she / her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)

Vancouver Public Library

t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x\u695?m\u601?|Èk\u695?\u601?y\u787?\u601?m (Musqueam), S\u7733?wx\u817?w`27mesh (Squamish), and s\u601?lil\u601?ta\u620? (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** Sophie Middleton  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 5:36 PM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Cc:** Alyssa Green <[Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca](mailto:Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** Good to go

Hi Tim,

I added in Christina's points and she didn't have any other additions. Please send it tonight s.22(3)(d)

s.22(3)(d)

Also would you be able to send an appropriately modified version of this email to the original complainant too. Fantastic work today!

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Sophie

Dear s.22(1)

Thank you for taking the time write. I am the Head of the Britannia Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. While the gallery space is within our building, the selection and exhibition of the art in the space is the responsibility of the Britannia Community Services Centre. **We have sent your email** to the Centre's leadership team. They may be reached at:

- \li600\fi-240\sb0\pntext\* \\*\pn\pnlvblt\pnf1\pnindent240\pnql\pntxtb- Cynthia Low, Executive Director: [Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)
- \li600\fi-240 \pntext\* \\*\pn\pnlvblt\pnf1\pnindent240\pnql\pntxtb- Amanda Lye, Arts & Culture Programmer: [Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca)
- \li600\fi-240\sa0\pntext\* \\*\pn\pnlvblt\pnf1\pnindent240\pnql\pntxtb- Britannia Art Gallery Curation: [brtngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtngallery@gmail.com)

Though the gallery is another unit within the broader civic complex at Britannia, I acknowledge the discomfort experienced by library patrons due to the content on display in a shared physical space. **Moving forward we will be working with Britannia Community Services to share policy and learning to support planning potential future exhibits** Gallery exhibits are displayed on a monthly basis, and the past month's content was removed on schedule this past Sunday, June 30.

What is our responsibility and what is distressing to me, is the report of library staff wearing political symbols. All persons

working for the library are subject to the [Code of Conduct Policy](#) and the [Endorsement and Advocacy Policy](#). The display of political symbols contravenes the spirit of the advocacy policy and several clauses of the code of conduct, most notably:

Re advocacy:

- *VPL may undertake advocacy activities to enhance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services.*

*VPL*

Re conduct:

- *VPL 1.5 Respect: Staff must conduct public business efficiently, with decorum and proper attention to the Library's diversity.*

Contraventions of the staff policy will be addressed immediately. The concerns you've shared and those shared in the group letter have been shared with our site partners and I expect communication to be forthcoming. For my part and as the head of this branch library, the words you've shared are deeply resonant and I extend my deep gratitude to you for sharing.

Sincerely,

Tim

Best,

Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she / her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)

Vancouver Public Library

t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x̱m̱w̱ (Musqueam), S̱w̱ (Squamish), and s̱w̱ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples



**From:** ["Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)  
**To:** ["Middleton, Sophie" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)  
["Nelson, Carol" <carol.nelson@vpl.ca>](mailto:carol.nelson@vpl.ca)  
**CC:** ["Ibey, Dawn" <Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca>](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)  
["Ashdown, Maryn" <maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca>](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
**Date:** 7/5/2024 2:04:27 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

---

Thanks for sharing this Sophie.

---

**From:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 5, 2024 9:39 AM  
**To:** Carol Nelson <Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca>  
**Cc:** Christina de Castell <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>; Dawn Ibey <Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca>; Maryn Ashdown <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** FW: Letter of concern

Hi Carol,  
I wanted to share the patron response to Tim's email about the BRI situation.  
It seems to have landed well.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** owner-nsms [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) [@vpl.ca](#) > On Behalf Of Timothy McMillan  
**Sent:** July 5, 2024 9:33 AM  
**To:** Neighbourhood Services Managers [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) [@vpl.ca](#) >  
**Subject:** nsms: Fw: Letter of concern

Please see the communication below from the BRI patron who shared their concerns last Saturday.

T

Tim McMillan (he/him)  
Branch Head |  
Britannia Branch  
Vancouver Public Library  
T: 604.665.3914 E:  
[timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

This email is being sent from the unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)

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**From:** s.22(1)  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 4, 2024 9:03 PM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan  
**Subject:** [External] Re: Letter of concern

Dear Tim,

I am deeply appreciative for your thoughtful response and understanding.

I respect what a difficult moment we are in politically and how fraught these conversations are for all, no matter their position. The library policies you have shared here are relieving to see, and do seem clear.

I hope they may be used to guide staff to correct their use of political displays in the library. We look forward to returning soon.

Thank you for your time and response.

s.22(1)

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**From:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 4, 2024 8:44 AM  
**To:** s.22(1)  
**Cc:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

Dear s.22(1)

Thank you for taking the time to write. I am the Head of the Britannia Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. While the gallery space is within our building, the selection and exhibition of the art in the space is the responsibility of the Britannia Community Services Centre. We have sent your email to the Centre's leadership team. They may be reached at:

- Cynthia Low, Executive Director: [Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)
- Amanda Lye, Arts & Culture Programmer: [Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca)
- Britannia Art Gallery Curation: [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com)

Though the gallery is another unit within the broader civic complex at Britannia, it is important for me to acknowledge the discomfort experienced by library patrons due to the content on display in a shared physical space.

Moving forward we will be working with Britannia Community Services to share policy and learning



to support planning potential future exhibits

Gallery exhibits are displayed on a monthly basis, and the past month's content was removed on schedule this past Sunday, June 30.

What is our responsibility and what is distressing to me, is the report of library staff wearing political symbols. All persons working for the library are subject to the [Code of Conduct Policy](#) and the [Endorsement and Advocacy Policy](#). The display of political symbols contravenes the spirit of the advocacy policy and several clauses of the code of conduct, most notably:

Re advocacy:

- 

VPL may undertake advocacy activities to enhance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services.

Re conduct:

- 

1.5 Respect – staff must conduct public business efficiently, with decorum and proper attention to the Library's diversity.

Contraventions of the staff policy will be addressed immediately. The concerns you've shared and those shared in the group letter have been discussed with our site partners and I expect communication to be forthcoming. For my part and as the head of this branch library, the words you've shared are deeply resonant and I extend my sincere gratitude to you for bringing them to me.

Tim

**Timothy McMillan** (he/him)

Branch Head | Britannia Branch

Vancouver Public Library

T: 604.665.3914 | E: [timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

I am grateful to live and work on the unceded homelands of the x m kw y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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From: s.22(1)

Sent: June 29, 2024 9:12 PM

To: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; directors s.15(1)(l)

Subject: [External] Letter of concern

Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by s.22(1) earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library. s.22(1)

s.22(1) I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my s.22(1) children to and have

loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.

When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons). How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

s.22(1)

s.22(1) letter:

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

□

Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

**2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**

□

The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

**3. Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

□

Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

**4. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

□

Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol.



The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

#### **5. Impact on Community Harmony:**

Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove

the display

of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely,

**From:** "Maryn Ashdown" <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "Neighbourhood Services Managers" s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca>  
"Menzo, Christie" <christie.menzo@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/11/2024 2:38:49 PM  
**Subject:** nsms: FW: Video call updates

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Hi team,

I'm forwarding you some questions that came from Kim's NE team about the advocacy policy, as I think they're relevant across the system, and it's so helpful to have Christina's written content to think about as we grapple with these concepts in a time when social activism is a norm.

If you're not able to attend Christina's video call next week, it will be recorded and available for future reference. I'll put on our NYS agenda how we'll be sharing this content out.

### **Maryn Ashdown**

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia  
t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
She/Her/Hers

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**From:** Christina de Castell <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 11, 2024 2:18 PM  
**To:** Maryn Ashdown <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>; Kimberley Constable <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>  
**Cc:** Carol Nelson <Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Video call updates

Thanks for this. Some of the topics are ones I've flagged for Carol to add to the FAQ that's started, and I'll make sure I cover them in the video call. Some notes below. I'm copying Carol for the FAQ.

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**From:** Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 11, 2024 10:16 AM  
**To:** Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>; Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** RE: Video call updates

Hi Christina, I'm sharing notes from Kim, as she had a challenging follow up conversation with the NE branch leadership (regular meeting). They discussed the BRI situation with watermelon pins and art, and had a broader discussion about the philosophy of this topic.

- People are confused between what symbols are acceptable and what is not (e.g. gaza pins vs. orange shirts, poppies, peace signs). They want to understand why we pick and choose topics and symbols that we do publicly advocate for (this isn't about advocating for library-specific things, more about social issues like TRC and LGBTQ+2S).

**When we publicly advocate on something, or make an obvious effort to promote something, it's**

because the Board has an established and documented position through the Strategic Plan and its associated activities. This is true for both TRC and 2SLGBTQ+. . In the Strategic Plan, Belonging & Connection pillar, for “What we Heard” you’ll see that it indicates “active support of IBPOC and LGBTQ2+ communities” as emerging from consultation with community for the Strategic Plan. It also references that TRC over-arches our priorities at the beginning. For TRC and UNDRIP it began with the Calls to Action, followed by the UNDRIP legislative changes, and, Board reports are on the website under Progress to Date: <https://www.vpl.ca/truth-reconciliation>. For gender/2SLGBTQ+ issues, this stems from the legislative change to include gender in the Canadian Human Rights Act in 2017, which led to the City and VPL establishing strategies and action plans. There’s background in this report: <https://www.vpl.ca/sites/default/files/TGV2SInclusionPlanning2020.pdf>

For poppies and peace signs, it’s quite rare to hear someone saying they’re political or polarizing, although I know this happens with poppies from time to time. The City participates in and hosts Remembrance Day services, Council attends, etc. so there’s clarity that they would be an acceptable symbol if someone chose to wear one. Work isn’t a place for displaying symbols about your personal beliefs, regardless of what those are, which is why this comes up in our policies.

- People are looking for more guidance and understanding of how to navigate the difficult conversations arising from these issues – e.g. when a display is not within guidelines, or when someone is wearing a political symbol that resonates with the public opinion, or with the specific local community for a branch.

Explaining the role of the library as a place to learn about background and history of issues, and better understand their complexity would be a good place to focus – and then coming back to that it’s a policy of the Library and the City, so we need to follow it, ultimately.

- People are interested in understanding why we’re talking about the advocacy policy now – need context (maybe around what’s happened at VPL and in the world to make us feel we need to have this discussion)

The Board updated it last year, and we hadn’t done any awareness activities yet, and we’ve had quite a few requests related to taking positions, making statements etc. on a variety of topics over the past year that made it clear that there are lots of people who aren’t aware and needed to understand this better.

- People don’t understand why we advocate for gender rights and TRC specifically, and not other human rights linked issues

Covered above, those two things had Canadian legislative changes recently and the Board made the decision to prioritize them, following broad community consultation.

- Leadership team need clear direction and support to have difficult conversations with their teams. This includes managers – who may want a followup discussion as they will be supporting staff in navigating grey areas

We do need our supervisors to ensure our policies are followed. With the BRI situation, which I didn’t know about when I was giving the presentation, it’s obvious that our first step needs to be awareness raising, rather than our first step being disciplinary. If someone is refusing to stop doing something that violates policy that’s different, but we should be starting with conversations. Hopefully FAQ and my video call will help. I’d then suggest one on one conversations with those who are obviously going to struggle, before any group conversations at the unit level.

- Our leadership team may need support in understanding that we’re asking them to exercise judgement in what is a balanced and nonpartisan display/program/etc, vs. what is outside of our policy. They may need support as they start work in this area.

Perhaps a manager or supervisor group could look at display guidelines? Collection strategy? ISV?



Principles probably already exist – i.e. multiple viewpoints, community interest, what are the national/local days in the calendar... it would be good to engage staff in coming up with these but I think they may exist. It's important to also think about this for the signage we add.

- Some of these questions intersect with the incoming intellectual freedom training – we may need to be clear that IF is aimed at patrons to support their right to access all information without judgement or partisanship. Yes, they're definitely linked to each other. We need to be a place where people can come and get their questions answered without judgement.

### Maryn Ashdown

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services

Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia

t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)

She/Her/Hers

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From: owner-exempt-mgrs-incl-DGR s.15(1)(l) On Behalf Of  
Christina de Castell  
Sent: July 10, 2024 5:00 PM  
To: Exempt Managers Including DGR s.15(1)(l)  
Subject: exempt-mgrs-incl-dgr: Video call updates

Hello everyone,

If you have updates for your units that you'd like me to share on the video call next week, please send them to me by end of day Monday. Bullet points are great.

Christina

Christina de Castell  
Chief Librarian & CEO  
Vancouver Public Library  
t. 604-331-4007

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From: "Maryn Ashdown" s.15(1)(l) @vpl.ca>

To: [Middleton](#)

[Sophie](#)

Date: 7/9/2024 9:17:11 AM

Subject: nsms: FW: Leadership minutes - Endorsement & Advocacy

Attachments: Endorsement Advocacy overview for leadership july 2024.pptx

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Hi team,

I'm sharing the minutes (below) and powerpoint from Christina's Leadership presentation on the advocacy policy. This is a really important presentation for us as it sets expectations for workplace behaviour in cases where personal values don't align with our organizational mission as a library "C and we see this happening a lot in our NYS spaces.

I'll talk about this policy and presentation at NYS (on zoom!) next week, and how we will move this conversation forwards across our teams.

I'll ask you to read the powerpoint and minutes carefully "C this can happen in the next few weeks, but please do set aside time as we'll be coaching our team members on this content.

Thanks,

**Maryn Ashdown**

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services

Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia

t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)

She/Her/Hers

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From: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>

Sent: July 8, 2024 4:42 PM

To: Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>

Subject: Leadership minutes - Endorsement & Advocacy

Hi Maryn,

Here's the summary and the Q&A from the minutes, and I've attached the slides with my notes.

Christina shared the revised Endorsement and Advocacy Policy approved by the VPL Board in January 2023, which was updated due to an increase in requests for advocacy by VPL. The Endorsement policy was first developed in 2015, and advocacy aspects were incorporated in the existing policy given the related nature of the content. She discussed that VPL is a public and government funded institution, with a purpose of providing library service to everyone in the community. It needs to be a place that is welcoming for everyone in the community and serves everyone, and that maintains public trust. This policy helps ensure that we are thoughtful about how staff and the Board allow VPL's reputation, resources and power to be used. She also noted that the policy does not apply to staff's participation in advocacy in their personal capacity, when it is not connected to their role at VPL. She noted that library association activity can be tricky to separate, and invited staff to talk to their manager if help is needed to interpret or ensure compliance with the policy.

She clarified the definitions of endorsement and advocacy, where endorsement is showing support for other organizations, and that advocacy is more proactive and sustained work to address issues. She gave examples of when VPL will participate and not participate; and how staff should handle requests. The policy requires that endorsement requests be approved by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and that advocacy be approved by the Board. Branches may receive endorsement requests related to their neighbourhoods, for example, a Neighbourhood House or community organization asking for a letter of support from VPL for

their grant application, and that staff should send these requests to their manager. The manager will send this request to their director and/or Christina for approval.

\ri789

\li120\ri789 Christina also talked about VPL's Code of Conduct and its relationship to the Endorsement and Advocacy policy, and the ways that it identifies expectations for staff to maintain trust and respect for VPL as a civic institution. She confirmed that VPL will only take positions on issues that are related to library services, and that these must be Board approved. The Library cannot be used as a platform for our personal beliefs. She noted that VPL's Strategic Plan and Inclusive Library Services policy outlines our position on raising voices that have been marginalized, and that we do this through our displays, program and collections, to provide information and education. She reminded staff that we have an obligation to serve everyone in our community, no matter what their beliefs, background, religion, or criminal history are, as long as they behave respectfully to each other and staff in our spaces, to provide information for them to make their own decisions, and to not take sides on issues in our work at VPL.

\ri789

\ri789 The Code of Conduct also applies to the Hub and internal communications, and discussions on the Hub are subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. FOI is a way that staff in publicly funded institutions are held accountable for the responsibility we have by being funded through taxpayers. VPL's budget is 93% funded through municipal taxes, and has funding through provincial taxes on top of that. Political conversations do not belong on work communication tools. Christina also noted that she will plan a video call to go over this policy and questions with all staff.

\li120\ri789

\li120\ri789 [Link to presentation](#)

\li120\ri789

\li120\ri789 Q: Is it correct that the final decision on endorsement is the Chief Librarian & CEO, and the final decision on advocacy is the Board? If the Board tells us to do something, do we have to do it?

\li120\ri789

\li720\ri789\fi-600 A: Yes, endorsement requests are decided by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and the Board decides if we will participate in advocacy. The Board governs VPL, and if the Board directs us to do something, we have to execute their decision. We can provide feedback, but it is ultimately their decision. We all have choices, and sometimes if we disagree, the choice is whether to continue working for VPL. With situations happening in the US around book censorship, we've seen some Chief Librarians resign when the Board has provided direction that they do not agree with.

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 Q: What is an example of an endorsement?

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 A: An endorsement is when an individual or organization comes us to ask for VPL's support of something they're doing, such as a grant they are applying for, where they would like us to write a letter of support. We often do this for existing partners, like immigrant serving or family serving agencies. When I get the request, I will ask what we have done with them in the past and what this endorsement supports. Depending on the circumstance, I may check in with the Board Chair before providing the endorsement.

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 Q: In terms of letters of endorsement, is there a timeline for turnaround on those requests, particularly if they are time-sensitive (like a grant deadline)?

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 A: You should allow approximately a week. You can make it easier by providing a draft letter from the organization of what they would like us to say or writing the letter yourself, so that once I've confirmed that VPL can support the organization, I can



edit as needed and sign. There's also a request for endorsement form to fill out. If we can't meet the turnaround time sometimes it means we can't provide the endorsement.

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 Q: Can you give us any specific examples where this may have been a challenge in the past?

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 A: Some endorsement and advocacy requests that have gone to the Board have been challenging. Requests the Board discussed, and determined weren't directly about library services, included \$10 a day childcare and transit passes. These affected access to our services, but they weren't directly about our services. These required a lot of discussion, and are part of why the Board revised the policy. Examples of issues that we do participate in advocacy on include copyright and digital licensing.

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789 An example of personal values and beliefs being applied to our services in a way that is not okay was when a staff member put a note in a Horizon record about a book then weeded the book because they had concerns about the author's background. We need to help staff understand that we are obligated as public servants to set aside our personal beliefs when we are delivering library services.

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 Q: I'm interested to hear more about the risks to the library if internal communications (e.g. Hub) were made public through an FOI request. For instance, if staff members were debating or advocating for a political issue on the Hub. What could happen to the library if this became public?

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 A: There are lots of possibilities, and it is hard to anticipate. For context, libraries have historically been well supported by both left and right leaning political parties. With increasing polarization, this is changing. Staff conversations about political issues interpreted as representing library views in media could compromise our support on the basis of our alignment with or against those political issues. Our budget is decided by elected officials aligned with political parties, and members of the public also speak for or against civic organizations during budget deliberations. Normally we can rely on those public speakers being in support of the library. If they were not, it could affect the funding that supports all of us.

\ri789

\li720\ri789 This is why a hub post sometimes has comments restricted, especially when it's veering outside of our Code of Conduct, or we post a message asking staff to end discussion of an issue on the Hub. We do this when we see risks of non-compliance with our policies, and discussions that could be problematic for the staff members or the Library's reputation.

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 Q: Is VPL Chat also included in the list of internal communications open to FOI requests?

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 A: Yes. All tools used for work are subject to FOI requests, and you must only use work tools for work conversations. Everything we do at work is subject to FOI. This transparency and accountability is how we create trust for government/publicly funded institutions in Canada.

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 Q: I am sometimes approached by members of the public when I'm outside the library who recognize me as a library worker. How should I respond when they ask me, "What is the library's position on X?"

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 A: Generally you can say: "The library doesn't take a position on political

issues. We're here to make sure everyone can make their own informed opinion. Sometimes the library will have a position, and if we do it's written down in a policy or a Board report. For example, you could all look at the Inclusive Library Services Policy and our Strategic Plan to help you with your answer. You can paraphrase from our policy or from a VPL document, if it's an issue that the Board has taken a position on. If it isn't Board approved, then there is no library position. **It is always OK to say "I don't know."**

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 Q: Will your video call be available for all staff?

\li720\ri789\fi-600

\li720\ri789\fi-600 A: Yes, I will hold an all staff call on this topic.

\ri784

## **\li120\\*kmkstart Other\_Updates\\*kmkend Other\_Updates Other Updates**

\li120 Christina reminded staff that the Pride Parade is August 4<sup>th</sup>. The posting is on the [hub](#) if anyone is interested in participating and staff are still needed for the VPL tables. Sam Mills, Branch Head of Dunbar, noted a number of events related to the library that will be happening. More information is found [here](#).

\li120

\li120 Christina reported that all capital requests submitted to City Council last week made it through the first round, and will be decided on July 23. These include: increased funding for Oakridge; replacement furniture for Central; ongoing budget for Central revitalization; increased funding for branch renovations; IT server room's backup power and cooling; and an interim solution for the Marpole Branch.

\li120

\li120 Lastly, Christina thanked staff for participating in the EDI Staff Engagement and [their](#) input on the actions. The reports will be shared over the summer. She thanked the project team's hard work to lead the feedback sessions and analyze the results, and recognized in addition the emotional labour involved: Pat Chong, Manager of Policy & Planning; Emily Aspinwall, Assistant Manager of Circulation; Nichole Holdbak, Planning Analyst; and Sze Wann Lim, Supervisor of Mount Pleasant.

Goretti McLean

Office Coordinator (Acting) | Directors Group

Vancouver Public Library

t: 604.331.4001 | e: [goretti.mclean@vpl.ca](mailto:goretti.mclean@vpl.ca)

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**From:** "Christina de Castell" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "VPL Leadership Team" s.15(1)(l) @vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 1:33:33 PM  
**Subject:** vpl-leadership-team: Follow up to today's meeting

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Hi everyone,

Thank you for your attention and questions this morning. I know that for some of you, the relationship between the Hub and email communications and FOI requirements and implications for VPL may not have been fully understood before today, and you may have learned information about our Endorsement and Advocacy Policy, the Code of Conduct Policy, and FOI obligations that you weren't aware of. In follow up to today's presentation, you are welcome to review and delete any of your own HUB posts/comments that you are concerned may not be in the spirit of VPL policies and obligations. As I mentioned, all our HUB content, including comments, are subject to FOI requests. The comments can be considered transitory records, and can be deleted if there is not an active request for the records. Currently there are no active freedom of information requests where HUB records would be in scope. This also applies if there is something you think a staff member who reports to you should review.

As good practice for records management, it is always a good idea to have a routine for clearing up transitory records, such as passing conversations that happen over email. At the same time, it's important to retain records of decisions that you make that affect patrons or staff.

Please do follow up with your manager if you have questions that didn't get answered today. If we have lots, we'll work on an FAQ for you to support you with conversations in future.

Christina

Christina de Castell  
Chief Librarian & CEO  
Vancouver Public Library  
t. 604-331-4007

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**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "Green, Alyssa" <Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 4:08:47 PM  
**Subject:** FW: Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

---

Hi Alyssa,  
Here is the original email.  
I think you got the second one.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** Chrysalyn Tolentino <Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 9:29 AM  
**To:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>; Kimberley Constable <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>; Timothy McMillan <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Cc:** Maryn Ashdown <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

Thanks!

C

**Chrysalyn Tolentino** (she/her/hers)  
Executive Assistant  
Office of the Chief Librarian & CEO | Library Board  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4003 | e: [chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca)

---

**From:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 9:29 AM  
**To:** Chrysalyn Tolentino <Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca>; Kimberley Constable <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>; Timothy McMillan <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Cc:** Maryn Ashdown <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

Hi Chrysalyn,  
Thanks I will follow up with her about the correspondence that went out last week.



Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam),  
Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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From: Chrysalyn Tolentino <[Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 9:11 AM  
To: Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>; Timothy McMillan  
<[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>; Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: FW: Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

Hi there,

Forwarding the email from City Clerks. Kindly respond to the email sent by [s.22\(1\)](#) and  
bcc [CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca).

Thanks!  
C

**Chrysalyn Tolentino** (she/her/hers)  
Executive Assistant  
Office of the Chief Librarian & CEO | Library Board  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4003 | e: [chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca)

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From: Chan, Rachel (City Clerks) <[Rachel.Chan2@vancouver.ca](mailto:Rachel.Chan2@vancouver.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 9:06 AM  
To: Chrysalyn Tolentino <[Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: [External] Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

Hi Chrysalyn,

Council received these residents' concerns, which have also been emailed to the VPL regarding the  
artwork at Britannia Branch.

Would the VPL be able to respond back to these residents and BCC  
[CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca) in the email response?

Thanks,

**Rachel Chan**  
Council Correspondence Coordinator

City Clerk's Department | City of Vancouver  
604-873-7266  
[rachel.chan2@vancouver.ca](mailto:rachel.chan2@vancouver.ca)

From s.22(1)

Sent: Friday, June 28, 2024 7:50 AM

To: s.15(1)(l) McMillan, Timothy <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>

Cc s.22(1)

s.22(1)

s.22(1)

im, Ken <[Ken.Sim@vancouver.ca](mailto:Ken.Sim@vancouver.ca)>; [yung@vancouver.ca](mailto:yung@vancouver.ca) s.22(1)

Subject: Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library

**To Whom It May Concern,**

We, a group of s.22(1) are writing to express our deep concern regarding the imagery currently displayed as a painting hanging at our local public library, Britannia Library, which depicts a person wearing a Keffiyeh covering their face next to an Indigenous person.

**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "Low, Cynthia" <Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca>  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 4:50:21 PM  
**Subject:** FW: Letter of concern

---

Hi Cynthia,

Here is a second letter of complaint on the same Gallery issue. We are addressing issues related to our own staff and political symbols. I will respond to your other email requests separately. I hope you are well Cynthia.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** s.22(1)  
**Sent:** June 29, 2024 9:12 PM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; directors s.15(1)(l)  
**Subject:** [External] Letter of concern

Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by s.22(1) earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library. s.22(1)  
s.22(1) I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my s.22(1) children to and have loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.

When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons). How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

s.22(1)  
- )



s.22(1) letter:

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

- Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

**2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**

- The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

**3. Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

- Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

**4. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

- Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

**5. Impact on Community Harmony:**

- Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected. Sincerely,



**From:** ["Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)  
**To:** ["McMillan, Timothy" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 5:13:17 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

---

If you haven't sent it, Christina had some additional points maybe we should include.  
Can you send me the draft for her to review.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm ([Musqueam](#)),  
Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliłwətał ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

---

**From:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 5:12 PM  
**To:** Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

Confirmed. Will bcc suffice?

---

**From:** Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 5:12 PM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

Can you send me the final version? [s.13\(1\)](#)  
[s.13\(1\)](#)

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

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Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliłwətał ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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**From:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 4:44 PM

---

To: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Letter of concern

Yes, I will do so immediately. I will also speak to the team individually before 5pm today and then going forward.

Regarding the Centre contacts: **s.22(1)** Has Cynthia been informed?

TYVM

---

From: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 4:38 PM  
To: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; Neighbourhood Services Managers **s.15(1)(l)**<[s.15\(1\)\(l\)@vpl.ca](mailto:s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Letter of concern

Hi Tim,  
This looks excellent, thanks for getting it out so fast.  
Can you include all the Cynthia, Amanda and the curator as the contacts.

On another note we will need to look at the VPL logo on the promotional materials for the art gallery.  
I will leave that conversation to you and Kim.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: **s.15(1)(l)** | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam),  
Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

---

From: owner-nsms **s.15(1)(l)** <[s.15\(1\)\(l\)@vpl.ca](mailto:s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca)> On Behalf Of Timothy McMillan  
Sent: July 3, 2024 4:29 PM  
To: Neighbourhood Services Managers **s.15(1)(l)** <[s.15\(1\)\(l\)@vpl.ca](mailto:s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: nsms: RE: Letter of concern  
Importance: High

Good afternoon. A draft response from Britannia to the patron is below. Anything and everything may be changed before submitting.

**s.13(1)**



s.13(1)



---

From s.22(1)

Sent: June 29, 2024 9:12 PM

To: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; directors s.15(1)(l)

Subject: [External] Letter of concern

Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by s.22(1) earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library. s.22(1)

s.22(1) I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my s.22(1) children to and have loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.



When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons).  
How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

- s.22(1)

s.22(1) letter:

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

□

Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

**2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**

□

The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

**3. Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

□

Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

**4. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

□

Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

**5. Impact on Community Harmony:**

□

Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By

displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove

the display

of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely,

**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "McMillan, Timothy" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 5:23:28 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

---

Thanks so much Tim, I will get any feedback to you right away.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: **s.15(1)(l)** | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm ([Musqueam](#)),  
Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliłwətał ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

---

**From:** Timothy McMillan <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 5:17 PM  
**To:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern  
**Importance:** High  
**Sensitivity:** Confidential

**For review:**

**s.13(1)**





s.13(1)

Sincerely,

Tim

**Timothy McMillan** (he/him)  
Branch Head | Britannia Branch  
Vancouver Public Library  
T: 604.665.3914 | E: [timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

I am grateful to live and work on the unceded homelands of the x m kw y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

---

From s.22(1)  
Sent: June 29, 2024 9:12 PM  
To: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; directors s.15(1)(l)  
Subject: [External] Letter of concern

Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by s.22(1) earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library. s.22(1)

s.22(1) I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my s.22(1) children to and have loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.

When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons). How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

s.22(1) letter:

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Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

- Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

**2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**

- The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

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- Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

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**5. Impact on Community Harmony:**

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We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected. Sincerely,



**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "McMillan, Timothy" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
"Neighbourhood Services Managers" s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/4/2024 8:31:55 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Context/contact re: BRI gallery

---

Thanks Tim, this is very helpful background.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam),  
Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** owner-nsms s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca> On Behalf Of Timothy McMillan  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 4:43 PM  
**To:** Neighbourhood Services Managers s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** nsms: Context/contact re: BRI gallery  
**Importance:** High  
**Sensitivity:** Confidential

Good afternoon all,

For reference, I want to provide some context on the BRI gallery space.

- The gallery falls under the purview of Amanda Lye, the Centre's Arts and Culture Programmer: [Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca)
- The gallery has recently engaged a part-time curator, Iris Hougbo: s.22(1) (not an external contact I believe)
- Gallery shows go up for approximately one month. There is a reception from 5-8pm on the Wednesday afterwards. The exhibit in June was [Still Here](#) by artist Nora Stakaya Pape. The takedown was this past Sunday, June 30.
- The current show is [A Figment of My Idle Mind](#) by artist Dani Young Darling. The reception is this evening and will run to July 31. I have reviewed the content and see nothing that could be construed as problematic.
- The Centre has exhibit spaces in the niches of the pool/fitness centre building. Earlier this year, there was complaint made regarding an artist's statement attached to that display. The complaint centred on similar issues. Cynthia Low as ED for the Centre managed this difficult issue.

□ The gallery's web presence is here and their contact information is [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com).

If the group has further questions, please let me know.

T

**Timothy McMillan** (he/him)  
Branch Head | Britannia Branch  
Vancouver Public Library  
T: 604.665.3914 | E: [timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

I am grateful to live and work on the unceded homelands of the x m kw y m (Musqueam),  
S wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations

**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "Nelson, Carol" <carol.nelson@vpl.ca>  
**CC:** "Green, Alyssa" <Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/4/2024 9:54:41 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

---

Hi Carol,  
Thanks so much for this.  
I will share it with Tim for his conversations with staff as well.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** Carol Nelson <Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 4, 2024 9:17 AM  
**To:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**Cc:** Alyssa Green <Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Good morning Sophie

I had a quick chat w Christina this morning about this.  
It sounds like Tim's response has already gone out.  
For future patron response, or when addressing the pins with staff, there are two particular aspects of the code of conduct and endorsement and advocacy policies that also are relevant, especially code of conduct 5.6

#### Code of conduct

5.6 An employee may engage in any Political Activity so long as it does not impair, or is not perceived as impairing, the employee's ability to perform their duties in a politically impartial manner. This precludes employees from displaying slogans or symbols supporting a particular party or candidate while at work where their duties may reasonably require them to interact in person with the public or where their duties require them to supervise, schedule or assign work to others.

5.1 Staff members enjoy broad political freedoms and should be able to engage in democratic politics with few restrictions. However, such broad freedoms must be exercised so as not to call into question their ability to perform their employment duties in a professional and impartial manner.



Endorsement and advocacy

3. General Guidelines

- VPL may support policy positions or recommendations that advance public library services.
- As a City agency, VPL may endorse or support the advocacy efforts of the City of Vancouver.
- VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services.
- VPL will not extend its goodwill and brand to the endorsement of partisan activities, including support for a political party or candidate.

Hope this helps  
Carol

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From: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 5:22 PM  
To: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Alyssa Green <[Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca](mailto:Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca)>; Dawn Ibey <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Carol Nelson <[Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca](mailto:Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Christina,  
I have not received any further correspondence from s.22(1) and I am happy to send another message to her with the critical information. Tim has written an excellent letter below for your review, I have added your points in red.

s.13(1)



s.13(1)

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm ([Musqueam](#)),  
Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliwətaʔ ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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From: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 5:09 PM  
To: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Alyssa Green <[Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca](mailto:Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca)>; Dawn Ibey <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Carol Nelson <[Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca](mailto:Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Sophie,

Did you receive any further messages from this patron in follow up? s.13(1)

s.13(1)

s.13(1) Here are some points that should be in the reply that you send next (which I understand Tim is working on).

- identifying that we are addressing the pins with staff and appreciate them bringing this to our attention, and that political activities aren't in alignment with VPL policy
- clarifying that the gallery is organized through Britannia Community Services, although we recognize its location does connect it to the VPL space, and you've also passed on the complaint to them, in addition to the curators
- advising that we'll be working with Britannia Community Services to share policy and learning to support planning potential future exhibits

s.13(1)

s.13(1)

I can review it if you'd like.

Christina

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From: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 4:23 PM  
To: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Christina,  
Also please note that the complaint went to City Council.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](mailto:s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam),  
Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliiwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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From: Sophie Middleton  
Sent: July 3, 2024 9:28 AM  
To: 'CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca' <[CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca)>  
Cc: Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Dawn Ibey <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Cynthia Low <[Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)>  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Rachel,  
I responded to the patron as below last week and also requested the gallery exhibit curators to respond to the patron's concerns.



In addition I forwarded the email to Cynthia Low at Britannia Community Center and Amanda Lye, Arts and Culture Programmer, as the Library does not manage the gallery space. I have included my correspondence with Cynthia.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm ([Musqueam](#)), Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliłwətał ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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From: Sophie Middleton  
Sent: June 28, 2024 3:42 PM  
To: [s.22\(1\)](#)  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Dear [s.22\(1\)](#)  
Thank you very much for contacting us to let us know about your concerns. I have forwarded your email to the curators of the exhibit Jess Sung and Iris Hougbo at [brtngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtngallery@gmail.com) to respond. Information about the community gallery can be found on their website: <https://www.britanniaartgallery.org/>. The exhibit is being replaced in two days.

Best regards,  
Sophie Middleton

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm ([Musqueam](#)), Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliłwətał ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

### To Whom It May Concern,

We, a group of [s.22\(1\)](#) are writing to express our deep concern regarding the imagery currently displayed as a painting hanging at our local public library, Britannia Library, which depicts a person wearing a Keffiyeh covering their face next to an Indigenous person.

**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "McMillan, Timothy" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**CC:** "Kimberley Constable" <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/4/2024 11:42:53 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Conversations with staff

---

Thanks for making these convos happen on Saturday **s.22(3)(d)** Just keeping Kim in the loop and we really appreciate your willingness and dedication Tim.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: **s.15(1)(l)** | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** Timothy McMillan <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 4, 2024 11:37 AM  
**To:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**Cc:** Kimberley Constable <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Conversations with staff

The roster for Friday:

**s.22(3)(d)**



I will come onsite to connect with all persons as I do not want to lose a day. Time spent may be taken back asap when operationally suitable.

T

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**From:** Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 4, 2024 11:30 AM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Cc:** Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** RE: Conversations with staff

Hi Tim,  
Thanks so much for doing this work, I know these can be difficult conversations, and thanks for keeping me up to date on your progress.



Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: **s.15(1)(l)** | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) Peoples

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From: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 4, 2024 10:20 AM  
To: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Conversations with staff  
Importance: High

Good morning,

Further to our conversations yesterday, the All Sups' meeting, and Christina's direction, I have spoken individually to the following staff regarding endorsement/advocacy, Code of Conduct, and wearing advocacy paraphernalia at work along the lines Carol has highlighted below.

**s.22(3)(d)**



I will continue to connect individually with team members. **s.22(3)(d)**  
**s.22(3)(d)** There is little overlap of staff between today and tomorrow so I am considering the best means to connect with all staff on duty Friday.

T

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From: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 4, 2024 9:56 AM  
To: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: Conversations with staff

Hi Tim,  
Carol gave us some feedback about what policy applies to the situation at BRI with the art and staff wearing buttons. I hope this is helpful for your conversations with staff.

#### Code of conduct

5.6 An employee may engage in any Political Activity so long as it does not impair, or is not perceived as impairing, the employee's ability to perform their duties in

a politically impartial manner. This precludes employees from displaying slogans or symbols supporting a particular party or candidate while at work where their duties may reasonably require them to interact in person with the public or where their duties require them to supervise, schedule or assign work to others.

5.1 Staff members enjoy broad political freedoms and should be able to engage in democratic politics with few restrictions. However, such broad freedoms must be exercised so as not to call into question their ability to perform their employment duties in a professional and impartial manner.

### Endorsement and advocacy

#### 3. General Guidelines

- VPL may support policy positions or recommendations that advance public
  - library services.
  - As a City agency, VPL may endorse or support the advocacy efforts of the City of Vancouver.
  - VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services.
  - VPL will not extend its goodwill and brand to the endorsement of partisan activities, including support for a political party or candidate.

Best,  
Sophie

#### **Sophie Middleton** (she/her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)

Vancouver Public Library

t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "McMillan, Timothy" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/5/2024 9:41:43 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

---

I sent this along to the Directors and they share their kudos on your letter as well!

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples

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**From:** owner-nsms s.15(1)(l) On Behalf Of Timothy McMillan  
**Sent:** July 5, 2024 9:33 AM  
**To:** Neighbourhood Services Managers s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** nsms: Fw: Letter of concern

Please see the communication below from the BRI patron who shared their concerns last Saturday.

T

Tim McMillan (he/him)  
Branch Head | Britannia Branch  
Vancouver Public Library  
T: 604.665.3914 E: [timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

This email is being sent from the unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh)

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**From:** s.22(1)  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 4, 2024 9:03 PM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan  
**Subject:** [External] Re: Letter of concern

Dear Tim,

I am deeply appreciative for your thoughtful response and understanding.



I respect what a difficult moment we are in politically and how fraught these conversations are for all, no matter their position. The library policies you have shared here are relieving to see, and do seem clear. I hope they may be used to guide staff to correct their use of political displays in the library. We look forward to returning soon.

Thank you for your time and response.

s.22(1)

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**From:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 4, 2024 8:44 AM  
**To:** s.22(1)  
**Cc:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

Dear s.22(1)

Thank you for taking the time write. I am the Head of the Britannia Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. While the gallery space is within our building, the selection and exhibition of the art in the space is the responsibility of the Britannia Community Services Centre. We have sent your email to the Centre's leadership team. They may be reached at:

- Cynthia Low, Executive Director: [Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)
- Amanda Lye, Arts & Culture Programmer: [Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca)
- Britannia Art Gallery Curation: [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com)

Though the gallery is another unit within the broader civic complex at Britannia, It is important for me to acknowledge the discomfort experienced by library patrons due to the content on display in a shared physical space. Moving forward we will be working with Britannia Community Services to share policy and learning to support planning potential future exhibits

Gallery exhibits are displayed on a monthly basis, and the past month's content was removed on schedule this past Sunday, June 30.

What is our responsibility and what is distressing to me, is the report of library staff wearing political symbols. All persons working for the library are subject to the [Code of Conduct Policy](#) and the [Endorsement and Advocacy Policy](#). The display of political symbols contravenes the spirit of the advocacy policy and several clauses of the code of conduct, most notably:

Re advocacy:

- VPL may undertake advocacy activities to enhance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services.

Re conduct:

- 1.5 Respect – staff must conduct public business efficiently, with decorum and proper attention to the Library's diversity.

Contraventions of the staff policy will be addressed immediately. The concerns you've shared and those shared in the group letter have been discussed with our site partners and I expect



communication to be forthcoming. For my part and as the head of this branch library, the words you've shared are deeply resonant and I extend my sincere gratitude to you for bringing them to me.

Tim

**Timothy McMillan** (he/him)  
Branch Head | Britannia Branch  
Vancouver Public Library  
T: 604.665.3914 | E: [timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

I am grateful to live and work on the unceded homelands of the x m kw y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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**From:** s.22(1)  
**Sent:** June 29, 2024 9:12 PM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; directors s.15(1)(l)  
**Subject:** [External] Letter of concern

Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by s.22(1) earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library. s.22(1)  
s.22(1) I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my s.22(1) children to and have loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.

When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons). How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

- s.22(1)

s.22(1) letter:

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

- Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with

visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

**2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**

- The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

**3. Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

- Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

**4. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

- Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

**5. Impact on Community Harmony:**

- Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected. Sincerely,

From: "Alyssa Green" <[Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca](mailto:Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca)>  
To: "de Castell, Christina" <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
Date: 7/3/2024 4:37:25 PM  
Subject: FW: Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

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First email – Sophie responded to this

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From: Chrysalyn Tolentino <[Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 9:11 AM  
To: Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>; Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>; Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: FW: Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

Hi there,

Forwarding the email from City Clerks. Kindly respond to the email sent by s.22(1) and bcc [CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca).

Thanks!  
C

Chrysalyn Tolentino (she/her/hers)  
Executive Assistant  
Office of the Chief Librarian & CEO | Library Board  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4003 | e: [chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca)

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From: Chan, Rachel (City Clerks) <[Rachel.Chan2@vancouver.ca](mailto:Rachel.Chan2@vancouver.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 9:06 AM  
To: Chrysalyn Tolentino <[Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: [External] Council Correspondence - 201001605166 (Artwork at Britannia Branch)

Hi Chrysalyn,

Council received these residents' concerns, which have also been emailed to the VPL regarding the artwork at Britannia Branch.

Would the VPL be able to respond back to these residents and BCC [CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:CouncilCorrespondence@vancouver.ca) in the email response?

Thanks,

Rachel Chan  
Council Correspondence Coordinator  
City Clerk's Department | City of Vancouver  
604-873-7266  
[rachel.chan2@vancouver.ca](mailto:rachel.chan2@vancouver.ca)

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From: s.22(1)  
Sent: Friday, June 28, 2024 7:50 AM  
To: s.15(1)(l) McMillan, Timothy <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>

Cc: s.22(1)  
s.22(1)

s.22(1)

Sim, Ken

s.22(1)

**Subject:** Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library

**To Whom It May Concern,**

We, a group of s.22(1) are writing to express our deep concern regarding the imagery currently displayed as a painting hanging at our local public library, Britannia Library, which depicts a person wearing a Keffiyeh covering their face next to an Indigenous person.





The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

- Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or



- bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.
- 2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**
    - The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.
  - 3. Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**
    - Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.
  - 4. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**
    - Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.
  - 5. Impact on Community Harmony:**
    - Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely, s.22(1)  
s.22(1)

s.22(1)

On behalf of a larger group of concerned s.22(1)

**From:** "Maryn Ashdown" <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "Watt, Lianne" <Lianne.Watt@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 9/10/2024 2:10:52 PM  
**Subject:** FW: NCS staff issue - when you're back

---

**Maryn Ashdown**

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia  
t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
She/Her/Hers

*Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the x m kw y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and S l ilw ta (Tseil-Waututh) Na ons*

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**From:** Maryn Ashdown  
**Sent:** July 16, 2024 3:50 PM  
**To:** Kimberley Constable <Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** Re: NCS staff issue - when you're back

Yep, no problem.

Maryn Ashdown  
Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia  
t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
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**From:** Kimberley Constable  
**Sent:** July 16, 2024 3:47 PM  
**To:** Maryn Ashdown  
**Subject:** RE: NCS staff issue - when you're back

Can we chat about this too at 4?

Kim Constable  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Northeast)  
Vancouver Public Library

---

**From:** Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 16, 2024 3:13 PM  
**To:** Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
**Subject:** NCS staff issue - when you're back

Hi Kim, when you're back - a staff member has complained s.22(3)(d) and feels that this is obviously a statement about s.22(3)(d) political beliefs about Palestine given how prominent this symbol is in media right now. Regardless of s.22(3)(d) intent, could you please ask s.22(3)(d) to replace s.22(3)(d) s.22(3)(d) and at that point s.22(3)(d) would be innocuous - but the impact on s.22(3)(d) colleagues right now when feelings are high isn't good.

Thanks,  
M

**Maryn Ashdown**  
Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia  
t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
She/Her/Hers

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From: "Maryn Ashdown" <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>  
To: "Watt, Lianne" <Lianne.Watt@vpl.ca>  
Date: 9/10/2024 2:10:29 PM  
Subject: FW: Question about s.22(3)(d)

---

**Maryn Ashdown**

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia  
t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
She/Her/Hers

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From: Maryn Ashdown  
Sent: July 17, 2024 1:03 PM  
To: s.22(3)(d)  
Subject: RE: Question about s.22(3)(d)

Hi s.22(3)(d)

My understanding is s.22(1) complained that the photo was a reflection of support for a political position (likely due to the watermelon reference, and the ongoing dialogue that's happening about watermelons as a politicized symbol for Palestinian protest. This probably came to their attention because of the recent conversations about pins and our advocacy policy (more detail in Chris na's recorded video call from yesterday). s.22(3)(d)

I think regardless of the intent, this symbol is clearly intensely meaningful and politicized among our staff at this time, and the kindest approach for our colleagues is to replace it with something that doesn't elicit the same nuance. We all hope that this conflict is resolved soon, and watermelons can return to bring just another delicious summer fruit!

**Maryn Ashdown**

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia  
t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
She/Her/Hers

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From: s.22(3)(d)  
Sent: July 17, 2024 12:56 PM  
To: Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: Question about s.22(3)(d)

Hi Maryn,

I hope that you're having a lovely day. J s.22(3)(d) let me know that I've been asked to remove s.22(3)(d) s.22(3)(d) and I wanted to ask permission to keep it s.22(3)(d) If I'm not able to get permission, could you please provide clear rationale as to why not.

Thank you,



s.22(3)(d)

s.22(3)(d)



From: "[Maryn Ashdown](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)" <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>  
To: "[Watt, Lianne](mailto:Lianne.Watt@vpl.ca)" <[Lianne.Watt@vpl.ca](mailto:Lianne.Watt@vpl.ca)>  
Date: 9/10/2024 2:15:47 PM  
Subject: FW: Video call updates

---

**Maryn Ashdown**

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia  
t: 604.331.4005 | c:  | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
She/Her/Hers

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S w w m i 7 mesh U x w m i x w (Squamish) and S l i l w ta (Tseil-Waututh) Nations*

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From: Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 11, 2024 5:13 PM  
To: Carol Nelson <[Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca](mailto:Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca)>; Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>; Maryn Ashdown  
<[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Video call updates

Thank you, Maryn, for the summary of the issues, challenges and needs that are surfacing here.

Thank you, Christina, for the detailed notes below.

I want to clarify that the conversation was challenging due to the topic, but it was respectful, thoughtful and productive. As leaders, they are really looking for more clarity and to feel supported as they have these often fraught conversations. I prepared by reading the Leadership presentation (including speaking notes and minutes) and the policy, so I was able to share some of the information below yesterday as well help them feel supported. Still, I think the video call, the opportunity to ask questions and the FAQ will be very helpful for everyone.

Sincerely,

Kim Constable  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Northeast)  
Vancouver Public Library

---

From: Carol Nelson <[Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca](mailto:Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 11, 2024 3:52 PM  
To: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>; Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Kimberley Constable  
<[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Video call updates

This is super helpful to know what types of questions are being asked. Thanks for looping me in.

Carol

---

From: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 11, 2024 2:18 PM  
To: Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Carol Nelson <[Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca](mailto:Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Video call updates

Thanks for this. Some of the topics are ones I've flagged for Carol to add to the FAQ that's started, and I'll make sure I cover them in the video call. Some notes below. I'm copying Carol for the FAQ.

---

From: Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>

Sent: July 11, 2024 10:16 AM

To: Christina de Castell <[Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)>; Kimberley Constable <[Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca](mailto:Kimberley.Constable@vpl.ca)>

Subject: RE: Video call updates

Hi Chris na, I'm sharing notes from Kim, as she had a challenging follow up conversation with the NE branch leadership (regular meeting). They discussed the BRI situation with watermelon pins and art, and had a broader discussion about the philosophy of this topic.

- People are confused between what symbols are acceptable and what is not (e.g. gaza pins vs. orange shirts, poppies, peace signs). They want to understand why we pick and choose topics and symbols that we do publicly advocate for (this isn't about advocating for library-specific things, more about social issues like TRC and LGBTQ+2S).

When we publicly advocate on something, or make an obvious effort to promote something, it's because the Board has an established and documented position through the Strategic Plan and its associated activities. This is true for both TRC and 2SLGBTQ+. . In the Strategic Plan, Belonging & Connection pillar, for "What we Heard" you'll see that it indicates "active support of IBPOC and LGBTQ2+ communities" as emerging from consultation with community for the Strategic Plan. It also references that TRC over-arches our priorities at the beginning. For TRC and UNDRIP it began with the Calls to Action, followed by the UNDRIP legislative changes, and, Board reports are on the website under Progress to Date: <https://www.vpl.ca/truth-reconciliation>. For gender/2SLGBTQ+ issues, this stems from the legislative change to include gender in the Canadian Human Rights Act in 2017, which led to the City and VPL establishing strategies and action plans. There's background in this report: <https://www.vpl.ca/sites/default/files/TGV2SInclusionPlanning2020.pdf>

For poppies and peace signs, it's quite rare to hear someone saying they're political or polarizing, although I know this happens with poppies from time to time. The City participates in and hosts Remembrance Day services, Council attends, etc. so there's clarity that they would be an acceptable symbol if someone chose to wear one. Work isn't a place for displaying symbols about your personal beliefs, regardless of what those are, which is why this comes up in our policies.

- People are looking for more guidance and understanding of how to navigate the difficult conversations arising from these issues – e.g. when a display is not within guidelines, or when someone is wearing a political symbol that resonates with the public opinion, or with the specific local community for a branch.

Explaining the role of the library as a place to learn about background and history of issues, and better understand their complexity would be a good place to focus – and then coming back to that it's a policy of the Library and the City, so we need to follow it, ultimately.

- People are interested in understanding why we're talking about the advocacy policy now – need context (maybe around what's happened at VPL and in the world to make us feel we need to have this discussion)

The Board updated it last year, and we hadn't done any awareness activities yet, and we've had quite a few requests related to taking positions, making statements etc. on a variety of topics over the past year that made it clear that there are lots of people who aren't aware and needed to understand this better.

- People don't understand why we advocate for gender rights and TRC specifically, and not other human rights linked issues

Covered above, those two things had Canadian legislative changes recently and the Board made the decision to prioritize them, following broad community consultation.

- Leadership team need clear direction and support to have difficult conversations with their teams. This includes managers – who may want a followup discussion as they will be supporting staff in navigating grey areas

We do need our supervisors to ensure our policies are followed. With the BRI situation, which I didn't know about when I was giving the presentation, it's obvious that our first step needs to be awareness raising, rather than our first step being disciplinary. If someone is refusing to stop doing something that violates policy that's different, but we should be starting with conversations. Hopefully FAQ and my video call will help. I'd then suggest one on one conversations with those who are

obviously going to struggle, before any group conversations at the unit level.

- Our leadership team may need support in understanding that we're asking them to exercise judgement in what is a balanced and nonpartisan display/program/etc, vs. what is outside of our policy. They may need support as they start work in this area.

Perhaps a manager or supervisor group could look at display guidelines? Collection strategy? ISV? Principles probably already exist – i.e. multiple viewpoints, community interest, what are the national/local days in the calendar...it would be good to engage staff in coming up with these but I think they may exist. It's important to also think about this for the signage we add.

- Some of these questions intersect with the incoming intellectual freedom training – we may need to be clear that IF is aimed at patrons to support their right to access all information without judgement or partisanship. Yes, they're definitely linked to each other. We need to be a place where people can come and get their questions answered without judgement.

### Maryn Ashdown

Director | Neighbourhood & Youth Services

Vancouver Public Library - 350 W Georgia

t: 604.331.4005 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)

She/Her/Hers

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From: owner-exempt-mgrs-incl-DGR s.15(1)(l) @vpl.ca > On Behalf Of Christina de Castell

Sent: July 10, 2024 5:00 PM

To: Exempt Managers Including DGR s.15(1)(l) @vpl.ca >

Subject: exempt-mgrs-incl-dgr: Video call updates

Hello everyone,

If you have updates for your units that you'd like me to share on the video call next week, please send them to me by end of day Monday. Bullet points are great.

Christina

Christina de Castell

Chief Librarian & CEO

Vancouver Public Library

t. 604-331-4007

Vancouver Public Library is on the unceded homelands of the [x-m kw y m \(Musqueam\)](#), [S wxwú7mesh \(Squamish\)](#), and [s l ilw ta \(Tseil-Waututh\)](#) Nations. We acknowledge that our work requires sincere action towards decolonization.

From: ["Alyssa Green" <Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca>](mailto:Alyssa.Green@vpl.ca)  
To: ["de Castell, Christina" <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>](mailto:Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca)  
["Nelson, Carol" <carol.nelson@vpl.ca>](mailto:carol.nelson@vpl.ca)  
Date: 7/23/2024 2:57:40 PM  
Subject: hub post

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Hi Christina,

I spoke to the NYS team and we think the Hub post regarding the advocacy policy needs to contain the following (in no specific order):

1. Clear direction on what is and is not acceptable.
  - a. Clothing and accessories – as per the dress and appearance in the workplace policy, staff need to be neutral and non-partisan for the public. This means they may not wear political symbols in the workplace (for example, watermelon pins)
  - b. Political communication and pictures on Hub, VPL-chat, and general work communication online, in public spaces, and in workrooms.
  - c. Conversations and posts on Hub that are disrespectful and/or invite debate on non-work topics that make people feel unsafe or disrespected. Including topics that may seem innocuous where the intent is subversive **s.22(3)(d)**
2. Consequences for continuing to disregard these directions
  - a. Investigation, other
3. Information on the harm internally to colleagues who feel unsafe and unsupported
4. Clarification that VPL is a workplace and that censorship does not apply. People have a right to come to expect their employer to ensure they don't feel unwelcome when they come to work. These open and ongoing non-work related political topics are making multiple groups of staff feel unsafe. This was well-stated in the video call update and useful to have consolidated and articulated.

Any questions or clarification needed let me know.

Regards,

Alyssa Green (she/her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services Southwest Area

Vancouver Public Library

T: **s.15(1)(l)** E: [alyssa.green@vpl.ca](mailto:alyssa.green@vpl.ca)

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From: ["Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)

To: ["Reed, Jade" <jade.reed@vpl.ca>](mailto:jade.reed@vpl.ca)

["Cheng, Alicia" <Alicia.Cheng@vpl.ca>](mailto:Alicia.Cheng@vpl.ca)

["Erin Watkins" <Erin.Watkins@vpl.ca>](mailto:Erin.Watkins@vpl.ca)

Date: 7/9/2024 9:27:25 AM

Subject: Leadership Meeting Notes

Attachments: Endorsement Advocacy overview for leadership july 2024.pptx

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Hi Everyone,

The minutes have been put on the HUB from the recent [leadership meeting](#). I am not sure how this has landed for your units, but let's discuss at the next CPS meeting how to support your teams to have conversations about this topic. I will add it to our agenda.

Thanks,  
Sophie

Sophie Middleton (she/her)  
Acting Director | Central Library and Public Service  
Vancouver Public Library  
350 West Georgia St.

t: 604.331.4004 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x m k y m ([Musqueam](#)), S wxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and s lilw ta ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

# Endorsement & Advocacy Board Policy

Overview for VPL Leadership Team

July 3 2024



I'm going to talk briefly about this policy, which was updated by the VPL Board in January 2023. Previously it was known as the Endorsement policy. The Board identified that we needed to have clearer policy around advocacy due to the increasing situations when private organizations and corporations take positions on issues, and the expectation that VPL might take positions on issues affecting our communities, or issues that are being discussed by library associations. After considering a separate policy, we concluded that endorsement and advocacy were related, and added the advocacy policy to the existing Endorsement policy.

We're in a time when trust in government and democratic institutions is compromised, and we have a role in ensuring that people's trust in libraries isn't compromised at the same time. We've been fortunate that libraries have been among the most trusted institutions for a long time, and this policy is intended to help us maintain that trust.

We are public sector employees, and delivering public service is valuable and requires trust. I know that this belief in public service and contributing our community is a common thread for everyone who works at VPL, and the intention of this policy is to ensure that we maintain that trust in ourselves and VPL as an institution by thinking carefully about public positions.

It's not about what you do on your own time, outside of work, when you are not representing yourself as an employee of VPL.

## Policy Objective

To provide a framework for responding to requests from organizations, groups, or individuals seeking VPL endorsement of their work or position on an issue, as well as for proactive efforts made by VPL related to public positions.



The initial policy was developed in 2015; an updated policy was approved by the Board in October 2022. The previous policy only addressed endorsement and did not consider communications for the purpose of advocacy around funding or policy, which have historically included the participation of trustees, and may be undertaken in alignment with positions taken by library associations or affiliated organizations.

## Definitions

*Endorsement:* The expression of approval or support through any medium, often one-time, for an individual or organization's activity, position, or contribution.

*Advocacy:* Proactive planned, deliberate, and sustained effort to influence decisions on an issue of strategic importance.



The terms are sometime used interchangeably, but can be considered to be along a continuum,

Endorsement involves VPL taking a position on an issue in a reactive or passive manner, most often as a one-time contribution to an effort being led by others that is related to library services or aligns with VPL's values. Advocacy entails much more proactive, deliberate, and sustained efforts to influence an outcome that is of strategic importance to the Library.



## Goals of Endorsement or Advocacy

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL



## Scope

*Applies to any activities related to a public position or issue that, if acted upon, have the potential to engage VPL staff, patrons or trustees, or impact the reputation of VPL in the community.*

- Includes: efforts by Library Board and/or staff presented on behalf of VPL
- It's not: personal activities or those as part of professional associations



This policy applies to efforts made by the Library Board and/or staff that are presented on behalf of VPL, whether directed at elected officials, government staff, or the public.

It does not apply to Board or staff members' personal activities or those undertaken as part of participation as an individual in professional associations.

Endorsement requests covered include things such as:

A letter of support or reference letter for a grant or funding application, or award nomination

Adding VPL's name to a list of signatories in support of a position

A quote or a comment for inclusion in a press release or other communiqué

Asking VPL to distribute or post information or documents on behalf of the requestor or via social media

## Policy Statements - Principles

- VPL is a respected civic institution and must carefully consider the implications of its endorsement or advocacy activities.
- VPL will not advance interests that are in conflict with Library policies.
- VPL works in partnership with the broader library sector, and will leverage its position as a large urban public library system to enhance the capacity of public libraries in BC and across Canada.



Key things are implications and conflict with Library policies. When we make a public statement or endorse an organization's activities, it means that we are prepared to invest public resources, meaning our staff time, in that issue or activity. This is a significant decision, as it is public money from tax dollars locally and provincially that provide our funding.

It's also about maintaining trust in public institutions. We are a place where everyone is welcome, as long as they behave respectfully towards each other and staff. This means no matter what background, religion, criminal history or beliefs, we provide service to them.

## Policy Statements - Goals

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL



We limit what we advocate on to areas that advance these specific goals, and this is expanded in the policy. An example of a public position or policy is something that is directly related to VPL, such as issues that affect the public's access to information through libraries. Historic examples include copyright, internet-related laws, and digital licensing.

## General Guidelines

- VPL may support policy positions or recommendations that advance public library services.
- As a City agency, VPL may endorse or support the advocacy efforts of the City of Vancouver.
- VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services.
- VPL will not extend its goodwill and brand to the endorsement of partisan activities, including support for a political party or candidate.
- VPL's purchase of products from vendors should not be considered an endorsement of that product or service.





## Endorsement Requests

- Endorsement of activities that further VPL's priorities and goals and do not unduly burden VPL's financial or human resources will generally be provided. Eg:
  - Initiatives that protect or advance information rights in Canada;
  - A policy or submission statement issued by a library organization; or
  - Activities that seek to enhance access or engagement with library services or information in Canada.
- VPL may endorse activities of organizations it partners with in delivering VPL services
- Must be approved by the Chief Librarian & CEO



## Advocacy

- VPL may undertake advocacy activities to advance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services, addressing areas such as:
  - Policy positions and legislation on issues such as copyright, intellectual freedom, and privacy;
  - Issue areas linked with libraries including literacy, education, and human rights;
  - Funding for library services.
- Advocacy activities will be recommended by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and must be approved by the Library Board.



Before VPL makes any public statements, it requires approval by the Board.

## Why is this important?

- Increasing requests from staff for VPL to publicly support issues, organizations, or positions
- Increasing conversations on the Hub about issues that are not about delivering library services and risk not complying with our Code of Conduct
- The Hub and our email are ultimately public, although they are internal forums. All information is subject to FOI and should be limited to work purposes.



This policy and our code of conduct govern what we communicate both publicly and on our internal channels.

- We are a govt funded organization and do not take positions on issues that do not direct affect library services and access to library services
- We are employees of a public sector, government funded organization. We're here to serve everyone in our community, and cannot choose to serve some community members and not others. We don't choose which communities we support, through our collections or when delivering our services. We're here to represent everyone.
- The Hub is a forum for **work related** communications
- Respectful communication is a core value at VPL

## Code of Conduct: 1.3 Responsibility

Staff must act responsibly, within the law and within the authorities of the Library Act. They are to observe the Code of Conduct. This means disclosing actual or potential conflict of interest relating to their public duties and taking steps to resolve the conflict for the protection of the public interest; following the letter and spirit of policies and procedures; and ***exercising all conferred power strictly for the purpose for which the powers have been conferred.***



We have an obligation to not use the library as a platform for our personal beliefs.

## 1.4 Leadership

Staff must demonstrate and promote the key principles of the Code of Conduct through their decisions, actions and behaviour. Their behaviour must **build and inspire the public's trust and confidence in local government.**





## 1.5 Respect

Staff must conduct public business efficiently, with decorum and with proper attention to the Library's diversity. They must treat each other and others with respect at all times. This means not using derogatory language towards others, respecting the rights of other people, treating people with courtesy and recognizing the different roles others play in local government decision making



## Policy Goals

- To communicate the value and impact of library services
- To advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals
- To ensure adequate funding
- To support or oppose public positions or policies which have the potential to impact VPL



Staff who do not ensure approval by the Chief Librarian & CEO for endorsement or advocacy activities they undertake as representatives of VPL, or otherwise fail to comply with this policy, may face disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

We are public sector employees, and delivering public service is valuable and requires trust. I know that this belief in public service and contributing our community is a common thread for everyone who works at VPL, and the intention of this policy is to ensure that we maintain that trust in ourselves and VPL as an institution by thinking carefully about public positions.

**From:** ["Cynthia Low" <Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)  
**To:** ["Middleton, Sophie" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)  
["Lye, Amanda" <amanda.lye@vancouver.ca>](mailto:amanda.lye@vancouver.ca)  
**CC:** ["Ashdown, Maryn" <maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca>](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)  
["Britannia Art Gallery Gallery" <brtnngallery@gmail.com>](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com)  
**Date:** 7/2/2024 2:57:31 PM  
**Subject:** RE: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

---

Hi Sophie,

Thanks for forwarding the concerns to us, are there VPL policies that address the complex balance between Freedom of Expression, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility? The Britannia Arts and Culture Committee will be developing a set of guidelines that we will share with your team to ensure that the VPL is a part of the dialogue and that any guidelines meet your mission and vision as a public library. Your expertise on this matter is greatly appreciated.

Regards,

Cynthia

Honouring with gratitude, the traditional stewards of this unceded ancestral lands of the x m k y m|Musqueam, S wxwú7mesh|Squamish & s lilw ta |Tsleil-Waututh Nations Nations' families, communities and their descendants. Respecting the ancestors, supernatural ones, hereditary leaders and matriarchs, creatures big and small for looking after the rich resources and cultural teachings of this beautiful land.

---

**From:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 02, 2024 2:29 PM  
**To:** Low, Cynthia <Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca>; Lye, Amanda <amanda.lye@vancouver.ca>  
**Cc:** Ashdown, Maryn <maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Cynthia and Amanda,  
Please find below a community complaint about a recent art exhibit. I forwarded this to the curators, but realized I should have sent it to you both as well.  
I let the patron know the exhibit was coming down last weekend.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x m k y m ([Musqueam](#)), S wxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and s lilw ta ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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**From:** Sophie Middleton  
**Sent:** June 28, 2024 3:26 PM  
**To:** 'brtnngallery@gmail.com' <brtnngallery@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hello Iris and Jess,  
Would you be able to respond to this email with concerns about the current exhibition at the art gallery?

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x m k y m ([Musqueam](#)), S wxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and s lilw ta ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

**From:** owner-dsg s.15(1)(l) @vpl.ca > **On Behalf Of** s.22(1)  
**Sent:** June 28, 2024 10:00 AM  
**To:** Directors Support Group s.15(1)(l) @vpl.ca >  
**Subject:** dsg: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

**To Whom It May Concern,**

We, a group of s.22(1) are writing to express our deep concern regarding the imagery currently displayed as a painting hanging at our local public library, Britannia Library, which depicts a person wearing a Keffiyeh covering their face next to an Indigenous person.

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

1.

**Exclusion from Public Life:**

- o Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

2.

**Lack of Political Neutrality:**

- o The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

3.

**Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

- o Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

4.

**Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

- o Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

5.

**Impact on Community Harmony:**

- o Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely,

s.22(1)





s.22(1)



s.22(1)



On behalf of a larger group of concerned  s.22(1)

--

s.22(1)



s.22(1)



From: "[Chrysalyn Tolentino](mailto:Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca)" <[Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca)>  
To: "[Ibey, Dawn](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)" <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>  
CC: "[Middleton, Sophie](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)" <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Date: 7/3/2024 10:46:44 AM  
Subject: RE: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

---

TY!

Chrysalyn Tolentino (she/her/hers)  
Executive Assistant  
Office of the Chief Librarian & CEO | Library Board  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.4003 | e: [chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:chrysalyn.tolentino@vpl.ca)

---

From: Dawn Ibey <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 10:42 AM  
To: Chrysalyn Tolentino <[Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca](mailto:Chrysalyn.Tolentino@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi CT.  
Just so you know this matter is closed.  
-d

---

From: Council Correspondence <[councilcorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:councilcorrespondence@vancouver.ca)>  
Sent: July 3, 2024 10:32 AM  
To: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Cc: Maryn Ashdown <[Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Dawn Ibey <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Cynthia Low <[Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)>  
Subject: RE: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Sophie,

Thanks for sharing your response and providing the update, I've now closed this case from my end.

Best regards,

Rachel Chan  
Council Correspondence Coordinator  
City Clerk's Department | City of Vancouver  
604-873-7266  
[rachel.chan2@vancouver.ca](mailto:rachel.chan2@vancouver.ca)

---

From: Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: Wednesday, July 3, 2024 9:28 AM  
To: Council Correspondence <[councilcorrespondence@vancouver.ca](mailto:councilcorrespondence@vancouver.ca)>  
Cc: Ashdown, Maryn <[maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca](mailto:maryn.ashdown@vpl.ca)>; Ibey, Dawn <[Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca](mailto:Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca)>; Low, Cynthia <[Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)>  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Hi Rachel,

I responded to the patron as below last week and also requested the gallery exhibit curators to respond to the patron's concerns.

In addition I forwarded the email to Cynthia Low at Britannia Community Center and Amanda Lye, Arts and Culture Programmer, as the Library does not manage the gallery space.

I have included my correspondence with Cynthia.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x m k y m (Musqueam [[musqueam.bc.ca](http://musqueam.bc.ca)]), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish [[squamish.net](http://squamish.net)]), and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh [[twnation.ca](http://twnation.ca)]) Peoples

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From: Sophie Middleton  
Sent: June 28, 2024 3:42 PM  
To: s.22(1)  
Subject: FW: [External] Urgent: Inclusivity Concerns at Our Local Library Inbox Updates

Dear s.22(1)  
Thank you very much for contacting us to let us know about your concerns.  
I have forwarded your email to the curators of the exhibit Jess Sung and Iris Hougbo at [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com) to respond.  
Information about the community gallery can be found on their website: <https://www.britanniaartgallery.org/>  
[\[britanniaartgallery.org\]](http://britanniaartgallery.org) .  
The exhibit is being replaced in two days.

Best regards,  
Sophie Middleton

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x m k y m (Musqueam [[musqueam.bc.ca](http://musqueam.bc.ca)]), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish [[squamish.net](http://squamish.net)]), and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh [[twnation.ca](http://twnation.ca)]) Peoples

### To Whom It May Concern,

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The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

1.

**Exclusion from Public Life:**



- Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

2.

**Lack of Political Neutrality:**

- The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

3.

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- Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

4.

**Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

- Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

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**Impact on Community Harmony:**

- Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely,

s.22(1)



s.22(1)



s.22(1)



On behalf of a larger group of concerned s.22(1)



s.22(1)



s.22(1)

# Political activities at VPL

Posted by Christina de Castell • Updated Jul 31, 2024

Further to my video call last week, attached are Q&As to help guide your discussion and behaviour around political advocacy at VPL.

Staff have a right to be treated with respect at work by their colleagues, and to not be forced into political conversations. In the past week, we've seen intentionally disrespectful Hub and chat posts, as well as workroom discussions, and these activities don't recognize the diverse backgrounds and opinions of VPL staff, and don't show the care that we normally see staff show for each other at VPL. As these are work spaces and tools, your colleagues are unable to avoid them while doing their jobs. Ongoing and increasing non-work related political topics are making multiple staff feel unsafe at work.

As multiple policies and the attached Q&A state, VPL provides public service to everyone in our community, and should be welcoming to everyone. Displaying personal political opinions at work through symbols is not appropriate when the result is that parts of our community feel unwelcome in our spaces, and we have received public feedback that this is the consequence of wearing watermelon pins at VPL. This choice and related behaviours are hurting the public and your colleagues and are creating a negative working environment.

As outlined in numerous policies, VPL staff need to respect each other and our diverse backgrounds, as well as the diversity of our community. Please give thought to the impact of your behaviour on others, and be aware that you may be violating VPL policies, which may lead to investigations or disciplinary processes.

Christina

## Attachments

Select all

Sort by

 Q&A

## 1 Comment

**Christina de Castell**

Jul 25

If anyone has further comments that they feel it's necessary to share related to this topic, please direct them to my email, at [christina.decastell@vpl.ca](mailto:christina.decastell@vpl.ca).



# VPL - DGR - Political Activities at VPL - Q&A - 2024-07-24.pdf

 **VPL - DGR - Political ...PL - Q\_A - 2024-07-24.pdf**

(818kB)

Updated 18 days by Chennie Lai

## Interpreting VPL's Policies

### Q&A related to CHIEF LIBRARIAN & CEO'S VIDEO CALL JULY 16, 2024

**Q. The current conversation started with the Endorsement and Advocacy Policy. What is it about?**

The intent of the [Endorsement and Advocacy Policy](#) is to ensure that we maintain public trust and uphold our responsibility as public sector employees by thinking carefully about public positions taken by VPL. The relevant section of the *Endorsement and Advocacy Policy* is:

*VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services.*

The policy provides a framework for responding to requests from organizations, groups, or individuals seeking VPL endorsement of their work or position on an issue, as well as for proactive efforts made by VPL related to public positions. It provides guidelines on what we will and will not take a public position on.

The Policy requires that endorsement requests be approved by the Chief Librarian & CEO, and that advocacy be approved by the Board.

**Q. Who does the Endorsement and Advocacy policy apply to and when does it apply?**

The *Endorsement and Advocacy Policy* applies to efforts made by the Library Board and/or staff, presented on behalf of VPL, whether directed at elected officials, government staff, or the public. It does *not* apply to Board or staff members' personal activities or those undertaken as part of participation as an individual in professional associations.

**Q. Why are we talking about political statements in the library now?**

While the *Endorsement and Advocacy Policy* was updated and approved by the Board in 2023, we've recently had quite a few requests related to taking positions, making statements etc. on a variety of topics that made it clear that many staff aren't aware of the policy or need to understand it better.

We have an obligation to serve everyone in our community, no matter what their beliefs, background, religion, or criminal history, as long as they behave respectfully to each other and staff in our spaces, to provide information for them to make their own decisions, and to not take sides on issues in our work at VPL.

Since we began discussing the policy in early July, the conversation has changed, with staff asking questions about wearing pins or symbols. Some staff have also shifted to more intentionally political and divisive conversations and Hub posts that do not recognize the

DOC/2024/221323  
July 24, 2024

1

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## 2 Comments

**Chennie Lai**

18 days

Thanks Michelle! There were no changes to the Q&A content itself, we were fixing hyperlinks on the PDF, thus the multiple versions. I've added a VanDocs number onto the document (now version 5) - it's DOC/2024/221323.

*This comment refers to version 5*

**Michelle Patenaude**

26 days

Can this document be added to Vandocs? It's been updated 4 times, for transparency and to avoid confusion it would be helpful if staff could see what is changing.

*This comment refers to version 4*

From: ["Carol Nelson" <Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca>](mailto:Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca)  
To: ["Middleton, Sophie" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)  
Date: 7/17/2024 10:36:03 AM  
Subject: RE: Form submission: Email Us

---

Certainly.  
There is absolutely no need to respond beyond what has already been provided.  
It has been acknowledged, and that is all that is needed.  
Done.  
Move on.

If you want to discuss I am happy to ...

---

From: Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
Sent: July 17, 2024 10:32 AM  
To: Carol Nelson <Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca>  
Subject: FW: Form submission: Email Us

Hi Carol,  
No one has responded to this as yet.  
Can I ask for some help?  
Thanks,  
Sophie

Sophie Middleton (she/her)  
Acting Director | Central Library and Public Service  
Vancouver Public Library  
350 West Georgia St.

t: 604.331.4004 | c: [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x m k y m ([Musqueam](#)), S wxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and s lilw ta ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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From: owner-infoservsups [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) On Behalf Of Michelle Patenaude  
Sent: July 17, 2024 10:26 AM  
To: Information Services Supervisor Group [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#)  
Subject: infoservsups: RE: Form submission: Email Us

This is extremely concerning, I wonder where its coming from. Should we pass this onto M&C? They may wish to be aware if there is a conversation happening online connecting VPL to genocide denial or censorship.

---

From: owner-infoservsups [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#) On Behalf Of VPL Email Address For Public  
Sent: July 17, 2024 10:14 AM  
To: Information Services Supervisor Group [s.15\(1\)\(l\)](#)  
Subject: infoservsups: Fw: Form submission: Email Us

Hi,  
  
Can someone pass this on? I don't know who to forward it to.  
  
Thanks,  
Janet

Information Services  
Vancouver Public Library  
350 West Georgia St.  
t: 604-331-3603 | e: [info@vpl.ca](mailto:info@vpl.ca)  
VPL online at [vpl.ca](http://vpl.ca) and on Twitter and Facebook

Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

---

From: VPL Email Address For Public  
Sent: July 17, 2024 10:12 AM  
To: s.22(1)  
Subject: Re: Form submission: Email Us

Hi s.22(1)

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts. I will forward your comments to the appropriate department.

Take care,

Information Services/JL  
Vancouver Public Library  
350 West Georgia St.  
t: 604-331-3603 | e: [info@vpl.ca](mailto:info@vpl.ca)  
VPL online at [vpl.ca](http://vpl.ca) and on Twitter and Facebook

Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

---

From: webadmin  
Sent: July 16, 2024 6:30:45 PM  
To: VPL Email Address For Public  
Subject: Form submission: Email Us

\*\*\*\*\* THIS IS AN AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED EMAIL. PLEASE DO NOT REPLY DIRECTLY TO THIS EMAIL \*\*\*\*\*

A patron has completed the form submission: Email Us  
Submitted on:  
Tuesday, July 16, 2024 - 18:30

s.22(1)

Email Address:

s.22(1)

Phone Number:

s.22(1)

City:  
Vancouver

Province:  
BC

Message:

I am so upset to learn that you have banned you staff from wearing watermelons or Palestine flags in solidarity against the horrible holocaust occurring in Gaza.  
Please reconsider this fascist decision. It doesn't suit you. Or shouldn't suit a library.  
Shame.





From: "Carol Nelson" <Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca>  
To: "Middleton, Sophie" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
Date: 7/5/2024 9:40:56 AM  
Subject: RE: Letter of concern

---

That is so great.  
Well done to Tim.

---

From: Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
Sent: July 5, 2024 9:39 AM  
To: Carol Nelson <Carol.Nelson@vpl.ca>  
Cc: Christina de Castell <Christina.deCastell@vpl.ca>; Dawn Ibey <Dawn.Ibey@vpl.ca>; Maryn Ashdown <Maryn.Ashdown@vpl.ca>  
Subject: FW: Letter of concern

Hi Carol,  
I wanted to share the patron response to Tim's email about the BRI situation.  
It seems to have landed well.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x'm k'y'm (Musqueam), S'wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and s'ilw'ta (Tseil-Waututh) Peoples

---

From: owner-nsms s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca > On Behalf Of Timothy McMillan  
Sent: July 5, 2024 9:33 AM  
To: Neighbourhood Services Managers s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca >  
Subject: nsms: Fw: Letter of concern

Please see the communication below from the BRI patron who shared their concerns last Saturday.

T

Tim McMillan (he/him)  
Branch Head |  
Britannia Branch  
Vancouver Public Library  
T: 604.665.3914 E:  
[timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

This email is being sent from the unceded territory of the x'm k'y'm (Musqueam), S'wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and s'ilw'ta (Tseil-Waututh)

---

From s.22(1)

Sent: Thursday, July 4, 2024 9:03 PM  
To: Timothy McMillan  
Subject: [External] Re: Letter of concern

Dear Tim,

I am deeply appreciative for your thoughtful response and understanding.

I respect what a difficult moment we are in politically and how fraught these conversations are for all, no matter their position. The library policies you have shared here are relieving to see, and do seem clear. I hope they may be used to guide staff to correct their use of political displays in the library. We look forward to returning soon.

Thank you for your time and response.

s.22(1)

---

From: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Sent: July 4, 2024 8:44 AM  
To: s.22(1)  
Cc: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: RE: Letter of concern

Dear s.22(1)

Thank you for taking the time to write. I am the Head of the Britannia Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. While the gallery space is within our building, the selection and exhibition of the art in the space is the responsibility of the Britannia Community Services Centre. We have sent your email to the Centre's leadership team. They may be reached at:

- Cynthia Low, Executive Director: [Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Low@vancouver.ca)
- Amanda Lye, Arts & Culture Programmer: [Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca](mailto:Amanda.Lye@vancouver.ca)
- Britannia Art Gallery Curation: [brtnngallery@gmail.com](mailto:brtnngallery@gmail.com)

Though the gallery is another unit within the broader civic complex at Britannia, it is important for me to acknowledge the discomfort experienced by library patrons due to the content on display in a shared physical space. Moving forward we will be working with Britannia Community Services to share policy and learning to support planning potential future exhibits

Gallery exhibits are displayed on a monthly basis, and the past month's content was removed on schedule this past Sunday, June 30.

What is our responsibility and what is distressing to me, is the report of library staff wearing political symbols. All persons working for the library are subject to the [Code of Conduct Policy](#) and the [Endorsement and Advocacy Policy](#). The display of political symbols contravenes the spirit of the advocacy policy and several clauses of the code of conduct, most notably:

Re advocacy:

- VPL may undertake advocacy activities to enhance the Library's strategic priorities and/or to communicate to funders and stakeholders the value and impact of library services.

Re conduct:

1.5 Respect – staff must conduct public business efficiently, with decorum and proper attention to the Library's diversity.

Contraventions of the staff policy will be addressed immediately. The concerns you've shared and those shared in the group letter have been discussed with our site partners and I expect communication to be forthcoming. For my part and as the head of this branch library, the words you've shared are deeply resonant and I extend my sincere gratitude to you for bringing them to me.

Tim

**Timothy McMillan** (he/him)

Branch Head | Britannia Branch

Vancouver Public Library

T: 604.665.3914 | E: [timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca](mailto:timothy.mcmillan@vpl.ca)

I am grateful to live and work on the unceded homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

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From s.22(1)

Sent: June 29, 2024 9:12 PM

To: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; directors s.15(1)(l)

Subject: [External] Letter of concern

Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by s.22(1) earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library s.22(1). I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my s.22(1) children to and have loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.

When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons). How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

s.22(1)

s.22(1) letter:

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space

for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

## **2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**

The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

## **3. Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

## **4. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

## **5. Impact on Community Harmony:**

Public spaces, especially those dedicated to education and community engagement, should promote understanding, tolerance, and inclusivity. By displaying imagery that can be interpreted as taking sides in a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, the library risks fostering division rather than unity.

We believe it is possible to respect and acknowledge the histories and narratives of all groups involved without alienating any part of our community. We respectfully request that the library remove the display of this image and strive for content that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect. We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a resolution that ensures the library remains a space where all community members feel welcome and respected.

Sincerely,

**From:** "Sophie Middleton" <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**To:** "McMillan, Timothy" <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**CC:** "Neighbourhood Services Managers" s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca>  
**Date:** 7/3/2024 4:47:47 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

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Hi Tim,  
Good point, Cynthia is aware of the first email.  
I will forward her the second one as well so she can address it.  
Thanks for all your great work on this challenging situation.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)  
Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm ([Musqueam](#)), Skwxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and səliłwatał ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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**From:** Timothy McMillan <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 4:44 PM  
**To:** Sophie Middleton <Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca>  
**Cc:** Timothy McMillan <Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

Yes, I will do so immediately. I will also speak to the team individually before 5pm today and then going forward.

Regarding the Centre contacts: s.22(1) Has Cynthia been informed?

TYVM

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**From:** Sophie Middleton <[Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:Sophie.Middleton@vpl.ca)>  
**Sent:** July 3, 2024 4:38 PM  
**To:** Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; Neighbourhood Services Managers s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Letter of concern

Hi Tim,  
This looks excellent, thanks for getting it out so fast.  
Can you include all the Cynthia, Amanda and the curator as the contacts.

On another note we will need to look at the VPL logo on the promotional materials for the art gallery.  
I will leave that conversation to you and Kim.

Best,  
Sophie

**Sophie Middleton** (she/her)

Manager | Neighbourhood Services (Southeast)  
Vancouver Public Library  
t: 604.331.3791 | c: s.15(1)(l) | e: [sophie.middleton@vpl.ca](mailto:sophie.middleton@vpl.ca)

I am humbly thankful that I live and work on the territories of the x m k y m ([Musqueam](#)), S wxwú7mesh ([Squamish](#)), and s lilw ta ([Tsleil-Waututh](#)) Peoples

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From: owner-nsms s.15(1)(l) @vpl.ca > On Behalf Of Timothy McMillan  
Sent: July 3, 2024 4:29 PM  
To: Neighbourhood Services Managers s.15(1)(l)@vpl.ca >  
Cc: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>  
Subject: nsms: RE: Letter of concern  
Importance: High

Good afternoon. A draft response from Britannia to the patron is below. Anything and everything may be changed before submitting.

s.13(1)



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From: s.22(1)  
Sent: June 29, 2024 9:12 PM  
To: Timothy McMillan <[Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca](mailto:Timothy.McMillan@vpl.ca)>; directors s.15(1)(l)  
Subject: [External] Letter of concern



Hello,

I am writing in support of the letter sent by **s.22(1)** earlier this week with respect to a harmful piece of art on display at Britannia Library. **s.22(1)** I was dismayed to have missed the opportunity to add my name.

This is our home library. It is a public space that I take my **s.22(1)** children to and have loved for many years. The fact that you have a piece of art displaying a militant political symbol is shocking. This does not communicate peace; this does not communicate the Library as a safe or inclusive space for your Jewish families.

When I went to see the piece myself, I saw staff wearing political symbols (watermelons). How can Jewish users feel safe here?

I sincerely hope that the call to remove this piece of art and address staff use of political symbols is heard.

- **s.22(1)**

**s.22(1)**'s letter:

The public library is a space intended for all members of our community, including our children, and it is disheartening to see such a politically charged image in a place meant for education and inclusion.

Our concerns are as follows:

**1. Exclusion from Public Life:**

□

Several Jewish mothers in our community have expressed discomfort with visiting the library or bringing their children due to the presence of this image. The library should be a welcoming space for everyone, yet this imagery makes us feel marginalized and unwelcome. Jewish families are a vital part of our community, and it is essential that public spaces do not alienate any group.

**2. Lack of Political Neutrality:**

□

The image in question is not politically neutral. It implicitly supports a particular political narrative that does not acknowledge the historical and cultural connections of Jewish people to the Levant, a fact supported by extensive historical evidence. This omission contributes to a one-sided perspective that can foster misunderstanding and division.

**3. Misrepresentation of Indigenous Allyship:**

□

Many Indigenous groups and elders have publicly spoken out about their allyship with Israeli people. The implication that Indigenous Canadians are universally allied with Palestinians is misleading and can contribute to a sense of exclusion among Jewish community members. Such imagery can inadvertently imply a lack of support for Jewish people within Indigenous rights movements, which is not reflective of the diverse opinions within Indigenous communities.

**4. Inappropriate Use of Cultural Symbols:**

□

Our understanding is that Keffiyehs are not traditionally worn covering the face. While Keffiyehs worn as a head or neck scarf can be seen as a cultural symbol, Keffiyehs covering the face are a militant political symbol. The imagery of the Keffiyeh covering the face is referencing the North American "Pro-Palestinian" movement, which has included extremist anti-Israeli and antisemitic rhetoric. This representation can be seen as aligning with a movement that has, at times, propagated harmful and exclusionary views towards Jewish people, further contributing to our discomfort and sense of alienation.

**5. Impact on Community Harmony:**

□

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Sincerely,