

The board of the Manitoba Library Association thanks and recognizes all members and non-members for their concerns expressed recently over controversial issues facing the national 2SLGBTQ+ and library communities. MLA takes all opinions and concerns seriously and works to represent its membership with the utmost respect and in the best light possible.

The concepts of protection from discriminatory or hateful speech and the right of freedom of expression are not isolated; they affect all public libraries. Recognizing the importance of recent events and their impact on 2SLGBTQ+ patrons, allies and library staff, the board discussed commentary and opinions about Toronto Public Library's decision to rent public space to a controversial speaker at length at our November 12 Executive Board meeting. The board invited three guests from the library community to provide context to the issues, each representing different perspectives. Their insights have helped to inform MLA's response.

The MLA board reiterates its support for all Manitobans to have fair, equitable and barrier-free access to the widest possible variety of expressive content -- a core tenet of intellectual freedom. As part of a helping profession, our role as library professionals is to be there for our diverse communities. We are particularly invested in supporting historically marginalized communities such as the 2SLGBTQ+ community, Indigenous people, visible minorities and those with disabilities. We believe in and support inclusion and acceptance of all people and in providing safe spaces where everyone feels welcome to use library resources and spaces.

MLA believes one of the key ways we can continue to support our community and drive positive change is through tangible, interactive and accessible learning opportunities. We are actively working to provide our membership with constructive, inclusive and meaningful opportunities to learn and develop their skills with a focus on supporting marginalized patrons and communities. Please stay tuned for more details on when and where you may participate.

As always, we welcome any and all feedback from the community. We want to hear your priorities and address your needs and wants the best we can. As a volunteer-driven association, we will always do the best we can to support you. Please send us a message with your thoughts at any time: <https://mla.mb.ca/about/contact-mla/>.

Thank you for your continued support of our association and of libraries across Manitoba.