

February 20, 2025

St. Albert Public Library re-affirms commitment to intellectual freedom with expanded policy

St. Albert, AB — St. Albert Public Library is marking Freedom to Read Week by strengthening and updating its Intellectual Freedom policy.

“Intellectual freedom is a core value at the heart of what libraries do,” says St. Albert Public Library CEO Peter Bailey. “The recent CBC Fifth Estate report on the Valleyview, Alberta Library situation was a reminder that intellectual freedom is very much a live issue. And we know it is not only a books or collections issue but also a programs and public spaces issue ... The Fifth Estate report reminds us to not be complacent.”

The new policy is clear that St. Albert Public Library’s Intellectual Freedom policy covers collections, programs and events, public computers and networks (e.g. the Internet), display spaces and program and meeting rooms.

“Bound by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we affirm every individual’s right to both seek and receive information from all lawful points of view without restriction. We promote universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information, and ideas, while respecting the individual’s rights of privacy and choice. We support the free exchange of lawful information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment. We endorse the Canadian Federation Library Associations Statement on Intellectual Freedom,” according to the updated policy, which will be posted to the Library’s website [here](#).

The updates also make clear that the Intellectual Freedom policy works with and supports Library values and existing policies and statements, including those on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Truth and Reconciliation.

“Equity, diversity and inclusion and intellectual freedom are mutually reinforcing and SAPL will strive to support all voices by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment while upholding the principles of freedom of expression and human rights. Here for YOU, Here for ALL,” the policy reads.

“We know that by facilitating access to diverse collections that represent a broad range of viewpoints, our Library will include some ideas and perspectives that some might find controversial, upsetting or wrong,” says Bailey. “The ultimate right and responsibility for making choices about materials to read, view, and listen to, or services to access at the library rests with the individual, or in the case of children- with the parent or guardian.”

St. Albert Public Library members can challenge content in collections, programs, displays, meeting rooms, and computer or network access by submitting a [“Request for Reconsideration.”](#) Requests are reviewed by staff, and a written response will be provided to the member within 30 days of receiving the request.

Last year, SAPL staff spent their bi-annual Staff Development Day learning about Intellectual Freedom, which helped guide staff on the revision of the Intellectual Freedom policy, which is reviewed every three years. The Library Board devoted their annual retreat to an intellectual freedom workshop with subject matter expert James Turk of the Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University.

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Statement from the St. Albert Library Board about updated Intellectual Freedom policy:

“Freedom to Read week is the perfect time to reaffirm and celebrate St. Albert Public Library’s commitment to intellectual freedom- a core value and fundamental principle for public libraries in Canada and democracies around the world.”

“We support the rights of every St. Albertan to seek, receive and share information from all viewpoints, in accordance with Canadian legislation. St. Albert Public Library plays a vital role in providing access to reliable information in a public space where people feel welcome to both consume and share ideas without judgement. We respect St. Albertans’ rights to privacy and choice and our new, expanded Intellectual Freedom policy upholds and protects those rights and reaffirms our commitment to strengthening our democracy.”

“As a vibrant, welcoming centre of learning for all, St. Albert Public Library’s high-quality collections, services and programs foster a love of reading, literacy and the pursuit of lifelong learning.”

-Library Board co-chairs Jennifer Freitas and Meagan Dechaine

[The Canadian Federation of Library Associations’ Intellectual Freedom Statement](#)

"Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend and promote

equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources."

[Freedom To Read Week 2025](#)

The annual Freedom to Read week (Sunday, February 23 to Saturday, March 1) is a time for Canadians to celebrate and reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom. Even in democracies like Canada, it is vitally important to protect Canadians' right to decide for themselves what they choose to read, as libraries are regularly asked to remove books and magazines from their shelves.

SAPL is also marking Freedom to Read week with a book display, and a "Book in a Jar" contest. Prizes for the contest include "I Read Banned Books" tote bags.

CBC Fifth Estate report: <https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/features/a-shadow-war-on-libraries>

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