



:. ontario library association

POLICY NAME:	FOREST OF READING® POLICY ON THE SELECTION OF MATERIALS
DATE APPROVED:	NOVEMBER 15TH, 2017 BY FOREST OF READING SELECTION CHAIRS DECEMBER 15TH, 2017 BY OSLA COUNCIL *Updated July 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Forest of Reading® is Canada’s largest recreational reading program, with over a quarter of a million readers taking part every year.

The OLA Board of Directors is pleased to provide this reading initiative:

- To encourage children, young people and adults of Ontario to enjoy reading;
- To develop recognition for Canadian authors and Canadian books;
- To contribute to the financial stability of the Canadian publishing industry;
- To provide staff at school and public libraries with a meaningful tool for improving literacy in schools and libraries; and
- To respond to community interest and need.

The Forest of Reading® is designed to engage and encourage readers to enjoy reading and to create lifelong readers.

It offers nine reading programs for children and young adults, designed for various age ranges:

Program Name	Grade Range	Book Type
Blue Spruce Award™	JK–Grade 2	Picture Books
Silver Birch Express Award®	Grades 3–6	Fiction / Non-fiction

Silver Birch Fiction Award®	Grade 4-6	Fiction
Yellow Cedar Award	Grade 4-8	Non-Fiction
Red Maple Award™	Grades 7–8	Fiction
White Pine Award™	Grades 9–12	Fiction
Le prix Peuplier	varies	Picture Books
Le prix Méléze	varies	Shorter chapter books or mature picture books
Le prix Tamarac	varies	Chapter Books

OBJECTIVE

The Forest of Reading® lists may contain books that parents, staff at school and public libraries and readers see as difficult or controversial. This policy provides context for OLA’s position on the selection of books in the Forest of Reading®.

DEFINITIONS

Censorship: Censorship is defined as the removal, suppression or restricted circulation of literary, artistic, or educational images, ideas, and/or information on the grounds that they are morally or otherwise objectionable.

The selector seeks reasons to include material in the collection; the censor seeks reasons to exclude material from the collection. It is the responsibility of the school and library staff to provide a diverse, balanced, and high-quality collection representing all points of view on controversial issues.¹

Freedom of Expression: In Canada, section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication”. Please refer to OLA’s [statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual](#).

¹Adapted from: American Association of School Librarians:
http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/intellectual_freedom_brochure0212.pdf

POLICY STATEMENTS

The OLA supports the right of a family to decide if a book is or is not suitable for their child.

The OLA affirms that intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general, and including those ideas and interpretations which may be unconventional or unpopular.

The OLA affirms the importance of fostering a society that tolerates freedom of expression and the opportunity to explore difficult, even personally offensive subject matter.

PROCEDURE

The Selection Committee for the Forest of Reading® consists of staff at both school and public libraries. These people are experts in choosing books that will engage and challenge young readers. While there is no deliberate selection of controversial materials, any book that meets the selection criteria will not be discarded if it also holds the potential to be controversial. Few great Canadian books would be chosen if this were the case.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE FOREST OF READING®

The following criteria are presented in order of importance:

1. **Literary quality** in the case of **fiction** including but not limited to:
 - structure
 - richness of language
 - craft of the writer
 - pace
2. **Quality of presentation** for **non-fiction**, including but not limited to:
 - appeal and appropriateness of the presentation
 - clarity
 - layout
 - format
3. Audience appeal
 - appropriateness to the age group
 - a range of readability
 - the variety of themes and content for the program being selected for
4. Accuracy and relevance
5. Balance in the final list
 - gender identity of protagonists
 - gender and cultural diversity of subject appeal
 - geographical settings, e.g., rural, urban, cross-Canada locations
 - genre variety

6. Curriculum connection is outside the purposes of the reading programs

POINTS OF CONSIDERATION

- We live in a society where people are free to object to books and opinions, and people are free to defend their right to intellectual freedom. Removal or banning of a book constitutes censorship and sends a destructive message to young people.
- Works of fiction are generally not constructed in an unbiased, balanced way – they proffer opinions and perspectives that challenge the reader.
- Books that are difficult or controversial pose an opportunity for a child to ask questions and to learn. The Forest of Reading® is primarily delivered through schools across Ontario providing the chance for children to debate, inquire, and develop opinions in a learning environment.
- The Forest of Reading® is a voluntary reading program. Children who participate in the voting process must read 5 of the 10 books in their chosen category. For the picture book categories the readers must have read or have had all 10 books read to them. If a child or a parent does not agree with the contents of the book, they do not have to read it.
- A library should be a safe place to explore dangerous ideas.

ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION STATEMENT ON THE INTELLECTUAL RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL **

In affirming its commitment to the fundamental rights of intellectual freedom, the freedom to read and freedom of the press, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Library Association declares its acceptance of the following propositions:

- 1) That the provision of library service to the public is based upon the right of the citizen, under the protection of the law, to judge individually on questions of politics, religion and morality.
- 2) That intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general, and including those ideas and interpretations which may be unconventional or unpopular.
- 3) That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.
- 4) That free traffic in ideas and opinions is essential to the health and growth of a free society and that the freedom to read, listen and view is fundamental to such free traffic.
- 5) That it is the responsibility of libraries to maintain the right of intellectual freedom and to implement it consistently in the selection of books, periodicals, films, recordings, and other materials, and in the provision of access to electronic sources of information, including access to the internet.

- 6) That it is therefore part of the library's service to its public to resist any attempt by any individual or group within the community it serves to abrogate or curtail access to information, the freedom to read, view and listen by demanding the removal of, or restrictions to library information sources in any format.
- 7) That it is equally part of the library's responsibility to its public to ensure that its selection of material is not unduly influenced by the personal opinions of the selectors, but determined by the application of generally accepted standards of accuracy, style and presentation.

**Endorsed by the membership of the OLA at the 96th Annual General Meeting, 1998.

STATEMENT FROM THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

"The Canadian Federation of Library Associations recognizes and values the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the guarantor of the fundamental freedoms in Canada of conscience and religion; of thought, belief, opinion, and expression; of peaceful assembly; and of association.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

In accordance with these principles, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly. Only the courts may abridge free expression rights in Canada."

**Approval History: ~ June 27, 1974 Amended November 17, 1983; November 18, 1985; and September 27, 2015

<http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/statement-on-intellectual-freedom-and-libraries/>