

GENTLY DRAWING A LINE THROUGH THE RAINBOW READING STORY-TIME PROGRAM

During my professional career as an Assistant Professor of Educational Technology at the University of Alberta, an Associate Instructor in the Library and Audiovisual Technician program at Grant MacEwan University, followed by experience as a teacher-librarian, a K-12 school administrator, and serving as a Consultant and Supervisor of Library and Learning Resource Services for Alberta's second largest school district, I learned that nothing was more important to school and public libraries than providing the very highest quality and most appropriate learning materials and programs for the students they serve.

Prior to my recent retirement after 11 years of service on County Council, I had the privilege of serving four years as Council's representative on its outstanding public Library Board.

With the five minutes allowed for me to speak today, I want to "gently" caution Council on the potential perils it could face from concerned parents should it continue to support, or even expand, "Pride related programming" to pre-school or school age students in our County Library without extensive input from it's public taxpayers.

I have two reasons for bringing this challenging gender related issue to Council's attention at this time.

My first reason stems from a recent local newspaper advertisement titled "Rainbow Reading Storytime which offered two 30-minute story-time readings about

2SLGBTQ+allyship followed by a child-friendly discussion and fun activity”.

It is my contention that this seemingly innocent activity had a hidden agenda aimed at both promoting and teaching, pre-school children and younger elementary students during their most innocent, informative, and vulnerable stage of life, about gender fluidity under the guise of “inclusion”. The timing of the two reading activities were further exacerbated by the variety of rainbow flags, rainbow street crossings and other pride related activities these children may experience both in their community or in their own homes throughout the month of June.

The second issue about which I wish to alert Council, revolves around the potential for the “adult drag queen community” to also request to host story-time reading activities and events for children in our County Library.

Going forward, I would encourage Council to provide direction to the Library Board that it work to establish a policy by no later than September 2022, that clearly identifies the fact that it is not the library’s job to attempt to teach or to provide programming that opens-up or promotes any biased dialogue on any topic that could create confusion pertaining to gender identity, fluidity or sexuality among children and students under the age of 18 years.

I wish to thank members of Council for allowing me to bring these important matters to your attention today.

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Strathcona County Resident