



May 3, 2023

**JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF DURHAM REGION**

Every June, for the past five years, all public libraries in Durham Region have partnered with the Durham Children's Aid Society and Youth Pride Durham to host a family-friendly community event called Drag Queen Storytime. Drag Queen Storytime is a storytime program attended by children with their parents and features stories and songs that celebrates diversity and teaches love, inclusion, and acceptance in a safe space. Every library supports the program by providing space and marketing the events to our respective communities.

We recognize that Durham Region is home to a variety of individuals and families, each with unique perspectives, experiences, and values. We deliver a range of programs and services that reflect and celebrate all members of our communities while acknowledging that not every book on our shelf or program we offer will be a good fit for each resident. These programs are selected based on our knowledge of our community and residents decide whether a program is a good fit for them and their family.

A large number of families in our community feel that Drag Queen Storytime speaks to their values. They express this through their continued attendance at the program every year and in their messages to us afterward. We hear often that the program offers a meaningful experience and a safe space for children and parents to talk about inclusion.

Public libraries have always championed the values underpinning a democratic society including free, open, and equitable access to a diversity of information and ideas, civic engagement, intellectual freedom, and freedom of speech. The public library remains an institution that helps build understanding for one another by being a welcoming and inclusive public space for all.

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