

Local libraries issue joint statement in support of drag storytimes

By **Zachary Roman**

Inclusivity matters to local libraries.

On June 29, the CEOs and board chairs of the Caledon, Orangeville, and Grand Valley public libraries issued a joint statement in support of drag storytimes.

"We, the undersigned, proudly express our support for the inclusion of drag storytimes as a valuable program in our libraries," reads the statement. "We believe in fostering diversity, inclusivity, and a safe space for all members of our community, including children."

The statement is signed by Colleen Lipp, CEO of the Caledon Public Library (CPL); Joanne Stevenson, CEO of the Grand Valley Public Library (GVPL); Darla Fraser, CEO of the Orangeville Public Library (OPL); Tony Maxwell, Board Chair of the CPL; Andrew Stirk, Board Chair of the GVPL; and Sheri Marks, Board Chair of the OPL.

The library leaders said drag storytime provides an "engaging and inclusive environment where children can explore the wonders of literature while embracing diversity and celebrating individuality."

Further, they said drag storytimes are an opportunity for libraries to promote respect and understanding of different identities, backgrounds, and expressions. They said this is essential in building inclusive communities.

"By making drag storytime available, we are creating an environment that values and embraces the rich tapestry of identities and experiences that make up our communities," the statement reads. "It is our duty as library leaders to remain true to the principles of intellectual freedom, equity and diversity and to provide a community space for voices that are often marginalized or

underrepresented."

The library leaders said supporting drag storytimes is a way to show they are committed to their principles. They thanked the drag performers who share their time and talents to share the joy of reading with local youth.

"In conclusion, we support drag storytime as a vital and cherished program within our libraries. We stand united in our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and the principles of intellectual freedom," reads the statement. "Together, we can create an environment where all community members, regardless of gender identity or expression, feel welcomed, respected, and celebrated."