



# Libraries Not Landfills

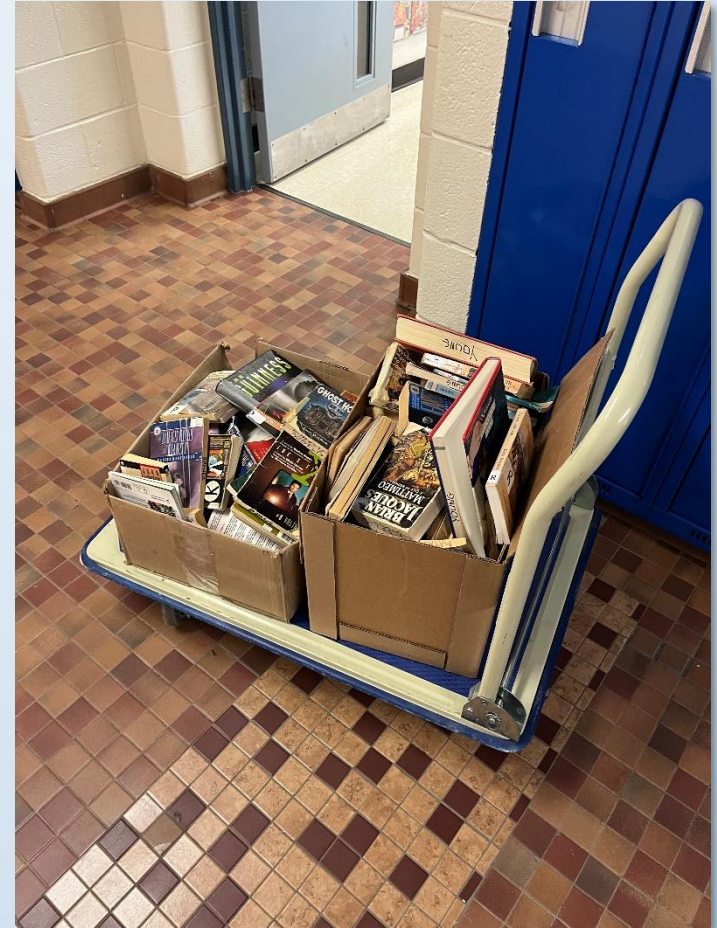
*No society that destroys books  
has ever ended up on the right  
side of history!*

Tom Ellard

Oct 3, 2023 – PDSB Committee Presentation

# Presentation Outline

- Who is Libraries not Landfills
- What are our Concerns
- What do we Know
- What the PDSB Report says
- What might be Gone
- What is the Outcome
- Where we are Now
- What we are Asking for Tonight



# Who Am I

- I am a parent with my son in the PDSB
- I am a product of the public education system
- I believe that our community's children deserve the best education possible for the tax dollars available
- I am upset that our library resources have gone to landfills or have been shredded, hurting the environment
- My child's chances to receive the best public education have been impacted



Tom Ellard, whose son attends a PDSB high school, is one of the founders of the group Libraries not Landfills, which Ellard says started after teachers came to them with concerns about the new weeding process. (Nicole Brockbank/CBC)

# Librariesnotlandfills.ca

- We are concerned parents, grandparents and educators who fund the Peel Public School Board
- We were formed after PDSB teaching staff approached us to help raise public awareness about their concerns regarding the Weeding and Auditing process
- We have an active Steering Committee comprised of parents, a principal, a superintendent, teachers, librarians and other professionals
- We agree that new diverse voices must be added and included in our school libraries

# Our view of School libraries

- School libraries are paramount in upholding freedom of speech, allowing children to access a multitude of ideas in a democracy
- A secular, non-ideologically focused library supporting the curriculum is vital to enable critical thinking and diversity of thought that can only come from an array of ideas
- This is a public system funded by the citizens of Peel to serve our children
- Elected Trustees monitor and direct the board administration on the use of resources on behalf of the community
- Canadians do not align themselves with the regimes that ban books

# Our Concerns

- PDSB is throwing out potentially millions of dollars of school library books
- There is no accountability for this process or the impact to us as taxpayers
- There has been no community engagement and transparency
- Empty shelves are harmful to children and will disadvantage them as it will take years to replenish shelves
- This process appears to be highly subjective, arbitrary and inconsistent
- The ideological and opaque nature of this weeding process is highly concerning and sets a dangerous precedent

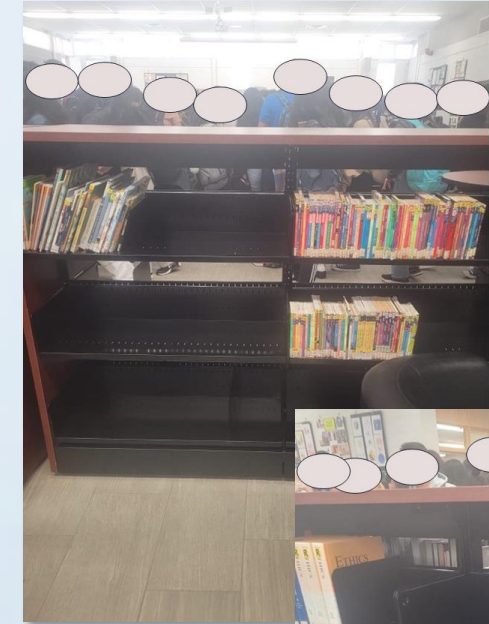
# What Do We Know - 1

- Weeding in some PDSB schools has resulted in half empty shelves
- Before May 8<sup>th</sup>, books were sent directly to landfills
- After that, books were shredded or put in storage based on the May 24<sup>th</sup> Trustee directive
- Librarians have lists of the books that were removed
- Trustees are on the record having heard from their constituents about thousands of books being removed



# What Do We Know - 2

- There is no consistency in the removal of materials, but the overall result is that library collections are substantially reduced
- This is not a small initiative - financial resources, as well as time from board administrators, teachers and custodians have been dedicated to this Weeding and Auditing effort
- Parents and students were not consulted or engaged
- Chair Dr. Green agrees that the process was “rolled out out wrong”



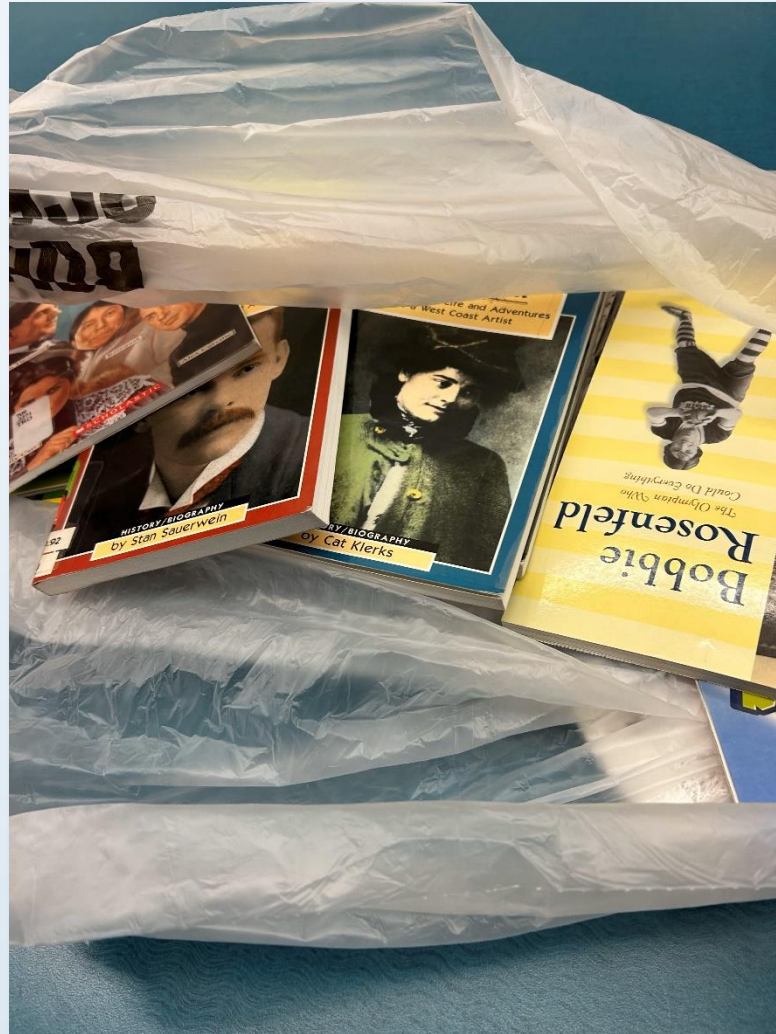
Weeding and Audit of Resources in the Library Learning Commons Collection

Guidelines for the weeding of Fiction Resources		
Type of Text	Retention period based on publication date *criteria to ensure accuracy of information	Circulation Criteria *number of years with zero checkouts to ensure relevance
General Fiction	10-15 years	5-8 years
Picture books	10-15 years	5-8 years



# Books Headed to Landfill From the PDSB

How did this action help students or the Environment?



# What the PDSB Documents Tell Us

- Instructions in the report direct librarians to weed their collections of materials published before 2008
- Librarians should only retain materials that reflect students' lived experiences to reduce perceived ideological harm
- The documents state that the equitable curations process is one where Peel library staff will be held accountable
- If a book is retained, the librarian needs to justify the retention or be in potential violation of board policy
- This approach was further reinforced during May 8<sup>th</sup> board meeting

## Frequently Asked Questions



### How was the 15-year weeding date chosen?

The previous time frame for weeding library resources was set at 10 years, but we have since decided to extend the shelf life to 15 years. This decision was made in order to maintain the currency and relevance of the collection while ensuring that the resources are in good condition and remain culturally responsive. It is important to

### What about books in our library collections that are considered "classics"?

It is imperative that library staff engage in continuous self-reflection to assess both their explicit and implicit biases, as well as their personal preferences, prior to initiating the weeding process. The objective of a student-centered collection is to align with the needs of the students, rather than the inclinations of the library staff. Holding onto personal biases such as "But I love/loved that book" promotes practices that prioritize teacher-centered approaches, rather than ensuring that students have access to current, compelling, and relevant resources.

In order to maintain an equitable collection, all items should be deemed potential candidates for weeding. The category of "Classics" typically consists of Euro-centric texts that were penned long before students' birth dates, and may not reflect the lived experiences of students within the Peel District School Board. Therefore, all texts within a collection must be thoroughly evaluated to determine whether they align with the weeding criteria, with the aim of avoiding the reinforcement of colonial ideologies that are inherently racist, classist, heteronormative, and/or sexist. In instances where circulation data indicates frequent usage of a book, its age and condition may be considered, and it may be retained in circulation.

# Weeding – What Might be Gone

- Our sources indicated that one school removed 2,500 books from its library
- Assuming other schools remove similar amounts, close to 650,000 books could be removed
- This represents a taxpayer value of approximately \$8 to \$16 million in lost inventory

Estimates only	Single School	259 Schools
Weeding Estimate of books lost	<b>2,500</b>	<b>647,000</b>
Potential Value lost at \$12 per book replenishment amount	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>\$7.8 M</b>
Potential value at hardcover cost of \$25*	<b>\$63,000</b>	<b>\$16.2 M</b>

\*Based on web searches for average industry pricing in Canada. The Board may have access to discount rates from publishers, however that data is not known to our committee at this time.

# Seeding – Costs and Time

- The board may have allocated \$12 per student for the purchase of new materials
- Average hard cover book in Canada costs \$25\*
- Schools must apply for funds and justify what books will reseed shelves
- It could take between 4 to 9 years to repopulate the libraries to their former levels

Estimates only	
Student Population 153,000 x \$12	\$1.8 M per year
Replacement rate low estimate (\$12 per book) at \$7.8 M	4.3 years
Replacement rate high estimate (\$25 per book) at \$16.2 M	9 years

What is the reseeding process and who approves these new books on what basis?

What is the level of transparency and engagement with the community?

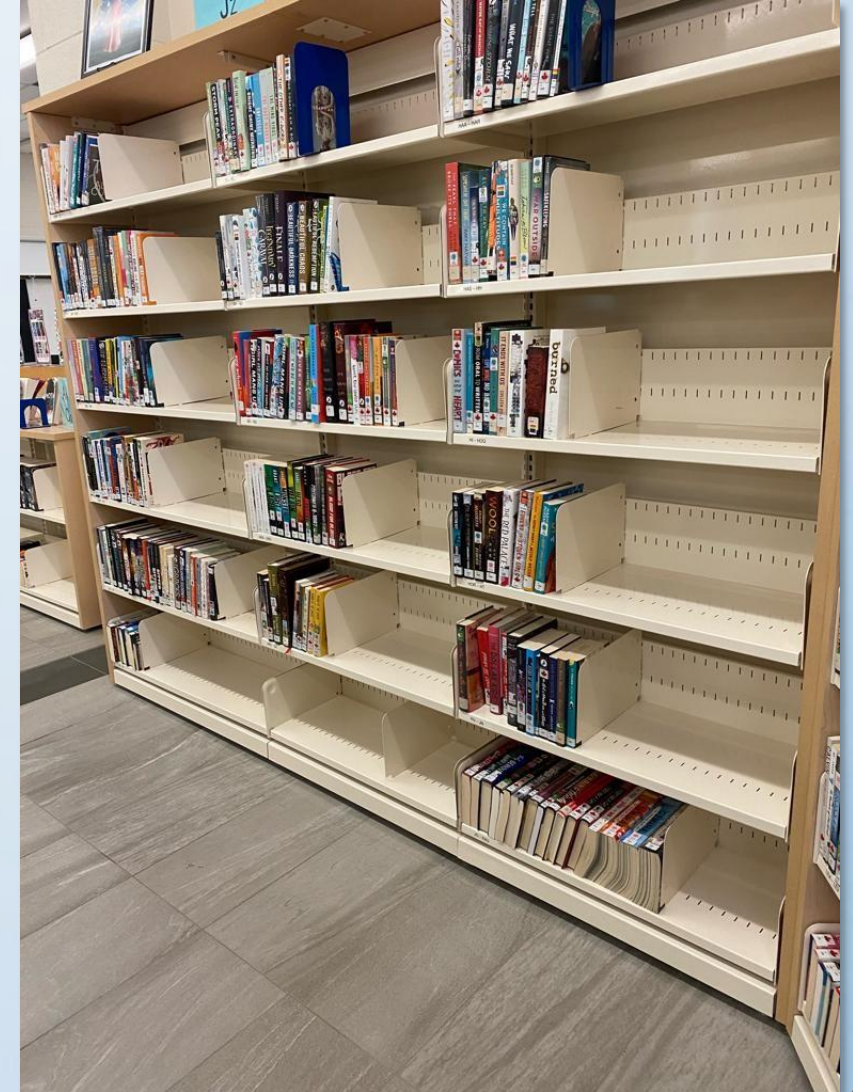
\*Based on web searches for average industry pricing in Canada. The Board may have access to discount rates from publishers, however that data is not known to our committee at this time.

# Outcome - Students Disadvantaged!



Based on the funding model of \$12 per student it will take years to reconstitute these shelves

Our estimates show a high school student today will graduate before the shelves are repopulated



# Teacher Saved these from the Dumpster!

This is a teacher's trunk with books rescued from the school dumpster



# Erindale Shelves - Result Fewer Books



Empty shelves are not inclusive

Empty shelves do not make an equitable learning environment

Empty shelves do not provide for a diversity of ideas

PDSB students at schools with empty shelves are at a disadvantage today relative to their peers



# Where Are We Now?



Examples of books removed from PDSB schools as an outcome of the Weeding an Auditing Process

CBC Investigates Sept 13, 2023

## Statement from Minister Lecce

- ✓ “Ontario is committed to ensuring that the addition of new books better reflects the rich diversity of our communities. It is offensive, illogical and counterintuitive to remove books from years past that educate students on Canada's history, antisemitism or celebrated literary classics,
- ✓ “I have written to the board to immediately end this practice.” Lecce wrote in a statement

Source Canadian Press / CTV News Sept. 13 2023.



## Statement from our Director of Education: Library Learning Commons Resources Across PDSB

PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 15, 2023

The Peel District School Board follows the library weeding guidelines set by the Canadian School Libraries Association. These guidelines direct the teacher librarians at our 259 schools to keep books with any publishing date that are accurate, relevant to the student population, inclusive, not harmful, and support the current curriculum from the Ministry of Education.

To be clear, books such as **The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank** and the **Harry Potter series** remain in our collections, and where needed, newer versions may be purchased if the book is in poor condition.

The weeding and seeding, or replenishment, of school book collections has always been a part of the responsibilities for all teacher librarians within Peel District School Board and at school boards across Canada. The replenishment process significantly enhances the school libraries' capacity to offer a more precise, inclusive, culturally relevant, and responsive collection of texts for students.

PDSB teacher librarians have not been given the direction to remove all books published with a publication date older than 2008, nor has the board received provincial direction to remove particular books from our collections. **Regardless of publication date**, older or damaged books that are accurate, relevant to the student population, inclusive, not harmful, and support the current curriculum may stay within the school or schools have the opportunity to repurchase newer copies of the same title to replace the damaged ones.

Teacher librarians will continue to be advised to follow the recycling guidelines from the Region of Peel and in collaboration with the school's custodial staff when determining how to dispose of books.

Training is conducted annually, and we will be reviewing our training process to ensure consistency in replenishment of Library Learning Commons Resources across PDSB schools.

The Peel District School Board continues to work to nurture student-centred learning environments that allow children to see themselves reflected in their school every day.

**Rashmi Swarup**  
Director of Education  
Peel District School Board

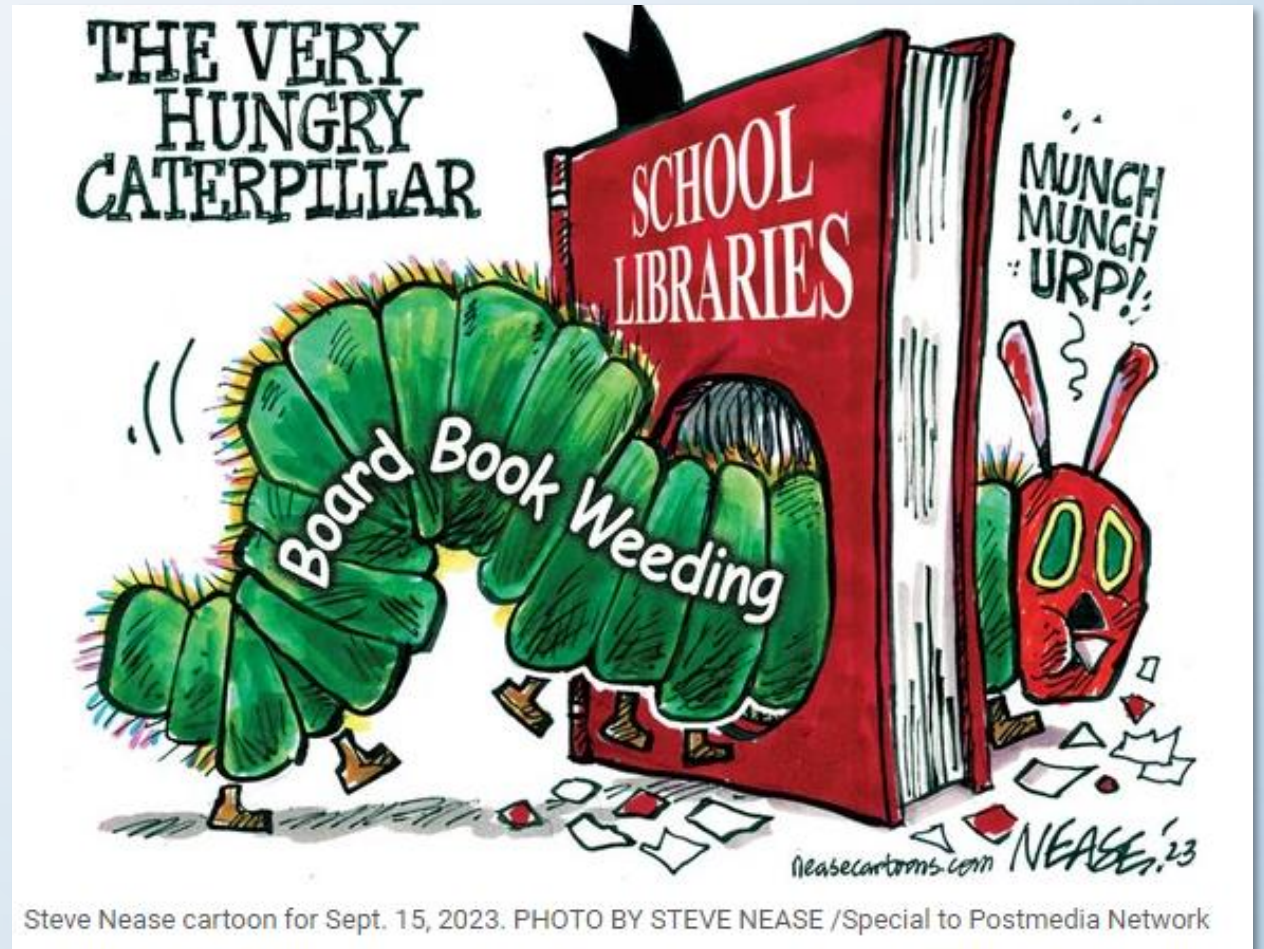
The statement does not provide comfort that the issue has been adequately addressed, stopped or that action is being taken to improve clarity, transparency and community engagement

## The Board Response and our Observations

- The Board statement on Sept 13<sup>th</sup> does not deny that Anne Frank or other books have been removed
- The Board administration statement does not acknowledge the direction from the Minister of Education to halt the process
- The statement seems to imply that the weeding process will continue despite the Minister's direction
- Statements regarding repurchasing of books are unclear – who defines what is “not harmful”?
- No budget for 2023/24 is mentioned for restocking libraries

# The World is Watching the PDSB

- Parents have spoken out against this process
- Students are impacted and have voiced their concerns
- The Minister of Education has given clear direction to stop this process
- We have global media attention on PDSB



Steve Nease cartoon for Sept. 15, 2023. PHOTO BY STEVE NEASE /Special to Postmedia Network



We are confident that you became Trustees to have a positive impact on the education and not landfills with books.

My son's future is impacted by your decisions.

# What We are Asking For

- Comply with Minister Lecce's direction to stop the process
- Make public the list of the materials already weeded
- Restore the books in good condition that are in storage to library shelves now
- Work with the Minister to set a new direction
- Engage the community transparently – hold open consultations

**Pass a motion to Stop** the entire **Weeding & Auditing** Process across the board tonight!