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## **MEMORANDUM**

**CWCD 455-2019**

**Subject: 2019 Book Distribution Event**

**Date: December 6, 2019**

**To: Regional Chair and Council**

**From: Darlene Edgar, RECE, Director Children's Services**

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Since 2017, Niagara Region Children's Services has been collaborating with First Book Canada, a registered Canadian charity which acts as a clearinghouse for large-scale book donations from publishing companies. Every May and November, Children's Services plans and hosts a book distribution event, with new, unused books, appropriate for different age groups, from infants to children 18 years of age. The books provided by First Book Canada are distributed through hundreds of representatives from a multitude of local schools, agencies and organizations serving low-income children and youth from families across the region.

Over the last few years the book distribution events have grown substantially and have created a "book dependency" in Niagara. However, at the same time, the number of books that Niagara Region Children's Services was able to secure from First Book Canada has declined, due to the increasing needs in communities across Canada. Children's Services reached out to the local retail store 'The Book Outlet', located in St. Catharines, to inquire if the store would like to consider donating books. The Book Outlet generously donated over 200,000 new, unused books.

In addition to the 200,000 books donated by The Book Outlet, 75,000 books were provided by First Book Canada. In the end, the Niagara Book Distribution Event, held the week of November 11 to 15, 2019, had nearly 280,000 books to be given to children and youth in need across Niagara.

The event was also made possible through the generous support of local businesses: Seaway Mall provided free storage space and the event locale; and Fontaine Trucking of Port Colborne, provided transportation for the books to Niagara. As well, Children's Services wishes to acknowledge the numerous volunteers who donated their time to help set-up for the event.

Including the recent book distribution event, there have been five (5) such events, helping to put approximately 600,000 new, unused books in the hands of children and youth across Niagara. The total value of these books has been conservatively estimated at \$6.5million dollars.

The following examples provided by community agencies, programs and services demonstrate how the book distribution events have made an impact in the community.

- Family & Children's Services of Niagara: Families receiving assistance are visited by Caseworkers who bring donated books with them on home visits. Since Caseworkers often discover there is very little, or at times nothing for the child to play with, they can now leave a book behind for each child.
- Public Health Nurses: Nurses visit parents with new born babies in their homes and leave a book behind to encourage reading and connecting with the baby.
- Holy Trinity Food & Hygiene Bank: Last December they put out a selection of books and wrapping paper and encouraged visitors to select and wrap a book as a gift for their family members. One grandfather broke down in tears, thankful that he now had gifts to give his grandchildren.
- Adult Literacy and Credit Programs: The books are used for reading projects and allow clients to take home books as gifts for their families.
- Public Health's Mobile Dental Clinic: Staff share books with children coming in for a dental appointment so they can read while they wait and bring the book home.
- Children's Services: When Fee Subsidy Caseworkers meet with families who are applying for financial assistance for their child care costs, families pick from a selection of books for their children to keep.

Children's Services is committed to working with local businesses and not-for-profit organizations to support Niagara families and their children in creating home libraries. Language development in the first 5 years of a child's life is crucial, with parents as their children's first teacher playing a critical role in supporting their child's early literacy. Language and communication provide the tools necessary for learning, engaging in social relationships and the ability to self-regulate emotions.

Respectfully submitted and signed by



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Darlene Edgar, RECE  
Director, Children's Services  
Appendix 1. Letter of Thanks from First Book Canada



Darlene Edgar  
Director, Children's Services  
Niagara Region  
P.O. Box 344  
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way  
Thorold, ON L2V 3Z3

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Dear Darlene,

We want to thank you for all your help with the Niagara Regional Pop-Up and Reading Celebration this week. First Book Canada is committed to providing equal access to high-quality books and educational resources to educators and children in low-income areas, and we couldn't do that without you.

The Niagara Region's generosity, commitment and support of such a massive project is greatly appreciated and it does not go unnoticed. Karen Schmidt did an amazing job directing the entire event and her dedication to its execution was second to none. She was an invaluable asset throughout the entire week. Every aspect of the event, from visiting the elementary school classes to the distribution of over 280,000 books will make a huge impact on the teachers, students, libraries and other groups serving children in need around the Niagara Community and across Southwestern Ontario.

So, from First Book Canada, thank you for taking the time to help us in our mission, provide books to hundreds of groups who need them, and give kids an opportunity to reach their full potential. Please also thank Karen and all your staff who volunteered last week for all their hard work and special efforts to make the whole event and school visits so successful.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Best". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Best,

Executive Director