



545 West 10th Ave
Vancouver, BC V6G 1M5

info@cupe391.ca
604.322.4879

**Statement from CUPE Local 391:
In response to VPL Board's decision regarding March 21 GIDYVR room rental at
Library Square Conference Centre**

The Vancouver Public Library Board's decision to permit a room rental to the group Gender Identity YVR (GIDYVR) is raising concerns for employees of the Vancouver Public Library in their workplace and their community. Workers, represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 391, disagree with the Board's decision to accept the rental request from GIDYVR, featuring the speaker Meghan Murphy.

Since Murphy spoke at a similar event at the Library Square Conference Centre in January 2019, the CUPE 391 Executive has witnessed significant pressures on the well-being of our membership. The stress put on workers before, during, and after this event, has the potential for long-term damage that cannot be ignored or dismissed. Members have expressed, to the union and to management, symptoms of anxiety, fear, anger, and depression in both their professional and personal lives. These experiences raise health and safety concerns from the union for those members directly affected as well as those working alongside their struggling colleagues. The impact is also felt by the many members who have had to navigate highly emotional conversations with colleagues and the public due to the very public discussion surrounding this issue. Library patrons and community members have directly targeted our members on social media while engaging in the debate about the decision to allow the room rental. Members in the unit responsible for library communications and social media have likewise been exposed to threatening and violent language.

CUPE 391 acknowledges that in response to requests from the union and feedback from staff, VPL administration have taken measures to mitigate the impact of the actual event on workers. We appreciate actions such as moving the event to after the library has closed and directing public enquiries to non-unionized managers. We also recognize that the VPL Board engaged in a lengthy review of the Public Meeting Rooms & Facilities Use Policy. We understand that the discussion and decision undertaken by the Board was difficult and emotional. However, we cannot overemphasize the potential for broader harms to the well-being of their employees, and in weighing Policy Statement 5. *Prohibited Activities* against Policy Statement 7. *Protecting Safety and Security*, members disagree with the decision to approve this room rental request.

The Union welcomes the Board's commitment to call upon provincial and federal authorities to provide greater clarity regarding legal protections for marginalized groups. We will continue to work with the employer and the community in finding outcomes that respect the rights of all workers and marginalized peoples to health, safety and well-being.