

Dear Town Council, Mayor, Deputy Mayor:

This letter for the consent agenda relates to the Collingwood library. I am requesting revision to the library written code of conduct to prohibit patrons:

- sleeping
- lying stretched over furniture (couches, chairs) and having feet on furniture

In addition, library staff to enforce wearing footwear at all times as indicated in code of conduct. Also, removal of couch in front of Murray Clerkson room 2nd floor. At present, management (CEO Kulchycki, library board) permit sleeping patrons to lie fully stretched out on couches, shoes to be taken off and patrons to put their feet on couches and chairs.

The library is funded by local municipal property taxes. The town council has oversight and provides funding but there is joint accountability between town council and library board for operations. The library is governed under the Public Libraries Act with independent board governance. The library board ensures operational management being responsible for setting policy/procedures for acceptable patron behaviour. At the library board meeting on April 23rd, this issue will be presented with a deputation.

The main reasons for supporting a no sleeping policy relate to the following:

- **Liability**
- **Health and safety**
- **Security**
- **Space management**
- **Patron wellbeing**

Liability- a sleeping patron poses liability risks. If the patron experiences a medical emergency such as diabetic coma or drug overdose, it could be considered negligent if library staff don't intervene believing the patron to be sleeping.

Health and Safety- no sleeping policies support safety because library staff can more readily assess that patrons are healthy and alert versus sleeping. Wellness/safety checks can prevent medical emergencies such as drug overdoses, or drug/alcohol intoxication. It is a safety risk when staff can't differentiate between a patron sleeping versus unresponsive or intoxicated. In these cases, quick intervention by staff is critical and assessment can be more challenging with sleeping patrons. Staff engaging with patrons also enhances safety standards as well as circulating throughout the facility.

Security- sleeping patrons may not be able to respond as quickly to emergencies such as fire, fire drill, security issues or to exit the facility at closing time. There is an increased risk of their belongings being stolen. Safety checks by library and security staff circulating around the library support increased levels of security. Patrons can be encouraged to report security issues as well.

Space Management- libraries are busy public multi-use spaces. There is limited seating and maximum sharing of resources. Furniture is to be shared and not monopolized by a sleeping patron. A patron sleeping on a couch in front of a busy meeting room such as the Murray Clarkson room is not suitable for a public facility. Thus, it is recommended to remove this couch.

Patron wellbeing- stay active and engaged while at the library. Enjoy library resources, programs and activities such as reading, studying, tutoring, computers, researching, speakers, and meetings. Many libraries explicitly state in their code of conduct that sleeping is not permitted to ensure the wellbeing of patrons. Finding a sleeping patron can negatively impact the library experience with many finding it disturbing, distracting and unexpected. Patrons have a right to a positive, and enjoyable experience at the library.

Sleeping is prohibited in over 249 public libraries in Ontario .Namely: Owen Sound, Innisfil (3 branches), Barrie (3), Orillia, Midland, Orangeville (2), Norfolk County (5) Tiverton, Kingston (16), Peterborough (2), Guelph, Sault Ste Marie (3), Windsor (9), Timmons (2), Georgina (4), London (16), Ottawa (33), Whitby, Pickering, Woodstock, Elliott Lake, Brampton (9), Aurora (2), Kitchener (6), Niagara Falls (4), Oshawa (4), Pembroke , Port Hope (2), Quinte West (2), Meaford, Fort Erie (3), Lincoln Pelham (4), Brighton (2), Brockville, Wasaga Beach and Toronto public libraries (all 100 branches)..

Brampton library considers sleeping patrons to be in distress and conduct regular safety/wellness checks. Staff can ask patrons to wake up and if necessary leave the premises. This no sleeping policy/code of conduct has a **safety focus** also to maintain a welcoming and respectful environment. Sleeping at the Brampton library is considered a violation of shared space guidelines.

The Collingwood library code of conduct stipulates footwear is to be worn at all times. However, library staff allow sleeping patrons to take off their shoes and lie on the couch. This sends a message to all patrons that the library rules can be broken. It sets the tone for the entire library that staff are not in charge.

The Collingwood library offers public space for respite and as a warming/cooling centre. This should translate to space for sitting not necessarily sleeping.

To ensure a safe, welcoming, inclusive environment for all library goers, prohibiting sleeping is the best practice. Most libraries prohibit sleeping because it can interfere with the enjoyment of the library by others. A no sleeping policy aims to be proactive and manage disruptive or intrusive behaviour. Sleeping raises many issues including hygiene, safety, liability, enforcement and security.

The library can offer a welcoming, positive and engaging experience and still have policies such as no sleeping. Codes of conduct when enforced with a friendly approach instil respect for the library as a safe place to spend time. Staff engaging with patrons enhances connectivity with the library and a positive library experience.

The purpose of a library is to have a quiet safe place to read a book, use library resources, or participate in a community program. The library is not designed for sleeping and it is poor use of library resources. Library furniture needs to be used appropriately with chairs for sitting, tables for working and couches are not beds.

In summary, while a library offers shelter, sleeping is problematic for a public library. The town could consider alternate public spaces to offer sleeping in a day centre perhaps a different municipal building, church or the youth centre. Consider over **249 Ontario libraries** that have no sleeping policies. The library plays a vital role in our lives so let's make a few improvements to enhance connectivity, reduce liability and ensure a welcoming space with a high standard of safety.

Sincerely, Leslie Millar

Collingwood resident, taxpayer, library patron