

West Perth Public Library

Advocacy and Political Engagement

Purpose

This policy applies to Board members, employees and volunteers of West Perth Public Library with regards to advocacy, their dealings with candidates and political parties, and the use of Library resources during the campaign periods for municipal, provincial and federal elections.

The Library must act and appear to act in a non-partisan way at all times, especially during elections, while supporting the democratic process, freedom of expression and informed discussion on political issues. The Library must comply with legislation relating to elections. These regulations are included in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* as amended by Bill 181, the *Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016*. Specifically, Clause 88.18 *Use of municipal, board resources* states:

“Before May 1 in the year of a regular election, municipalities and local boards shall establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal or board resources, as the case may be, during the election campaign period.”

Responsibility

Public libraries in Ontario are governed by the *Public Libraries Act, R.R.O. 1990* which establishes governance by independent Boards. In facilitating the expression of a wide range of ideas, public libraries also play an important role in encouraging democratic participation and awareness. The Library Board encourages staff to support non-partisan activities that promote political participation and voter awareness. Approval for using the library space or website for non-partisan activities requires approval of the Library CEO or designate.

Advocacy

Public libraries play an essential role in promoting literacy and the love of reading. They also help to overcome barriers that can limit citizen participation in the economy and in society. Advocating and promoting West Perth Public Library and its resources is an important role for all staff and Board members. The goal of advocacy is to promote awareness of the impact and value of public libraries.

- Where appropriate, West Perth Public Library will participate in advocacy efforts with provincial and national library organizations. We will partner with the library

community to support independent research that improves and deepens our understanding about the impacts of libraries and best practices to achieve those impacts;

- The timing and nature of our advocacy will be careful to avoid the appearance of endorsing a specific candidate or political party;
- In general, the Library's formal advocacy efforts will focus on issues that are related to its organizational mission. For example, efforts to influence the Ontario and Canadian governments will focus on funding or legislation that impact public libraries or libraries, in general. This, however, does not preclude West Perth Public Library from participating in or supporting awareness campaigns on issues consistent with the values of respect and inclusion, or in general support of issues related to health and wellness and democratic participation;
- The Board Chair is the official spokesperson for the Library Board. Only the Chair may represent and speak for the Board in an official capacity to outside parties in announcing Board-stated positions and in stating Chair decisions (from Board By-Laws);
- The Library CEO:
 - speaks on behalf of the Library in matters relating to its operation and procedures, and may speak on behalf of the Board in cooperation with the Board Chair;
 - identifies and maintains effective relationships with appropriate stakeholders such as other libraries, universities, research organizations, governments, agencies, businesses, media, non-governmental organizations, community leaders and related institutions on a provincial, national and international scale;
 - is responsible for ensuring procedures are in place to support effective coordination with media;
- All Board members are encouraged to promote the value of the Library and its impact on the community by:
 - Sharing stories and relevant information about library programs, services and impact;
 - Sharing information about the Board's values, mission and strategic plans;
 - Being a positive ambassador for West Perth Public Library;
 - When requested, assisting the Board Chair in officially representing the Library at meetings or other events;
 - Respecting the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature and understand that it is the Chair's role to represent and speak on behalf of the Board;
 - If contacted by the media, coordinating with the Board Chair and Library CEO to ensure appropriate information is shared.

Campaign Contributions

In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*, Section 70(4), the *Election Finances Act*, R.S.O 1990 Section 16(1), and *Canada Elections Act*, Section 404(1), the Board may not make a contribution to the campaign of any candidate or political party in the form of money, goods or services.

Use of Library Resources and Property

1. All candidates and political parties have equal access to publicly available resources and services of the Library;
2. Meeting rooms may be rented in accordance with the West Perth Public Library's *Public Meeting Spaces* policy;
3. Candidates may not use equipment, supplies, staff or other operational resources of the Library, nor may they use the Library's logo in any campaign material;
4. 'All-candidates' meetings may be held at the Library, either as a Library program or sponsored by another group, provided that all candidates are invited to attend such meetings. A candidate cannot be featured or promoted in association with any other regular Library program or event;
5. In accordance with the *Canada Elections Act* section 81.1(1), federal election candidates or their representatives are allowed to campaign in facilities that are available for free to the public. During municipal and provincial elections, candidates will be granted the same right to campaign in the Library;
6. In accordance with the West Perth Public Library's *Community Information* policy, during an election the Library will provide awareness of the election and provide general information on elections;
7. No election sign or poster specific to a candidate or political party may be posted on the Library premises.

Employee and Volunteer Participation in Election Campaigns

1. Any library employee running as a candidate in the municipal election will comply with Section 30 of the *Municipal Elections Act*. This Act speaks to employees of local Boards running in municipal elections. The Act refers to the definition of *local board* as defined in the *Municipal Act, 2001* where the definition of a *local board* includes the public Library Board;
2. A Library employee or volunteer involved in a political campaign must be politically neutral in carrying out his or her Library duties and must not participate in campaign activities during his or her working hours.

Library Board Members as Candidates

Board members may continue their Library Board responsibilities when they are running for office.

Requests for information about the Library

1. The Library CEO will coordinate requests for information about the Library received from candidates or political parties;
2. Information that is provided by the Library to one candidate or political party will be provided to all other candidates and political parties upon request during an election;
3. Any candidate or political party may request a meeting with the CEO or tour of the Library.

Related Documents:

West Perth Public Library Policy. *Community Information.*

West Perth Public Library Policy. *Public Meeting Spaces.*

Government of Ontario. *Election Finances Act, R.S.O. 1990.*

Government of Ontario. *Municipal Act, 2001.*

Government of Ontario. *Municipal Elections Act, 1996.*

Government of Ontario. *Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016.*

Government of Canada. *Canada Elections Act.*

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