



Use of Library Resources for Political Elections

Governance

Purpose

The library must act and appear to act in a non-partisan way at all times, but especially during elections, while supporting the democratic process, freedom of expression and informed discussion on political issues. The library must comply with legislation related to elections.

The Library may host non-partisan civic engagement activities and provide neutral election information from official authorities. Partisan campaigning remains prohibited except as expressly permitted within a rented room under this policy.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Library Board members, employees, and volunteers;
- Elected officials, candidates for office, registered third-party advertisers, constituency associations, political parties, and their representatives; and,
- Any individual or organization using Library resources (physical and digital), spaces, or platforms during campaign periods.

It covers municipal, provincial, and federal elections and by-elections, as well as questions on a ballot.

Defined Terms

Local Board: The Municipal Elections Act speaks to employees of local boards running in municipal elections. That Act refers to the definition of local board as defined in the Municipal Affairs Act where the definition of local board includes the public library board.

Policy

1. Campaign Contributions

1.1 In accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, Section 70(4), the Elections Finances Act, 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.

2. Use of Library Resources and Property

- 2.1 All candidates and political parties have equal access on a first-come, first-served basis, to publicly available resources and services of the library.
- 2.2 Meeting rooms may be rented in accordance with the Brantford Public Library Meeting Rooms Policy.
- 2.3 Candidates may only use equipment normally provided as part of a room rental agreement. Candidates cannot use equipment, supplies, staff or other operational resources of the library nor may they use the library's logo in any campaign material.
- 2.4 'All-candidates' meetings can 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.
- 2.5 Candidates and political parties are permitted to distribute campaign materials within a room on library property rented by them provided they are in accordance with the Brantford Public Library Meeting Rooms Policy.
- 2.6 While federal law (Canada Elections Act s.81.1) provides candidates certain access to facilities open to the public, the Library determines that active campaigning inside open library spaces is incompatible with its neutral function. Candidates and their representatives may not campaign within Library facilities, except within a rented room or as part of an all-candidates forum approved by the Library. The same premise applies to municipal and provincial elections candidates.
- 2.7 Campaign brochures may not be displayed or distributed within the library unless and only during a duly constituted all candidates meeting. General materials promoting awareness of the election and general information on elections can be displayed.
- 2.8 No election signs or posters specific to a candidate or political party can be posted on the grounds of the library or in the library building.
- 2.9 The Library's website, social media, digital signage, newsletters, and other online platforms shall not host or promote candidate-specific content. Where the Library provides election information, it will link neutrally to official election sources and, if listing candidates, do so uniformly without editorial endorsement. Staff-only technology shall not be used for campaign purposes.

3. Employee and Volunteer Participation in Election Campaigns

- 3.1 Any library employee running as a candidate in the municipal election will comply with Section 30 of the *Municipal Elections Act*.
- 3.2 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.

4. Library Board Members as Candidates

- 4.1 Board members may continue their library board responsibilities when they are running for office.
- 4.2 Board members who are candidates must declare conflicts related to the election, refrain from using non-public library resources for campaign purposes, and recuse from decisions that could reasonably be seen to benefit their campaign.

5. Requests for Information About the Library

- 5.1 The CEO/Chief Librarian will coordinate requests for information about the library received from candidates or political parties.

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 Any candidate or political party may request a meeting with the CEO/Chief Librarian or tour of the library.

6. **Enforcement**

- 6.1 Breaches of this policy may result in:
- Immediate removal of campaign materials;
 - Termination of room bookings;
 - Suspension of access to library spaces or platforms; and/or
 - Referral to appropriate election authorities, where applicable.
- 6.2 Enforcement will be at the direction of the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate.
- 6.3 Enforcement decisions will be made, and impacted individuals notified, within ten (10) business days of Library management's awareness of the breach.

7. **Rules/Legislative requirements/Regulations**

- 7.1 Brantford Public Library will comply with:
- *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996 (Ontario), including s. 88.18 (use of board resources) and related provisions; consolidated to January 1, 2023.
 - *Canada Elections Act*, consolidated to February 18, 2026 (last amended March 26, 2025).
 - *Election Finances Act* (Ontario) regarding contributions and spending limits.

Where not otherwise addressed, this policy operates in conjunction with the City of Brantford Policy: *Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes*.

History

Supersedes: Not applicable

Background documents, related policies: Brantford Public Library Meeting Rooms Policy; City of Brantford Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy; Municipal Elections Act; Canada Elections Act; Elections Finances Act.

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