



SUBJECT: The LIBRARY AND POLITICAL ELECTIONS POLICY

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PURPOSE

Innisfil ideaLAB & Library strives to support community civic engagement and participation and to act as a venue for idea exchange and dialogue. At the same time, the Library must adopt a neutral approach in the provision of services, spaces and communications in the context of a political election. Therefore, the Library will be non-partisan with regard to its resources and will not support, endorse, or advocate the viewpoints or beliefs of any one candidate, political party, organization or group.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a consistent approach and direction on how Library resources can and cannot be used during municipal, school board, provincial and federal election campaigns or questions on the ballot. This policy also ensures that the Library is in compliance with relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the Municipal Elections Act, the Province of Ontario Elections Act, the Canada Elections Act and relevant municipal by-laws such as the Town of Innisfil's Election Sign By-law (037-18).

POLICY

General

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. These regulations are included in the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as amended by Bill 181, the Municipal

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.

The Library supports the principle of intellectual freedom, which is the free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society. The Library provides welcoming, neutral, safe and accessible environments inviting people to meet and interact with others and participate in public discourse.

The right to vote is one of the greatest rights of a free society and is at the core of our democracy. Thus, the Library will support the democratic process. The public and community can build their knowledge and be empowered through attendance at all candidates' meetings held at the Library. As required, Library locations may also serve as voting locations, i.e., polling places.

The Library will encourage and support discussion on civic and social issues in a manner that is neutral, fair and equitable to all those seeking elected office. The Library will balance the need for freedom of expression and assembly of all candidates and its legal responsibility not to provide an unfair advantage to any one candidate.

During election campaigns, the Library will maintain a neutral environment in which the Library will not make a contribution (including money, goods and services) or use Library resources to promote a political party, platform or one candidate over another.

Application

This policy applies to all Board members, employees and volunteers of the Innisfil ideaLAB & Library in their dealings with:

- candidates for elected office, including incumbent elected officials;
- political parties and third party advertisers;
- the request for library resources during the campaign periods for municipal, provincial and federal elections.

Nothing in this policy prohibits Library Board Members from performing their duties or Councillor's from performing their role, including representing the interests of their constituents in a manner consistent with their duties as an elected official.

Definitions

Campaigning means any activity by or on behalf of a candidate, political party, registrant, advocate, supporter or opponent of a question on a ballot meant to elicit support during the election period. Campaigning does not include the appearance of elected officials, other candidates or their supporters or registrants at an event in their personal capacity without the display of any signage or graphic which identifies the individual as a candidate or registrant and without the solicitation of votes.

Campaign Materials mean any materials used to solicit votes for a candidate(s) or question on the ballot in an election period, including, but not limited to literature, banners, posters, pictures, buttons, clothing, or other paraphernalia. Campaign materials include, but are not limited to materials in all media, such as print, displays, electronic, radio or television and online sources, including websites or social media.

Candidate means any person who has filed, and not withdrawn, a nomination for an elected office at the municipal, school board, provincial or federal level in an election or by-election.

Contribution, as defined in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, means “money, goods and services given to and accepted by or on behalf of a person for his or her election campaign”.

Elected Office means an elected position of authority to exercise a public function and to receive whatever compensation may belong to it.

Elected Official means an individual elected to the House of Commons, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Town of Innisfil Council or a School Board.

Election means an election, or by-election at the municipal (including school board), provincial and federal level of government, or the submission of a question or by-law to the electors.

Election Period means the official period of an election:

- For a municipal election (including school board), the election period means the period starting on the day an election is called and ending on voting day;
- For a provincial or federal election, the election period commences on the day the writ for the election is issued and ends on voting day;
- For a question on the ballot, the period commences on the day Town Council passes a by-law to put a question to the electorate and ends on voting day; and
- For a by-election, the period commences when the by-election is called and ends on voting day.

Glad-handing means attending a Library event as a private individual and interacting with other event attendees without displaying signage or disseminating material that identifies the individual as a candidate and without encouraging votes for a candidate, a political party or a position on a question on a ballot.

Library Resources include but are not limited to Library Employees and Volunteers, library events, library programmes, and services (including online services such as social media channels), library facilities, library equipment and supplies, library funds, library information, library infrastructure, and library intellectual property. These are further defined as follows:

- **Library Employee** means a person who is employed by the Library;
- **Library Events** mean events funded or organized by the Innisfil ideaLAB & Library including events that may be jointly organized with community organizations and/or with external sponsors. Library events include, but are not limited to community meetings and consultations, cultural celebrations, and special events. Events organized by third-parties are not considered Library Events for the purpose of this policy.
- **Library Facilities** mean any facility, including property, which is owned or leased by the Innisfil ideaLAB & Library and that is directly managed and operated by the Library. Library facilities do not include public right-of-ways such as sidewalks, roads, boulevards and laneways.
- **Library Funds** means funding support received through the Town's annual operating or capital budgets and the Province of Ontario Operating Grant for Libraries, and includes but is not limited to funds provided directly to Library programs and services, Board Member expense payments and staffing budgets.
- **Library Information** means any information in the custody and control of the Library, including databases that may be the repository of names, contact information, business records, financial information or other identifiers compiled and used by Library Employees to conduct library business.
- **Library Infrastructure** means any physical or technology systems that support the operation of library programmes and services, including but not limited to: the computer network, telecommunications and email system, wireless equipment, computer hardware, software and peripherals, the Internet and the Intranet. Excludes public right-of-way including sidewalks, roads, boulevards and laneways.
- **Library Intellectual Property** includes all content for which the Library holds intellectual rights, e.g., copyright, and includes for example, the Library's logo, videos or photographs produced by the Library, websites or domain names, etc.
- **Library Volunteer** means a person who voluntarily extends his or her services to actively support the Library, and who does so without remuneration. While Library Board Members volunteer their time, for the purposes of this policy they will be referred to as Board Members as they

have roles and responsibilities that are different from those of other volunteers.

Media Event means an event such as a press conference or photo opportunity to which the media is invited and the purpose of which is to promote a candidate, a political party or a position on a question on a ballot. Features of a Media Event can include but are not limited to, the issuing of a media advisory, stating date, time and location of briefing/press conference, use of backdrops, podiums or public address systems, the distribution of media releases and/or media kits, and/or the display of signage and/or other materials to promote a candidate or a position on a question on a ballot.

Media Scrum means an unplanned encounter between a candidate, a registrant, their staff and/or member(s) of the media.

Member of Council means the Mayor and all Town Councillors.

Non-Partisan is defined as not favouring or promoting or opposing any political party, platform or candidate for public office.

Political Party means political parties for provincial and federal elections that are registered under the *Ontario Election Finances Act* or in the registry of parties referred to in section 374 of the *Canada Elections Act*. Under the current legislative framework, political parties cannot participate in the Town's municipal elections or by-elections.

Question on a Ballot means any question or by-law submitted to the electors by Council, a School Board, an elected local board, or the Minister of Municipal Affairs under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

Registrant means an individual, corporation or trade union described in paragraphs 1 to 3 of subsection 70 (3) who has registered with the Town Clerk regarding a question on a ballot under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

Social Media is defined as any facility for online publication, participation, interaction and commentary, including without limitation: blogs, wikis, and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest and YouTube; the library website interactive components including blogs and Bibliocommons; forums and discussion boards, e.g. Google Groups; online encyclopaedias, e.g. Wikipedia; and any other websites that allow individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools, e.g. wikis.

Supporter means a supporter of a "yes" or "no" response to a question on a ballot but not incurring expenses like a registrant.

Third party advertising refers to advertisements or other materials that support, promote or oppose a candidate, or support, promote or oppose a “yes” or “no” answer to a question on the ballot. Third party in this context is a person or entity who is not a candidate and incurs a cost.

Voting Day means the day on which the final vote is to be taken in an election.

Guidelines

Section #1 - Campaign Contributions

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.

Section #2 - 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. Candidates cannot use equipment, supplies, Staff or other operational resources of the Library, except for those which are already available to any member of the public (e.g., use of photocopier at the regular cost per page copied), nor may they use the Library’s logo in any campaign material.
3. ‘All-Candidates’ meetings can be held at the Library, either as a library programme or sponsored by another group, provided that all candidates are invited to attend such meetings and the meetings are open to all members of the public. A candidate cannot be featured or promoted in association with any other regular library programme or event. This service is subject to availability of space and all applicable Library policies. It is the responsibility of the organizer(s) to ensure that all election candidates have been invited to participate in the event. The Library will provide space at market value in accordance with Library policies.
4. Room rental requests by a candidate, political party, registrant or supporter of a question on a ballot will only be available in accordance with the Library’s Room Rental Policy. Due to limited availability of space and the priority given to all-candidates meetings, these requests may not be guaranteed.
5. Any candidate, political party, registrant or supporter of a question on a ballot during an election shall not distribute any campaign materials in Library facilities, at Library events or on any of the Library’s social media channels.

6. During an election the Library will provide general information on elections, as requested.
7. Election campaigning on library grounds or in the library building is not permitted, and therefore, no election sign or poster specific to a candidate or political party can be posted on the grounds of the Library, in the library buildings or distributed through Library outreach programs.
8. Informal media scrums are permitted in public or common areas at Library facilities provided that no apparatus, mechanism or device for the amplification of the human voice or any sound is used and that the activity is not disruptive to regular Library activities in the vicinity. If the media scrum is deemed to be potentially disruptive, Employees may ask the participants to find an alternative location.
9. A candidate, political party, third party advertiser, registrant or supporter of a question on a ballot during an election is permitted to attend Library events, or events held at Library facilities, in either their capacity as an elected representative or as a private citizen to glad-hand with attendees and visitors, but may not solicit votes for themselves, a political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot, unless permitted by the Canada Elections Act.
10. Promoting awareness of, or providing general information on, elections is acceptable, such as teaching members of the public how to become a candidate, as long as no one particular candidate, political party, registrant or supporter of a question on a ballot during an election is promoted or endorsed at the event. Promoting awareness may include activities or events sponsored or not sponsored by the Library, in which all candidates are invited to attend.
11. Elected officials are permitted to attend Library-organized events or events held on Library property and act as ceremonial participants in their capacity as elected officials, including speaking at the event and partaking in ceremonial activities. Once the writ is issued for Provincial or Federal elections, MPPs and MPs are no longer elected officials and therefore shall not be invited to attend Library events as such.
12. During an election period, Library Board members who are candidates, registrants or supporters of a question on a ballot will be identified by title only in media releases and Library materials that describe activities in their capacity as a Library Board member.
13. Library online information related to Board Members will continue to be accessible by the public.

14. Library Board Members, Employees and Volunteers may work on a campaign or support a candidate outside of their work/volunteer hours.
15. Information, such the Library's strategic plan or annual report to the community, provided by the Library, Library Board Member or Employee to one candidate, political party, registrant or supporter of a question on a ballot during an election will be provided to all other candidates, political parties, registrants or supporters of a question on a ballot during an election, either through posting of the information on the internet or through other mechanisms. The provision of information to a candidate, political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot during an election will be coordinated through the Library's Communications Department.
16. Requests by a candidate, political party, registrant or supporter of a question on a ballot for personal meetings with the CEO, Managers or other Library Employees, and requests for tours of Library facilities during the election period will be accommodated where resources and time permits. If a meeting or a tour is organized for one candidate, political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot during an election, the CEO, Managers or other Library Employees commit to offering a similar meeting or tour for all other candidates, political parties, registrants or supporters of a question on a ballot during an election.

Section #3 - 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.
2. A Library Employee or volunteer involved in a political campaign must be politically neutral in carrying out their library duties and must not participate in campaign activities during their working hours.

Section #4 - Library Board Members as Candidates

Board members may continue their Library Board responsibilities while running for office.

Section #5 - Requests for Information about the Library

1. The CEO or Designate 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 a tour of the Library.

4. Should any written complaint arise regarding the alleged use of Library resources in contravention of this policy, the CEO, or their designate, shall have the delegated authority to investigate it and resolve any issues, and will provide details to the Town Clerk/Returning Officer of the complaint.

Section # 6 - Restricted Activities during Elections

1. Library resources may not be used to support, endorse or otherwise provide an unfair advantage to any candidate, political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot during an election.
2. Library Employees may not campaign or actively work in support of a municipal, school board, provincial or federal candidate, political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot during an election during working hours, unless they are on a leave of absence without pay, lieu time, or vacation leave. Library Volunteers may not participate in election campaigns during the hours in which they have agreed to provide volunteer service to the Library.
3. A Library Board Member may not use his or her position on the Board to influence Board Members, Employees or Volunteers for the benefit of a specific candidate, political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot during an election.
4. During work/volunteering hours, while on Library property, in Library vehicles, when representing the Library online and when on Library business, Library Board Members, Employees and Volunteers shall not:
 - Wear anything that promotes a specific issue, candidate or party, e.g., election buttons, campaign t-shirts; or Post, distribute or promote any election candidate or party materials e.g., campaign literature, flyers, signs, etc. in workspaces or online.
5. Library facilities, property and infrastructure cannot be used for any election related purposes by a candidate, political party, registrant or supporter of a question on a ballot during an election, including for the display of any campaign related signs, as well as for any other form of campaigning, except: as outlined in this policy's guideline section and where permitted by the Canada Elections Act.
6. No permits, licenses, leases, or any other agreement for the use of Library facilities, will be issued for the use or promotion of a particular candidate, political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot during an election.

Related Policies:

Board Code of Ethics Policy
Community Information & Display Policy
Community Social Media Policy
Employment Social Media Policy
Room Rental Policy
Staff Code of Conduct

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Supersedes Policy #2018-11, approved May 22, 2018, Motion #2018.42; & Policy
#2018-05, Approved March 19, 2018, Motion #2018.27