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The Library and Political Elections

The County of Brant Public Library operates in a non-partisan manner and supports the democratic process, fundamental freedoms, and informed discussion on political issues. This policy applies to municipal, provincial, and federal election campaign periods.

Section 1: Scope and Responsibility

1. This policy applies to the library board, employees, and volunteers:
 - a. in dealing with candidates and political parties, and
 - b. the use of library resources during campaign periods for municipal elections
2. It is the responsibility of the CEO or designate to ensure that the library complies with legislation related to elections at all levels - municipal, provincial, and federal.

Section 2: Use of Library Resources and Property

1. It is the responsibility of the library to ensure that no candidate, registered third-party advertiser, or political party is provided with an unfair advantage in the use of library resources at any time.
2. The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, states that *“Before May 1 in the year of a regular election, municipalities and local board 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”*.
3. Rules for use of library resources and property are as follows:
 - a. All candidates and political parties have equal access to publicly available resources and library services.
 - b. Meeting rooms may be rented in accordance with the Meeting Rooms (OP-08).
 - c. Library equipment, supplies, or personnel cannot be provided to candidates for campaign purposes.
 - d. The library’s logo cannot be used in any campaign material.
 - e. 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.
 - f. During a library-hosted program where any municipal council member or candidate would be invited, all municipal council members and candidates (who have submitted nomination forms for that municipal election) present at the meeting will

be invited and introduced. All candidates must advise the organizer/host of the event of their presence in order to ensure they are recognized.

- g. Candidates and political parties are permitted to distribute campaign materials on public rights-of-way at the library, unless prohibited by a municipal by-law.
- h. 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 are granted the same right to campaign in the library. Such activities must be coordinated with the CEO or designate to avoid any conflict with regular or planned library operational needs.
- i. In accordance with Policy LS13: Community Publicity, partisan or political materials may not be posted on Library bulletin boards, excepting for promotion of all-candidate meetings. Materials promoting awareness of the election are permitted.
- j. No election sign or poster specific to a candidate or political party can be posted on the grounds of the library or in the library building.

Section 3: Campaign Contributions

The library complies with legislation on campaign contributions at all levels.

1. Municipal Elections

The Board may not contribute to the campaign of any candidate or political party in the form of money, goods, or services. This is in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*, Section 88.8 (4).

2. Provincial Elections

The Board may not contribute to the campaign of any candidate of a provincial election, constituency association, nomination contestant, candidates, and leadership contestant of provincial political parties in the form of money, goods or services. This is in accordance with the Ontario *Elections Finances Act*, Section 16(1).

3. Federal Elections

The Board may not contribute to the campaign of any candidate of a federal election, a registered party, a registered association, nomination contestant, and leadership contestant of federal political parties in the form of money, goods or services. This is in accordance with the *Canada Elections Act*, Section 363(1).

Section 4: Participation in Election Campaigns

- 1. Library staff are encouraged to consult with a manager before engaging in any campaign activities on personal time to assess how their political activities may impact their professional duties.
- 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 working hours.

- a. Staff are expected to take extra care to ensure that they behave in a manner that residents, members of the existing County Council, and potential candidates for election see as impartial, fair and unbiased.
 - b. To avoid any perceived conflict of interest, staff are discouraged from assisting with municipal election campaigns in the County of Brant such as posting election signs on their property, phone and e-mail solicitation, distribution of brochures and wearing candidate buttons.
 - c. Staff shall not canvass or actively work in support of a candidate during normal working hours unless they are on a leave of absence without pay, flex time or vacation.
 - d. Staff shall not engage in campaign activities while wearing a uniform, badge, crest, or other element that identifies them as Library staff.
 - e. Staff shall not engage in campaign activities while using any resource (vehicle, technology, email, cell phone, etc.) owned or leased by the Library.
3. A library employee running as a candidate in a municipal election must comply with the *Municipal Elections Act*, Section 30.
 4. Board members may continue their library board responsibilities while running as a candidate in an election.

Section 4: Signage

Large candidate signs, such as lawn signs or banners are not permitted in any Library space, interior or exterior.

County of Brant By-law 121-08 outlines all requirements related to election signs and advertising devices

Section 5: Requests for Information from Staff

Candidate requests for information fall in one of two categories, and are handled accordingly:

1. Requests for corporate information (eg. Library budgets) will be directed to the CEO. Written responses will be provided to all candidates.
2. Requests for Library services (eg. reference questions) from political candidates will be handled in the same manner as service requests from patrons. Library staff will not show preference or dedicate extra time to the service because the requestor is a political candidate. Staff should consult with management if clarity or direction is needed.