

Chatham-Kent Public Library

Use of Library Resources During Elections Policy

Purpose

This policy provides guidance for Chatham-Kent Public Library (CKPL) staff and the Library Board regarding use of library resources, advocacy and participation in elections and political parties.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Partisan activity:** Any activity that supports or opposes a specific candidate, political party, or election outcome, either directly or indirectly.
- **Non-partisan activity:** Activities that promote civic engagement, voter participation, or public education without supporting or opposing any candidate, political party, or election outcome.
- **Library resources:** Includes library spaces, staff time, equipment, collections, and communication channels (e.g., website, social media, and printed materials).
- **Election period:** The time between the official call of an election and election day.

Background

Under Ontario's Public Libraries Act, public libraries including CKPL are governed by independent boards.

At CKPL a core value is intellectual freedom, and our role is to facilitate the expression of a wide range of ideas. Public libraries also play an important role in supporting the community in civic engagement and participation.

At the same time, CKPL strives to be non-partisan in our services, spaces, and communications. To accomplish this CKPL will be non-partisan in its use of resources and will not support, endorse, or advocate the viewpoints or beliefs of any one candidate, political party, organization, or group.

General Principles

The Library Board encourages and supports staff in facilitating non-partisan activities that encourage political participation and voter awareness.

Approved activities include things like the following:

- using library space to serve as polling stations
- using library space for non-partisan voter registration tables
- using library space to host all candidates' meetings
- using library space to host programs and discussions about relevant current issues

Approval for using the library space or promotion on the library's website or social media channels for non-partisan activities requires approval of the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate.

Accessible Polling Places

CKPL will work with the Municipal Clerk's Office, Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Elections Ontario, and Elections Canada to support the use of library branches as accessible polling locations.

Where library facilities are used as polling places, the library will make reasonable efforts to ensure that spaces are physically accessible and free from barriers that may prevent individuals with disabilities from exercising their right to vote.

The library will also make reasonable efforts to support accessibility needs related to communication and accommodation where possible.

Library Board Members as Candidates

Library Board members may continue their Board responsibilities while running for elected office. When acting in their capacity as Board members, they are expected to uphold the principles of this policy, including maintaining neutrality and not using library resources to support their candidacy.

Neutrality and Restrictions

CKPL will not support, endorse, or advocate the viewpoints or beliefs of any one candidate, political party, partisan organization, or group. The following activities are not permitted:

- the posting or distributing of partisan election or campaign material in or around library facilities, including entrances, lawns or on the library's website or social media channels
- renting library space for partisan events, election, or campaign activities during an election period
- campaigning within library facilities or directly outside library entrances
- the use of the library's name, logo, or branding in partisan materials, communications, or campaign activities
- the use of library resources, including staff time, equipment, or communication channels, for partisan purposes

Staff Conduct

While at work or representing the library, staff will not wear, display, or distribute items that promote or oppose a specific candidate, political party, or election outcome.

Staff will not post, distribute, or promote materials related to any election candidate or political party while on library property or using library resources.

Staff are expected to maintain political neutrality in their interactions with the public while performing their duties.

This policy does not restrict staff from participating in political activities on their own time. However, staff must not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the library and must not use library resources, property, or their position to support any candidate or political party.

Requests from Candidates and Political Parties

Requests for information received from candidates or political parties about the library will be coordinated by the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate received.

The CEO/Chief Librarian or designate will ensure that information provided by the library for one candidate will be provided to all other candidates and political parties upon request during an election.

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

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Background Documents: [Municipal Council Code of Conduct Policy](#); [Public Libraries Act](#)

References: Barrie Public Library, London Public Library

For more information or alternative formats of this document, please email
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