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# Hastings Highlands Public Library

**Area:** Operational  
**Policy Title:** Library and Political Elections  
**Policy Number:** OP-17

**Initial Policy Approval Date:**  
**Last Review:** June 18, 2026  
**Year of next review:** 2030

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## The Library and Political Elections

Hastings Highlands Public 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. This policy applies to municipal, provincial, and federal elections.

### Section 1: Responsibility and Application

1. This policy applies to Board members, employees, and volunteers of the Library in their dealings with candidates, registered third-party advertisers and political parties and the use of Library resources during the campaign periods for municipal, provincial, and federal elections.
2. It is the responsibility of the Library CEO to ensure that the Library complies with legislation related to elections at all levels - municipal, provincial, and federal – including the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and Municipality of Hastings Highlands policies/bylaws regarding municipally-owned facilities and resources during elections.

### 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. For municipal elections, by May 1<sup>st</sup> in the election year, the Library will establish the rules and procedures with respect to use of Library resources during the period leading up to the municipal election. This requirement is found in the ***Municipal Elections Act 1996***, Clause 88.18 *Use of municipal board resources*, which 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.”*

3. Rules for use of Library resources and property are as follows:
  - a. All candidates, registered third-party advertisers, and political parties have equal access to publicly available resources and services of the Library.
  - b. Meeting rooms may be rented through the Municipality of Hastings Highlands in accordance with applicable municipal policies and procedures. Non-partisan all-candidates meetings or debates organized by external organizations may be permitted, provided that all candidates are invited equally and all municipal rental requirements are met.
  - c. 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.
  - d. ‘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.
  - e. Campaigning is not permitted within Library facilities or on Library property. Such activities are considered incompatible with the function and purpose of the Library, in accordance with Section 81.1(1) of the *Canada Elections Act*. In addition, the Library shall comply with the Municipality of Hastings Highlands Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy. Where applicable, municipal by-laws or policies shall supersede this policy.
  - f. Campaign materials shall not be displayed, distributed, or posted on Library premises or grounds, in accordance with The Municipality of Hastings Highlands Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy.
  - g. 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 will comply 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.

### 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 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 in accordance with the *Canada Elections Act*, Section 363(1).

## Section 4: Employee, Volunteer and Board Member Participation in Election Campaigns

1. 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.
2. With respect to a municipal election, any Library employee running as a candidate in the municipal election will comply with the entirety of Section 30 of the *Municipal Elections Act* which reads, in part

*“30 (1) An employee of a municipality or local board is eligible to be a candidate for and to be elected as a member of the council or local board that is the employer if he or she takes an unpaid leave of absence beginning as of the day the employee is nominated and ending on voting day. 1996, c. 32, Sched., s. 30 (1); 2002, c. 17, Sched. D, s. 9 (1).”*

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

## Section 5: Requests for Information about the Library

1. Candidates, registered third-party advertisers, and political parties may access information about the Library only through the same publicly available channels as any member of the public.
2. Library staff may:
  - Provide access to publicly available information (e.g., brochures, policies, reports, website content);
  - Respond to general inquiries in a routine manner consistent with normal public service.
3. During Library hours on Municipal property, Library staff will not:
  - Provide non-public, internal, or privileged information;
  - Prepare or provide customized information, research, or analysis for campaign or election-related purposes;

- Participate in meetings, briefings, interviews, or tours with candidates or their representatives;
  - Engage in any activity that could be construed as supporting, influencing, or facilitating a campaign.
4. In accordance with municipal policy, candidates and registered third parties are not permitted to engage in campaign-related activities on Library property, including interactions directed at Library staff in their workplace.

All requests and interactions will be handled in a neutral, consistent, and non-preferential manner. This approach ensures compliance with the Municipality's Use of Corporate Resources Policy and maintains the Library's neutrality during the election period.

## Related Documents

Municipality of Hastings Highlands Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy

[Canada Elections Act](#) (S.C. 2000, c. 9)

[Election Finances Act](#), R.S.O. 1990, c. E.7

[Municipal Elections Act](#), 1996