

Muskoka Lakes Township Public Library  
LIBRARY BOARD POLICY

Policy Type: Operational	Policy Number: OP-19
Policy Title: The Library and Political Elections	Policy Approval Date: 05/12/26
Chairperson: V. Duke	Policy Review Date: 04/30

**Intent:**

The Muskoka Lakes Public Library (the “Library”) operates in a non-partisan manner while supporting democratic engagement, freedom of expression, and access to information.

The Library is committed to providing equitable access to services and spaces while ensuring that Library resources are not used in a manner that could be interpreted as supporting or opposing any political candidate, party, or position.

**Scope:**

This policy applies to Board members, employees, volunteers, and all users of the Library in relation to political activity during municipal, provincial, and federal election periods.

This policy governs:

- Use of Library resources and services
- Use of Library facilities
- Staff and Board conduct
- Interactions with candidates, political parties, and members of the public

**Legislative Context:**

In accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Library Board shall establish rules and procedures governing the use of its resources during an election period.

The Library will comply with all applicable legislation, including:

- Canada Elections Act
- Election Finances Act

The Canada Elections Act provides that federal candidates and their representatives may campaign in places open to the public without charge, subject to limitations where such activity is incompatible with the function and purpose of the place or inconsistent with public safety. The Library interprets this provision as permitting access while maintaining appropriate controls to ensure the Library remains a safe, neutral, and functional environment.

The Library will extend a consistent approach to provincial election periods.



The Library will align with the Corporation of the Township of Muskoka Lakes' Use of Municipal Resources Policy (C-LS-13) where appropriate, particularly with respect to the use of facilities and municipal resources during municipal election periods.

Where Township policy imposes additional restrictions during municipal election periods, including restrictions on the use of municipal facilities for campaign-related purposes, those restrictions shall apply to the Library.

At the same time, the Library will continue to operate as an accessible and equitable public space for all members of the community.

Candidates and political representatives are members of the public and may access Library services and spaces on the same basis as any other user, provided such access does not constitute a campaign contribution or confer an unfair advantage.

## Guiding Principles

1. The Library shall remain strictly non-partisan.
2. No candidate, political party, or third-party advertiser shall receive preferential treatment or access.
3. Library resources shall not be used in a manner that constitutes a campaign contribution.
4. The Library supports informed civic participation through access to information, not through advocacy.
5. Decisions shall prioritize consistency, neutrality, and operational clarity for staff.

## Campaign Contributions

The Library Board shall not make a contribution to any political campaign at the municipal, provincial, or federal level in the form of money, goods, or services.

For greater clarity, the provision of staff time, specialized assistance, or use of Library resources beyond standard public access may be considered a contribution and is not permitted.

## Use of Library Resources and Services

1. Candidates and political representatives may access Library services (e.g., printing, scanning, computers, internet) on the same basis as any member of the public, including payment of applicable fees.
2. Access to standard Library services by candidates or political representatives, where such services are available to the public at established rates and conditions, does not constitute a campaign contribution.
3. Staff may provide general assistance in accessing Library services (e.g., how to use equipment and basic troubleshooting); however, staff shall not provide hands-on or



extended support that contributes to the creation, production, or refinement of campaign materials.

4. Library equipment, supplies, and staff time shall not be used for campaign purposes beyond standard public access.
5. The Library's name, logo, and branding shall not be used in any campaign materials or communications.

### **Use of Library Facilities**

1. Campaigning, solicitation, and distribution of campaign materials are not permitted in general Library spaces.
2. Candidates, political representatives, and members of the public may **rent meeting rooms** in accordance with the Library's Room Rental Policy (OP-11), including for campaign-related events, provided that:
  - Access is equitable and available to all candidates under the same terms and conditions
  - All bookings are subject to the Library's Room Rental Policy (OP-11) and may be refused if they do not comply with that policy or any other applicable Library policy
  - Standard fees and conditions apply
  - The event is organized, paid for, and promoted by the renter, not the Library
  - The booking and event do **not imply endorsement** by the Library
  - Campaigning, solicitation, and distribution of materials are **restricted to the rented room** and do not extend into other areas of the Library
  - No Library resources, staff time, or services are used beyond standard public access
3. For greater clarity, federal and provincial candidates may engage in campaign-related activities within rented spaces under the conditions above. During municipal election periods, campaign-related use of Library facilities is subject to the Township of Muskoka Lakes Use of Municipal Resources Policy (C-LS-13), which may restrict or prohibit such use, except where explicitly permitted under that policy.
4. Campaign materials may be distributed only within the rented space as part of a private event and may not be displayed, posted, or left in other areas of the Library.
5. The use of Library space by a candidate, political party, or third-party advertiser is considered a private rental and does not constitute endorsement by the Library. Private rentals may be open to the public; however, such events remain the responsibility of the

renter and are not considered Library programs. The Library does not promote or advertise such events.

6. All-candidates' meetings may be held at the Library, either as a Library program or hosted by a third party, provided:
  - All candidates are invited
  - The event is neutral, accessible, and fair
  - The Library does not endorse any candidate or position
7. Informal presence of candidates within public Library spaces is permitted; however, this shall not evolve into organized campaigning, solicitation, or promotion.

### **Library Programs and Civic Engagement**

1. The Library may offer programs that support civic literacy and engagement, including:
  - Information sessions about elections
  - Educational programming (e.g., how to evaluate information, how to engage with elected officials)
2. The Library shall not organize, host, or promote programs that:
  - Advocate for a specific political position, campaign, or cause
  - Involve collective decision-making to support or oppose a political issue or candidate
3. For greater clarity, the above restriction applies to Library-led programs only. Individuals and groups may use Library spaces in accordance with existing policies, provided that:
  - The activity is not promoted or endorsed by the Library
  - All applicable Library policies (e.g., room rental, user conduct) are followed

### **Employee and Volunteer Participation**

1. Employees and volunteers must remain politically neutral while performing their duties and shall not engage in campaign-related activities during working hours.
2. Employees and volunteers may participate in political activities outside of work, provided there is no conflict with their role at the Library.

### **Library Board Members as Candidates**

Board members may continue their responsibilities while running for office, provided they maintain neutrality in their role and comply with all applicable legislation.

## Requests for Information

1. The CEO will coordinate requests for information about the Library from candidates or political parties.
2. Any information provided to one candidate shall be made available to others upon request.

## Related Documents

- MLPL OP-11 Room Rental Policy
- MLPL OP-14 Community Information Policy
- Township of Muskoka Lakes C-LS-13 Use of Municipal Resources Policy