

Grey Highlands Public Library Policy

Policy Type: Operational

Policy Title: The Library and Political Elections Policy

Signature

Board Chair _____

Policy No: 01-05-2018

Effective: March 23, 2022

Review Date: April 2026

The Grey Highlands Public 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.

Section 1: Purpose, Legal Framework, and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to balance the need for freedom of expression while upholding the Library's legal responsibility to ensure that no candidate, registered third-party advertiser, or political party is provided an unfair advantage during municipal, provincial, and federal elections periods. It provides the Grey Highlands Public Library (GHPL) with direction on how Library resources can and cannot be used during municipal, provincial, and federal election campaigns or questions on the ballot, and helps the organization to maintain its neutrality and preserve public trust.

This policy applies to Board members, employees, and volunteers of the Library in their dealings with candidates and political parties and the use of Library resources during the campaign periods for federal, provincial, and municipal elections.

This policy recognizes that Members of Council hold their office until the end of the term and supports them in continuing to fulfill their responsibilities as Members of Council, despite their candidacy in an election. Nothing in this policy shall prohibit members of the Grey Highlands Public Library Board from performing their duties.

Section 2: Legislative Authority

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* states that local boards must establish rules and procedures for the use of resources during the election period (section 18.18) and prohibits local boards from making contributions to any candidate, registered third-party advertiser, or political party during an election (sections 88.8(4) and 88.12 (4)). Likewise, the *Election Finances Act, 1990* and the *Canada Elections Act, S.C. 2000* impose contribution restrictions for provincial and federal campaigns. Provided this information, the Board may not contribute to the campaign of any candidate or political party during a municipal, provincial, or federal election. This includes money, goods, or services.

Grey Highlands Public Library Policy

Section 3: 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. As found in the *Municipal Elections Act 1996, Clause 88.18*, for municipal elections, by May 1st in the election year, the Library will establish the rules and procedures with respect to the use of Library resources during the period leading up to the election.
3. All candidates and political parties have equal access to publicly available resources and services of the Library.
4. "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.
5. Meeting rooms may not be used or rented for any election-related purposes during regular operating hours in accordance with the *Municipality of Grey Highlands Policy no. A09-C-04 -Use of Corporate Resources for Elections Purposes*.
6. Candidates may not use equipment, supplies, staff, or other operational resources of the library nor may they use the library's logo in any campaign material.
7. Photographic or videos made by the Library (including the Grey Highlands Cultural Channel) may not be used for any election purpose or in campaign materials.
8. Websites or domain names, social media channels, and TV channels that are funded by the Library will not include any campaign materials, make reference to and/or identify any individual as a candidate, political party, registrant, advocate, supporter, or opponent of questions on a ballot during an election, or profile any slogan or symbol associated with a candidate, political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot during an election.
9. Candidates and political parties are not permitted to distribute campaign materials on public rights-of-way at the Library, in accordance with the *Municipality of Grey Highlands Policy no. A09-C-04 -Use of Corporate Resources for Elections Purposes*.
10. During Federal, Provincial and Municipal elections candidates may not campaign in the Library. The Library will, however, assist in the promotion of the awareness of elections and provide general information on elections to encourage participation in the democratic process.

Grey Highlands Public Library Policy

11. 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.
12. Nothing in this policy prohibits the Library from promoting awareness of or providing information on elections as long as no particular candidate, registered third-party advertiser, or political party is promoted, supported, or opposed at the event. This includes promoting awareness of activities or events in which all candidates in an election are invited to attend.

Section 4: Access to Library Information during an Election Period

1. Information provided to one candidate, registered third-party advertiser, or political party that is of a general nature and may provide valuable guidance to all others will be provided to all candidates, registered third-party advertisers, or political parties. The Library will post the information on the Internet or through other mechanisms to ensure equal access to information.
2. Requests by a candidate, registered third-party advertisers, or political parties for personal meetings with the CEO or Library staff, including tours, may not always be accommodated based on resource or time constraints. If a meeting or tour is organized, the Library will organize a similar meeting or tour for any other candidate, registered third-party advertiser, or political party, upon request.
3. Library databases may not be used by any candidate, registered third-party advertiser, or political party unless the database is for public use.

Section 5: Employees, Board members 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*, 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 [they] take 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)."
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.
3. A Library Board Member may not use their 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.

Section 6: Library Board Members as Candidates

1. Board members may continue their Library Board responsibilities when they are running for office.
2. Citizen Board members of the Grey Highlands Public Library must inform the CEO immediately if they register to run for office in an election. Citizen Board members should also contact the Municipality's Clerk's office immediately and abide by policies that affect Citizen Board members running for office.
3. Councillor Board Members must inform the CEO if they are running to become MP or MPP.
4. Library Board Members may engage in political activity, including endorsing or opposing a candidate, political party, or a particular response to a referendum question, but not in a manner that would lead a member of the public to infer that they are acting on behalf of the Grey Highlands Public Library.

Section 7: Requests for information about the Library

1. The CEO 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 tour of the Library.

Section 7: Accountability

Should any written complaint arise regarding the alleged use of Library resources in contravention of this policy, the CEO/Chief Librarian, or their designate, shall have the delegated authority to investigate it and resolve any issues.

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 that identifies the individual as a candidate or registrant and without the solicitation of votes.

"Contribution" – as defined in the Act:

Grey Highlands Public Library Policy

- For a candidate – means “money, goods and services given to and accepted by a person for his or her election campaign or given to and accepted by another person who is acting under the person’s direction”.
- For a registered third-party advertiser – means “money, goods and services given to and accepted by an individual, corporation, or trade union in relation to third-party advertisements, or given to and accepted by another person who is acting under the direction of the individual, corporation, or trade union”.

“Election Period” means the official campaign period of an election:

- For a municipal (including school board) election, the election period commences on May 1 of an election year and ends on voting day.
- For a provincial or federal election, the election period commences the day the writ for the election is issued and ends on voting day.
- For a question on the ballot, the period commences the day Council passes a by-law to put a question to the electorate and ends on voting day.
- For a by-election, the period commences when the by-election is called and ends on voting day.

“Employee” means a person who is employed by the Library and includes all Employees, including Casual and contract staff.

“Library Events” means events funded or organized by GHPL 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 agencies and corporations are not considered Library events for the purpose of this policy.

“Library Facilities” means any facility that is owned or leased by the GHPL and that is directly managed and operated by the Library.

“Library Resources” include but are not limited to Library Employees and Volunteers, events, programs, and services (including online services such as online and social media channels), facilities, equipment and supplies, funds, information, intellectual property, and infrastructure.

“Registered Third-Party Advertiser” means in relation to a municipal election, an individual, corporation, or trade union that is registered with the Municipal Clerk, as per section 88.6 of the Act, whose purpose is to promote, support, or oppose a candidate for office, or an issue on a question on a ballot, and is not under the direction of the candidate.

“Third-Party Advertisement” means an advertisement in any broadcast, print, electronic or other medium that has the purpose of promoting, supporting, or opposing a candidate for office, or an issue on a question on a ballot, and is not under the direction of the candidate.

Grey Highlands Public Library Policy

"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 and do not receive remuneration, 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.

Related Documents:

Grey Highlands Public Library Facilities Use Policy

Federal:

Canada Elections Act

Income Tax Act of Canada

Canada Revenue Agency Policy Statement CPS-022, Political Activities

Provincial:

Election Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.6

Election Finances Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.7

Municipal Elections Act, 1996

Municipal

Municipality of Grey Highlands Policy no. A09-C-04 -Use of Corporate Resources for Elections Purposes.

Approved by the Grey Highlands Public Library Board, March 23, 2022.
Motion #25-22.