

POLITICAL USE OF LIBRARY SPACE

PURPOSE:

The public library is a foundational institution for informed and inclusive democracies, and it plays an important role in civic dialogue and debate. The Board recognizes that the Library must always act and appear to act in a non-partisan way, especially during elections and referendums, while supporting the democratic process, freedom of expression, and informed discussion on political issues.

PERSONS AFFECTED:

City of Lethbridge Library Board/Library employees/public

POLICY STATEMENT:

Posting or distributing partisan election or campaign material in Libraries or on Library property is not permitted. Elected officials, candidates for political office, representatives of political parties, and registered third party advertisers may not use open Library space or property to solicit or advocate among library users and may not use open Library space or property to make public statements or host media events, unless they are part of a shared Library program or announcement.

The Library may engage in non-partisan activities that encourage political participation and voter awareness. Examples of such activities include using physical library space to serve as polling stations or library physical or virtual space to host all-candidate meetings/forums or to host programs and discussions about relevant current issues.

Political parties that wish to invite media to events within library meeting rooms must submit their request to Library staff in advance for approval. Please note that all video and photo capture of events must follow the Library's guidelines.

Once the writ is dropped (Nomination Day in municipal elections) no elected official or candidate from that level of government will be invited to speak or present at library events, except for at all-candidates meetings, until after the election has concluded. Candidates, political parties, and registered third-party advertisers may not book any library spaces for meetings or other activities related to the election underway.

The Library's Administration may deny or cancel a meeting room or facility booking when they reasonably believe that the proposed use is likely to or will include any prohibited activities or violations of the Political Use of Library Space policy.

The Library's logo, slogans, or other intellectual property may not be printed, posted or distributed on any election-related campaign materials.

Promoting Elections

Nothing in this policy prohibits Lethbridge Public Library from promoting awareness of or providing information on elections as long as no particular candidate is promoted or excluded. This includes promoting awareness of activities or events in which all candidates in an election are invited to attend.

Demonstrations and Petitions

The Library and its grounds are not available for use by the public for the purpose of distributing petitions or literature, canvassing, or surveying. Protests or demonstrations of any kind are not allowed on Library property. If an individual or group arrives, they will be directed to the nearest non-library public property where they can remain.

Individuals who are conducting activities covered by this policy must not intimidate or harass library users; must not block, hinder, or impede travel to or from the Library, and must not disrupt the orderly operation of the Library and its services.

This policy does not include the surveying of groups or individuals done in conjunction with output measures or similar tools designed to quantify library use or satisfaction with library services.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Board will develop and regularly update bylaws that outline how dereliction of Library policy is enforced.

The CEO will develop operational policies, including a public Code of Conduct policy, to inform the public of appropriate activities and behaviors at the Library.

REVISION HISTORY:

- May 10, 2023: New policy