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## Library Board Report

To: Newmarket Public Library Board

From: Todd Kyle, C.E.O.

Date: September 18, 2019

RE: **Library advocacy during election campaigns**

### Background:

Municipal councils and local boards are required under the Municipal Elections Act to adopt a policy establishing rules with respect to the use of municipal or board resources during the election campaign period. Last year, the Board voted to formally adopt the Town of Newmarket's Use of Corporate Resources & Election Campaign Activities Policy with no revisions. At that time, it was reviewed by myself and I did not find any instances where it would substantially change any existing practice or conflict with Library Board objectives.

However, during the provincial election campaign that followed, the Town Clerk's office was of the opinion that it was contrary to the Policy for the C.E.O. to send to all local candidates a proposed package containing a letter and an election brief on library issues as provided by the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries. According to the Clerk's office, this activity was not in compliance with clause 5.6 of the Policy, which states:

*Employees shall not use their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election, nor use their official title while participating in otherwise permissible political activities.*

It was suggested that the package be sent instead from my personal e-mail account as a member of FOPL but not as the library C.E.O. Given that the purpose of FOPL's election campaign advocacy was to provide materials for libraries to engage in non-partisan advocacy, the package was not sent. No such activity was undertaken by the Library during the municipal elections later that year; in fact, the Library declined to host the "Coffee and donuts with the CEO" drop-in during Ontario Public Library Week as it concided with the election period, for fear that the CEO's messaging would be construed as election interference.

After discussion with other libraries, it is recommended at this time that the Library's version of the Policy be revised to permit the Library to engage in non-partisan advocacy on behalf of the

interests of the Library and of the library community as a whole. This is particularly timely as the Canadian Federation of Library Associations-Fédération Canadienne des associations de bibliothèques will be providing a series of briefs to members to engage in dialogue with candidates of all parties in the upcoming federal election. These briefs will advocate for library infrastructure funding, fair and balanced copyright, support for accessible materials, and Indigenous knowledge and language preservation.

The suggested revision to the Policy would be the addition of an addendum which would read:

*Notwithstanding Clause 5.6, employees of Newmarket Public Library shall be permitted to engage in non-partisan advocacy on library-related issues as authorized by the C.E.O. and on behalf of the Library Board.*

### **Conclusion:**

**The following motion is recommended:**

**THAT the Library Board receive the report on Library Advocacy during election campaigns;**

**AND THAT the Library Board approve the revision to the Use of Corporate Resources and Election Campaign Activities Policy as drafted;**

**AND THAT a copy of the approved Policy addendum be forwarded to the Clerk's office for their records.**