

Displaying and Distributing Information for the Public Policy

Date:	February 27, 2012
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

Recently staff reviewed the Displaying and Distributing Information for the Public Policy after several City Councillors inquired as to why councillor newsletters were not permitted to be displayed or distributed through library branches.

In accordance with the policy these materials are not displayed or distributed as they are communications from political representatives. Some political materials may be eligible for acceptance when they are announcing community meetings or forums for discussion on community issues.

As a result of the review, it is recommended that a change be made to the policy. It is proposed that newsletters from elected officials be permitted to be displayed and distributed through library branches within the official's electoral constituency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves a change to the Displaying and Distributing Information for the Public Policy as highlighted below and in Attachment1; and
2. approves changes to the Municipal Election Campaign Policy as outlined in this report and in Attachment 2.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this report. The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

DECISION HISTORY

Recently the practice not to accept local councillor newsletters was questioned resulting in a review of the policy.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Displaying and Distributing Information for the Public Policy was approved by the Library Board on May 12, 2008. It codified longstanding practices in library branches for handling this type of material. It has been an effective tool in assisting and guiding branch staff in dealing with a large number of requests for this service. There have been few complaints or issues raised regarding the application of the policy.

The Displaying and Distributing Information for the Public Policy applies to all materials displayed on and/or distributed on Library premises from individuals, community groups, agencies, institutions and government. The policy applies to any individual or group wishing to display and/or distribute information in Library premises and to all Library staff involved in the review and approval of this information.

A separate report proposing an Advertising policy requests changes to the Displaying and Distributing Information policy for the purposes of consistency between these policies.

COMMENTS

The policy ensures that the Library maintains a welcoming and neutral environment and that all requests to display and distribute materials will be handled in a fair, consistent and efficient manner. The high volume of requests for displaying and distributing materials demands that guidelines be clear and straightforward to ensure a consistent approach. The policy has been effective in guiding staff in reviewing and approving materials within the criteria set out in the policy.

The Library fulfils an important role as an information provider and through the application of this policy the Library supports the distribution and posting of community information.

In the policy it states that the Library will not display or distribute:

Materials whose primary focus and/or editorial policy is partisan or political in nature and communications from political representatives. However, political materials may be eligible when they announce community meetings or forums for discussion of community issues.

Recognizing that newsletters from elected officials provide information about community issues and civic activities it is recommended that the policy be amended as follows (as reflected in Attachment 1):

The Library will not display or distribute materials whose primary focus and/or editorial policy is partisan or political in nature and communications from political representatives, **with the exception of newsletters from elected officials in branches within their electoral constituency**. Other political materials may be eligible when they announce community meetings or forums for discussion of community issues.

It is recommended that the request to display and distribute newsletters from elected officials in Library branches be approved under the following conditions:

- only newsletters from elected officials will be displayed and distributed;
- newsletters will only be made available in local branches within the elected official's electoral constituency;
- newsletters will be displayed and distributed in the same manner as other publications in appropriate locations for a limited time period, subject to the availability of space;
- newsletters will not be displayed or distributed during elections in keeping with the Library Board's Municipal Election Campaign Policy.

Required Policy Amendment to Toronto Public Library Board *Municipal Election Campaign Policy*

This policy deals with the maintenance of neutrality of the Toronto Public Library during municipal elections in compliance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. With the introduction of the proposed changes to the Board's *Displaying and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy* an amendment is required to the *Municipal Elections Campaign Policy* to ensure consistency. The Policy will be amended to add the following wording as highlighted below and in Attachment 2:

2.0 Campaign Activities and Partisan Political Materials on Library Property

City Councillors and candidates in the municipal election cannot undertake campaign-related activities on Library property (except for facilities rented in accordance with the Auditorium, Meeting Room and Theatre Rental Policy and The Bram & Bluma Appel Salon Rental Policy). Consistent with the Displaying and Distributing Information for the Public Policy, the Library will not permit the display and distribution of partisan political materials on Library property.

Councillors' newsletters are permitted to be displayed and distributed on Library property outside of a municipal election period.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Jane Pyper
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Displaying and Distributing Information for the Public Policy
Attachment 2: Municipal Election Campaign Policy