

Guide to Political Activities

For City-funded Community Groups

April 2018



We want to remind all City-funded groups and organizations that the City of Toronto has a responsibility not to provide any unfair advantage to any candidate, political party, registrant or a supporter of a question on a ballot, during an election.

This document contains helpful pointers from the Canada Revenue Agency website that distinguishes between political activity and partisan political activity. We encourage all non-profits, and especially registered charities, to review the Canada Revenue Agency website for additional guidance.

All groups and organizations (and their employees and directors) funded by the City of Toronto must comply with the requirements listed in their agreement with the City (your Letter of Understanding - LOU). These requirements include those of the City of Toronto's Community Grants Policy as it relates to Political Activities (please see Appendix 1). We also encourage you to:



Contact the [Toronto Elections Office](#) if you have questions about municipal elections



Find out who the [candidates for office](#) are for **City of Toronto, School Board** and [Provincial elections](#)

Your community group can take part in any or all of the following **non-partisan** political activities:



Developing a call to action, encouraging the public to contact an elected representative or public official to urge them to retain, oppose, or change the law, policy or decision of any level of government in Canada or a foreign country.



Communicating (whether internally or externally) that the intention of any of your activities is to encourage others or for the group to: organize to put pressure on an elected representative or public official to retain, oppose, or change the law, policy or decision of any level of government or a foreign country.



Communicating to the public that a law, policy or decision of any level of government or a foreign country should be retained, opposed or changed.














Presenting to elected representatives or public officials (e.g. depute at committees, meet or communicate with them directly).

What is a partisan political activity?

A partisan political activity is one that involves the direct or indirect support of, or opposition to, any political party at any time, or to a candidate for public office, whether during an election period or not.

The use of a charity's resources for partisan political activities is always prohibited, even if a charity or its beneficiaries will clearly benefit from a particular election outcome.

City funded groups, whether or not they are registered charities, are **not** allowed to use any of their resources to:

-  publicly endorse (support) a candidate
-  give money or non-cash gifts to a candidate or political party, either directly or indirectly
-  allow a candidate or political party to use the group's equipment, facilities, volunteer time, or other resources
-  make public statements that support or oppose a candidate or political party
-  suggest that people should vote for a particular candidate or political party, either directly or indirectly
-  attend a political fundraiser as a representative of a community organization/ resident-led group
-  use a community organization's website to post or hyperlink to statements made by a third party that support or oppose a candidate or political party
-  publish or otherwise disclose the voting record or political platform of specific/ selected candidates or political parties on an issue
-  post signs that support or oppose a candidate or political party
-  distribute literature or voter guides that promote or oppose a candidate or political party, directly or indirectly
-  use your group's social media account to post election related material that promotes or appears to promote a candidate or political party.
-  use of the community group's resources (e.g. office space, supplies, phone, photocopier, computer, publications) to support a candidate or incumbent or a political party during an election period.
-  use your group's events, functions, activities, publications, or any of the group's other resources as a platform to voice support or oppose a candidate or incumbent or a political party during an election period.

Tips for Event Planners

Can we invite a politician or candidate to speak at our event during election period?



To be fair to all and not to appear to be taking part in a partisan political activity, you must invite all candidates to speak at your event. Let them know in advance that they cannot campaign at your event or activity. Election campaigning activities can include handing out flyers, buttons, fundraising, or speaking about their campaign or a political opponent or party.

What do we do if a politician or candidate attends our group's event or activity uninvited?



If a political representative (a candidate or incumbent) attends your activity/event during the election season, you should let them know that they cannot campaign at your event or activity. Election campaigning activities can include handing out flyers, buttons, fundraising, or speaking about their campaign or a political opponent or party.

Tips for Employees, Members of Board of Directors, Members & Volunteers

Individuals who are Employees, Members, Board of Directors, or Volunteers of a community organization (representative of a community organization) **can** be involved in political activities in their capacity as **individuals and on their own time**. This includes:



be involved with an election



be involved in a political campaign



publicly voice their views on political issues



be involved in any other political activity (such as running for office)

When engaging in the activities listed above it's important for individuals to indicate that their comments are personal rather than the views of the group. Also, be mindful when using social media (Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, etc). It can be difficult to tell the difference between when the individual is speaking on their own behalf, and not on behalf of their organization.



Individuals can't be involved in partisan activities, as described above, when using the organization's resources, events, functions or social media accounts.

For more guidance, please review a self-assessment tool on political activities developed by [Canada Revenue Agency](#)

Registered charities have to be mindful that they are devoting 10% or less of their total resources to political activities. Failure to comply with this could result in the loss of charitable status.

Appendix 1

The City's Community Grants Policy, in relation to political activities provides as follows:

1. Compliance with the City of Toronto's Community Grants Policy is a requirement of the organization's Grant Agreement with the City.
2. The City's Community Grants Policy, in relation to political activities, provides as follows:
 - a) Grant recipients shall not use funds provided by the City to oppose or endorse a named party, or elected official. Any such grants may not be devoted directly to such activities, or devoted indirectly through provision of resources to a third party engaged in partisan political activities.
 - b) In cases where a grant recipient devotes part of its resources to political activities, such political activities must be Ancillary and Incidental to its mandate, purpose, and project or service activities, such political activities must not include the direct or indirect support of or opposition to any political party or candidate for public office.
 - c) Without limiting the above, political activities undertaken as part of a City funded project can include:
 - all candidates meetings, oral and written presentations to the relevant Councillors to present the proponent's views or to provide information,
 - oral and written presentations or briefs containing information and recommendations to the relevant committees of Council,
 - the provision of information and the expression of non-partisan views to the media that fall within the general gambit of the grant recipient's mandate or purpose, as long as the devotion of resources to such activity is reasonable in the circumstances (i.e., is intended to inform and educate by providing information and views designed primarily to allow full and reasoned consideration of an issue, rather than to influence public opinion or to generate controversy)
 - publications, conferences, workshops and other forms of communication that are produced or organized by a grant recipient in order to sway public opinion on political issues and matters of public policy,
 - advertisements in newspapers, magazines or on television or radio to the extent that they are designed to attract interest in, or gain support for, a grant recipient's position on political issues and matters of public policy,
 - public meetings or lawful demonstrations that are organized to publicize and gain support for a grant recipient's point of view on matters of public policy and political issues, and mail campaigns: requests by a grant recipient to its members or the public to forward
 - letters or other written communications to the media and government expressing support for the organization's views on political issues and matters of public policy.
 - d) **None of the above activities may be carried out in a manner that may reasonably be construed as supporting a particular candidate, elected official or particular party.**
 - e) Through its funding, the City of Toronto creates opportunities for communities to play a role in shaping public policy as a way to support an active and engaged civil society. However, these investments are not an endorsement of any particular political or policy perspective held by Grant recipients.