

OP 09 Community Information

Policy Type:	Operational	Policy Number:	OP 09
		Policy Approval Date:	May 30, 2013
Policy Title:	Community Information	Policy Review Date:	Mar. 4, 2021
		Next Review Date:	March 2024

1.0 Scope

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library makes available information on community activities, agencies and organizations to facilitate access to resources within the community and as a partner in promoting community services and events.

The Board encourages the display of not-for-profit bulletins, brochures and posters regarding events in order that residents can fully participate in community activities.

This policy establishes guidelines around all manner of public communications including community information, displays, media relations and press releases.

2.0 Community Information Collection and Services

The library will collect and keep current information on the services of community agencies and organizations, including:

- municipal services;
- community groups;
- educational organizations;
- health and social services agencies; and
- religious, recreation and cultural institutions.

The Library will provide easy, convenient and confidential access to this information. Library staff will be knowledgeable about community agencies and organizations and capable of referring people appropriately and in a sensitive manner.

Patron confidentiality will be respected at all times.

3.0 Displays

The Library will make available limited space to display materials about community activities and events. The display of material does not constitute an endorsement of any group. Library staff will place, post and remove all materials on the bulletin boards and in the brochure racks. All materials become the property of the Board and the Library will dispose of materials as it sees fit.

Notices will be accepted on a space available basis according to the following priorities:

- Library programs, events, activities and services;
- municipal programs, events, activities and services;
- non-profit programming with no cost attached; and
- free cultural information and programming by local businesses.

The Library will not display or distribute:

- materials that contravene the Ontario Human Rights Code, federal or provincial laws and regulations;
- materials whose primary focus is partisan or political in nature, however political materials may be eligible when it announces meetings and forums for discussion of community issues;
- faith-based materials whose primary purpose is the promotion of faith, however free events sponsored by local religious groups may be displayed;
- information booths, due to space constraints;
- donation boxes, with the exception of the annual sale of poppies;
- materials advertising and promoting commercial products or services;
- personal ads and notices including notices of items for sale or rent; or
- multiple copies of the same posting on the bulletin board.

Bulk periodicals and newspapers will be accepted as space permits and must be of interest to library patrons and consistent with the Library's information goals.

Solicitations by members of the public are not permitted in the Library, either in person or by petition, except for petitions originating with the Board or the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, subject to formal approval by the Board.

Complaints will be resolved by the CEO. Appeals may be brought to the Board for consideration.

4.0 Media Relations and Press Releases

The Board is legally responsible for the Library. This responsibility includes liability arising from any actions or statements made on behalf of the Library. This policy outlines standards intended to foster professional and consistent relations between the Board, Library staff and the media.

It is important that the views and philosophy articulated are those of the Board. Further, discretion must be used to ensure that accurate, factual, consistent information is released in a timely manner. Finally, it is desirable to protect the Board from legal or financial consequences arising from inaccurate, misleading, libelous, defamatory statements.

The Board assigns the authority to the CEO and the Board Chair for public release of all information, including press releases, reports and correspondence dealing with Board, financial, policy or staffing matters.

The following principles shall guide the provision of information to the media:

- statements shall reflect official Board policy;
- statements shall be consistent and accurate;
- statements shall be timely, and where possible, delivered proactively; and
- statements shall be concise yet complete.

The Board issues the following guidelines to the CEO with respect to staff interaction with the media:

- Library staff may respond to media inquiries following appropriate preparation and discussion with the CEO. Staff may respond to general or routine media enquiries pertaining to the expertise and job function of the staff person. The CEO shall be informed of all media contacts.
- While Library staff have the right to their personal points of view regarding any issue, but when speaking publicly on behalf of the Library, personal points of view shall not be provided.
- Sensitive information includes legal matters pending litigation, matters involving significant exposure to litigation, political matters, subjects of ongoing public debate or media speculation, and personnel-related information. Staff shall refer all inquiries regarding sensitive issues to the CEO.
- The Library must be fair in its dealing with reporters and avoid giving preference to any reporter or media outlet. While it is appropriate for staff to respond to a reporter's phone call, it is inappropriate to initiate contact with a single reporter. Information provided proactively must be released to all local media contacts, except in special circumstances as approved by the CEO.

- Staff attending events as a speaker representing the Library should ensure that the CEO has approved the content of any information to be disseminated.
- Only spokespersons designated by the CEO or Board Chair may speak to reporters at any special event, public meeting or scene of an emergency or incident scene.