

Board Code of Conduct Policy

Policy Number:	GOV
Policy Category:	Board Manual
Approved by:	OPL Board
Accountability:	Chief Executive Officer
Approval Date:	January 19, 2023
Effective date:	January 20, 2023
Next Review Date:	2028
Supersedes:	

Purpose:

This policy defines the manner in which Oakville Public Library (OPL) Board members will fulfill their duties and carry on business with each other, with staff and with OPL's partners.

Scope:

This policy applies to all current OPL Board members.

Policy:

The Board upholds the mission, vision and values as outlined in the strategic plan.

OPL Board Members shall first and foremost support the interests of OPL and shall comply with the following:

1. Acting with Integrity and Leadership

Board Members shall act ethically, lawfully and with honesty, integrity and in good faith regarding the best interests of OPL. This includes:

- Treating others in a courteous, respectful, professional, and helpful manner, publicly or privately;
- Taking responsibility for own actions; including admitting own mistakes;
- Coming forward when identifying an issue that needs to be discussed;
- Exercising care, diligence, and skill in reviewing Board materials;
- Being factual and accurate, avoiding rumors or making premature conclusions;
- Articulating opinions during meetings and actively participating in debate;

- Supporting Board decisions after discussion has occurred and a Board decision has been made, even if it differs from own views.

Board Members understand that Board meetings are public and that their behaviour and statements affect the image of the OPL, so they must act in a manner akin to community leadership.

2. Promoting a Respectful Environment

Board Members will treat OPL's visitors, staff and fellow Board Members with respect. Board Members will not abuse, bully or intimidate others. Board Members will fulfill their responsibilities in ensuring that the OPL is free from discrimination and harassment. In addition, OPL Board Members are expected to act in accordance with the Town of Oakville's RZone Policy (<https://www.oakville.ca/town-hall/policies-procedures/customer-service-standards-and-customer-conduct-policy/rzone-procedure/>), which has the goal of promoting a positive, safe, and supportive environment for all individuals and user groups. All of the workplace violence and anti-harassment policies of the OPL also apply to the Board members.

3. Being Responsible with Power and Influence

Board Members shall understand the staff's role as public servants who provide professional and politically neutral advice to the Board. Staff should not be subject to undue influence from any individual Board Member.

When making requests or giving direction to staff, Board Members should be aware of the authority they have and not exploit it for any reason beyond the Board Member's role. Due to the position that a Board Member holds, staff may acquiesce to a Member's request even if the request is not part of staff's duties or is inappropriate. Therefore, Members should avoid requesting staff to perform activities other than those required in the performance of their duties.

4. Safeguarding Privacy and Confidentiality

Board Members will not disclose or release by any means to any member of the public or media (including social media), any confidential information acquired by virtue of their role at the Board. Board Members will maintain this obligation even after leaving the Board.

The following are examples of the types of information that a Board Member must keep confidential: litigation, contract negotiation, land allocation plans, personnel matters, sensitive information about an individual obtained in the course of business or provided in confidence.

The Board Chair is the primary spokesperson of the Board. Any Board Member speaking about or posting content on behalf of the Board must present Board positions fairly, accurately and without bias and limit it to the extent it has already been explicitly stated in Board meetings (excluding confidential sections). Board Members expressing individual comments or personal opinions should clearly identify such remarks as personal and not those of the Board.

Members are allowed to disclose confidential information only if required by law, or when previously and officially authorized to do so by the Board.

5. Identifying and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

While performing their roles, Board Members shall make or influence decisions about the OPL's facilities, equipment, supplies, services, staff or other resources solely in the best interests of the OPL. Such decisions should never benefit the Board Member's private interests above those of the OPL, whether such private interests are present or future, financial or otherwise, perceived or real, or in the interests of their family, friends or organizations with which Board Members are associated.

Board Members must disclose their involvements with organizations, vendors, or associations that might produce a conflict of interest, including cases where immediate family members become engaged in any private business (including employment) with the OPL.

In order to determine possible conflict of interest, Board Members should ask themselves if they, a family member, friend or an organization to which they belong to is or could be receiving a benefit as a result of the Board Member's role that might disrupt a level playing field where all citizens, groups and interests can no longer expect impartial treatment. This should be also be looked from a public perception perspective, i.e. even if the benefit is not real but could be perceived as such, a conflict of interest may still exist.

Private interest does not include a matter that is of general application or one that affects a Board Member as one of a broad class of the public. For example, a Board Member is not in a conflict of interest if the Board lowers late fines for all OPL users even though Board Members may be OPL users themselves.

6. Rejecting Gifts or Payments

Board Members are not to accept or provide any gift or benefit where it may be, or perceived to be, in exchange for favour or influence. This includes accepting payments to make referrals to a person or corporation; or to represent the Board at an external event.

Exceptions:

- Small Christmas gifts (cards or edibles, such as chocolates or cookies)
- Advertising material (calendars, scratch pads, disposable pens, t-shirts)
- Any hospitality or gift that has a monetary value under \$100
- Attending a modest event hosted by an external organization to celebrate an achievement in connection with existing OPL's business (as long as not in connection with future potential business)

7. Not Participating in OPL's Public Contests

Board members and immediate family members may not participate in any OPL contest open to members of the public. If a Board Member or an immediate family member participates in a OPL activity as a visitor (i.e. attending an adult program with a door prize), they shall still not be eligible to participate in the contest component of the program, if there is one.

Accountability: All Board Members are accountable for understanding and adhering to this Policy.

Board Members shall report to the Board Chair if they breached this policy intentionally or accidentally, or if they have a conflict of interest. Staff and Board Members may also do so, about their fellow Board Members.

The Board Chair will then be responsible for timely conducting an investigation (if necessary), and then recommend to the Board the appropriate course of action, which shall be discussed and voted by the Board minus the Board Member in breach or conflict of interest.

If the Board Chair is in breach or conflict of interest, the Vice Chair will preside over this investigation/discussion/recommendation/vote.