



MEMORANDUM

Date: August 15, 2021

To: TVP, P&D

From: Andrew Thomson, Chief of Government Relations

Re: Guidelines for University interactions with partisan officials during the federal election period
(August 15, 2021 – September 20, 2021)

Issue

On August 15, the Governor General called for a federal general election to take place on September 20, 2021. This memo provides guidelines for how University officials should interact with partisan/elected officials or advocacy groups during the campaign period.

As senior administrators, you could reasonably be perceived to speak on behalf of and/or represent the views of the University of Toronto. It is important to allow student and faculty participation in the election but also to ensure the University itself is not perceived as being partisan or biased.

In the coming weeks, as questions come up about how to engage candidates or issues on the campus, please reach out to the Government Relations Office (GRO) with any questions or should a sensitive request arise.

COVID-19 Protocols

Given current COVID-19 protocols, campaigning by candidates and their representatives will be impacted on the three campuses. Specifically, campaigning in residences will be restricted. Candidates or their designates will be required to request access from residence managers. They will also need to attest to being vaccinated, follow all UofT COVID protocols, and will be granted access only to publicly accessible areas such as common rooms. Access is required under the election act, but to ensure the health and safety of our students and broader University community, protocols for external guests must be adhered to. Visitors must complete a [self-screening form](#) prior to coming to campus. An attestation of vaccination status form will also be made available shortly.

Due to COVID restrictions, on-campus campaign events will not be permitted. The University is not currently accepting external space booking requests. Should this policy change during the election period, campus space inquiries will be considered based on university policies and availability, as would be the case for any other external group. Please contact the Government Relations Office should you receive a request to host or assist with an election-related event either in-person or virtual.

General Principles

- The University must be seen as impartial and non-partisan. As a publicly supported institution the University of Toronto neither supports nor endorses any candidate or party, at any level of government. The University of Toronto will work to advance its mandate and mission – which routinely includes collaboration with government – regardless of the government’s political affiliation.
- We recognize that our faculty and students support many differing views and parties, and democratic engagement is encouraged. This engagement should be guided by a sense of fair-play and impartiality at an institutional level. In 1992, the Governing Council of the University of Toronto passed the University’s *Statement of Institutional Purpose* and its *Statement on Freedom of Speech*. These statements have served as the cornerstones upon which the University of Toronto has built its commitment to free expression.

Use of Photos/Images, and U of T Branding

- No images with U of T branding or senior leadership should be used for any purposes during the campaign period. For example, a candidate for office should not use a photo of themselves with a university executive, even from a past event in their campaign literature, or other materials as it may be perceived as an endorsement.
- While it is our regular practice for a university executive to serve as host or emcee for a government announcement held at other times, during the campaign period such roles are inappropriate, as a university executive’s participation could be seen to imply an institutional endorsement of a candidate or party.
- The University of Toronto logo or signage is not to be used at election-related events without explicit University permission, and internal systems (email, listserv, social media channels, etc.) are not to be used to distribute candidate or party materials with the objective of engaging in partisan discourse.

Hypothetical Scenarios

- **During a campaign, a political group requests that a university administrator attend an event and introduce a political figure.**
It would be inappropriate for a university executive to play an official role, including emcee, even if the request originates from a campus political group.
- **A candidate sends the University campaign literature with the request that it be distributed to staff, students, and faculty.**
It would be inappropriate for the University to circulate campaign literature, U of T resources should not be used to distribute partisan literature, this includes University listservs and email. Requests can be made to make campaign literature available in student residence common areas only.
- **During a campaign, a division hosts an academic panel discussion on an issue and wishes to invite a political official to participate.**
This event could be described as directly related to the University’s academic mission, however equal opportunity must be given to registered parties and nominated candidates. We recommend consulting with GRO on potential participation by a university executive.

- **A division hosts a candidates' debate independently or in partnership with a student group.**
It is expected that invitations to participate be extended to all major candidates. Using the Federal Leaders Debate Commission determination of major parties, that means inclusion of candidates from Liberal, Conservative, New Democratic, and Green parties. Official presence and/or participation by a university executive is not recommended given the nature of the event. A candidates' debate hosted independently by a student group may be encouraged to invite all major candidates.

Resources

Free Speech Website

<http://freespeech.utoronto.ca/>

Statement of Institutional Purpose

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/system/files/import-files/mission4023.pdf>

Statement on Free Speech

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/freedom-speech-statement-may-28-1992>

Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Excellence

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/equity-diversity-and-excellence-statement-december-14-2006>

Policy on the Temporary Use of Space

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/space-university-toronto-policy-temporary-use-october-28-2010>

Contact

For questions and additional information, please contact Marny Scully, Government Relations Office, (marny.scully@utoronto.ca) 416-528-0343.