

West Neighbourhood House	
Policy Title:	Advocacy Policy
Approved By:	West Neighbourhood House Board of Directors
Approval Date:	January 2014
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Policy Statement

Advocacy efforts undertaken by West Neighbourhood House must be related to West Neighbourhood House’s mission, vision, values and priorities. West Neighbourhood House is committed to enabling less advantaged individuals, families and groups in the community to gain greater control over their lives and within their community.

West Neighbourhood House, as a not-for-profit organization working in the community, has a wealth of knowledge about social issues affecting the community and is well-positioned to offer insight for decision-makers and the general public. Thus, by disseminating this knowledge, Board members, staff, volunteers, students, clients, members and community members can become powerful advocates for issues that affect the West Neighbourhood House community. West Neighbourhood House understands that advocacy is an important tool to help the community it serves.

West Neighbourhood House adheres to all applicable legislation and guidelines governing advocacy activities of charitable organizations.

In order to effectively influence people’s behaviours and opinions, effective advocacy efforts require a well-planned advocacy plan including various resources, personnel and time. This policy is intended to create a framework for planning advocacy activities.

Applicability

Anyone engaged in advocacy on behalf of West Neighbourhood House, including:

- Board Members
- All Staff
- Program Participants, Clients, Members
- Volunteers
- Student Placements

Definitions

Advocacy

To speak or disseminate information in an attempt to influence behaviours, opinions, public policy and/or law.

Board Member

A volunteer member of the elected Board of Directors.

Grassroots Lobbying

To encourage members of the public to contact decision-makers in order to influence public policy.

Lobbying

To communicate with a public office holder in an attempt to influence legislation or public policy decisions. While advocacy may include attempts to influence the public, lobbying distinctly includes efforts to influence a public office holder.

Partisan

Communication that indicates support or call for support of a particular politician, candidate or political party.

Placement Student

A student studying at an accredited College or University and fulfilling program requirements of field placement at West Neighbourhood House.

Staff

A paid employee of West Neighbourhood House.

Volunteer

A person who volunteers their time without pay to assist West Neighbourhood House to accomplish its mission.

Applicable Legislation and Guidelines

West Neighbourhood House shall comply with all applicable legislation and guidelines.

Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Guidelines

Canada Revenue Agency Policy Guidance - CG-027, *Public policy dialogue and development activities by charities*, clarifies distinctions between charitable activities and non-permissible activities by charity organizations. As a not-for-profit organization as well as a charitable organization, West Neighbourhood House must abide by these regulations Please see the CRA guidance for more information.

Permissible political activities by CRA standards may also be considered “lobbying” activities under municipal, provincial or federal lobby legislation and thus charities must also abide by relevant legislation governing lobbying activities.

Existing Legislation on Lobbying

Rules and regulations governing lobbying of the Federal Government are set out in the *Canada Elections Act*, *Lobbying Act*, and the *Lobbyist Code of Conduct*. The Government of Canada requires not-for-profit organizations, whose paid employees lobby on their behalf, to register with the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada.

Rules and regulations governing lobbying of the Provincial Government are set out in the *Lobbyists Registration Act*. The Province of Ontario requires not-for-profit organizations, whose paid employees lobby on their behalf, to register with the Ontario Lobbyist Registrar. However, unpaid individuals, such as Board members or volunteers, are exempt from having to register.

Rules and regulations governing lobbying of the City of Toronto are set out in Chapter 140 of the Toronto Municipal Code.

General Principles

West Neighbourhood House will:

Be accountable to our community regarding advocacy activities.

West Neighbourhood House will account for advocacy initiatives in its planning cycle. Advocacy efforts will be publicized in the West Neighbourhood House newsletter. West Neighbourhood House will explicitly consider advocacy activities in our decision-making, priority-setting, partnership development, training, service planning and resource allocation. Advocacy ideas will be developed through careful research and consideration of a variety of differing viewpoints from within the organization and in the community.

Provide an environment where advocacy for West Neighbourhood House participants, members, and clients is a priority.

West Neighbourhood House will ensure that policies, procedures, programs, practices and performances reflect this environment. This environment will be promoted through communication and education.

Recognize and support advocacy as an important activity for West Neighbourhood House.

In accordance with West Neighbourhood House's mission, vision, values and priorities, the organization will ensure that advocacy is an integral component of our activities and helps us to achieve our vision.

Responsibilities

Anyone engaged in advocacy on behalf of West Neighbourhood House must record and document all of their advocacy activities.

The **Board of Directors** is accountable to the larger community for ensuring that advocacy efforts undertaken by West Neighbourhood House are in line with the organization's mission, vision, values and priorities. The Board is responsible for the overall development of this advocacy policy. The Board is also responsible for recruiting and retaining a diverse Board of Directors with a commitment to advocacy. Board members who undertake advocacy efforts are

responsible to document all of their activities. Board members must comply with the policy on [Political Activity](#) when engaging in advocacy outside the scope of this policy.

The **Executive Director** or designate is responsible for allocating adequate resources to ensure that advocacy activities are embodied in the work of West Neighbourhood House. The Executive Director or designate is also responsible overall for ensuring ongoing review and continued development of policies affecting advocacy in all aspects of West Neighbourhood House operations. If applicable, the Executive Director or designate must register the organization with the appropriate lobby registrars, or in the case of a paid lobbyist or in-house lobbyist, ensure that they are registered with the appropriate lobby registrar.

Supervisors are responsible for adhering to advocacy policies and procedures and working with their teams and volunteers, as appropriate, to ensure that advocacy goals are reflected in all aspects of program delivery.

All staff are responsible for adhering to advocacy policies and procedures.

Students, volunteers, program participants, clients, members will be supported and encouraged to promote advocacy activities, as advised by senior staff and in accordance with advocacy policies and procedures.

Reporting

For issues that West Neighbourhood House has worked on for over five years, advocacy activities must be presented to and approved by the Executive Director as part of the annual planning cycle.

New advocacy activities relating to new areas must be presented to and approved by the Executive Director and the Board of Directors.

All advocacy activities must be presented to the Board of Directors at least semi-annually. In addition, all advocacy activities, resources used and personnel involved must be recorded and documented.

Acknowledgement of Policy

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Advocacy Policy and/or have had it explained to me.

I understand that it is my responsibility to abide by this policy and related policies of West Neighbourhood House as a condition of my employment/volunteer status.

Date: _____

Name of Employee/Volunteer: _____

Signature: _____