



CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINES FOR CHURCHWARDENS

Churchwardens in the Diocese of Niagara hold an important position in our diocesan organization and system of governance. They, along with the rector or priest-in-charge, serve as the directors of a not-for-profit charitable corporation and administer a parish as trustees of the diocese in accordance with our canons and any applicable legislation.

Churchwardens have responsibilities for hiring staff, awarding contracts, making important decisions about property, purchasing supplies and resources, among other tasks. In overseeing the temporalities of a parish, churchwardens must be transparent in their decision-making and accountable to the parish vestry. They have legal duties of honesty, diligence, and prudence and a moral duty to seek the best interests of the parish's mission in the community they serve.

In the exercise of their ministry, churchwardens must take care to avoid any conflicts of interest, real or perceived. A conflict arises when either directly or indirectly a personal consideration affects a decision which the churchwarden must make in a matter affecting a parish. Therefore, a churchwarden must refrain from acting in a self-serving manner or from allowing friends or family members to gain a benefit or advantage from a decision made by the parish corporation.

For instance, a churchwarden who is a plumber must abstain from voting on any proposal to do repairs or work for the parish that they themselves have submitted. Or a churchwarden should abstain from hiring decisions when a close relative applies for employment. When decisions are made about hiring or contracts are awarded, the churchwardens must be at arm's length from those who will benefit from the decision.

In all situations, it is better to err on the side of caution and document steps that have been taken to avoid a conflict. It is incumbent on the warden to declare a conflict of interest and work with the other members of the parish corporation to address to it in an appropriate and upright manner.

*This guidance has been prepared with assistance of the
Conflict of Interest Guidelines of the Diocese of Toronto.*