

SUBJECT: Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy Review

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Legal and Legislative Services
Legislative Services

Report Number: LLS-12-26

Wards Affected: all

Date to Committee: March 3, 2026

Date to Council: March 10, 2026

Recommendation

Approve the updated Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy, substantially in the form attached as Appendix A to legislative services report LLS-12-26.

Executive Summary

Purpose of report:

- The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the updated Use of Corporate Resources During an Election policy.

Key findings:

- Legislative Services staff conducted a thorough review of the existing Use of Corporate Resources During an Election policy and has proposed several amendments.
- The review included a comprehensive jurisdictional scan, as well as the gathering of feedback from staff and Council Members.
- Proposed changes provide additional clarity and ensure compliance with municipal, provincial and federal legislation with respect to campaign contributions.
- Further, the proposed changes establish the appropriate use of resources during an election period in order to protect the interests of the City, Members of Council, Candidates, Registered Third-party Advertisers, and staff.
- The policy also ensures accountable and transparent election practices.

Implications:

- The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, requires that municipalities establish rules that govern the use of municipal resources during an election, by May 1 in the year a regular election is held.

Recommendation Report

Background

Section 88.18 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, (MEA) requires that municipalities and local boards establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal resources during an election campaign before May 1 of an election year. The MEA prohibits municipalities from making campaign contributions to candidates or registered third-party advertisers. Since a contribution can take the form of money, goods or services, any use of the City's resources for an election by any staff, member of Council who is a candidate, or by any other candidate or any registered third party, would be considered a contribution by the City for the purposes of the MEA. The purpose of the Use of Corporate Resources During an Election policy is to ensure compliance with legislation, to protect the interests of the Corporation, members of Council, candidates, third parties and staff, as well as ensure accountable and transparent election practices.

Analysis

The Use of Corporate Resources During an Election policy underwent a significant overhaul for the 2022 municipal election. Staff reviewed the policy for the 2026 municipal election with a goal to address any concerns, gaps or ambiguities that may have come up in the previous election through proposed revisions, and in implementation, staff education and candidate awareness. The review included engagement with Members of Council, staff, and a comprehensive jurisdictional scan. Staff analyzed all the inputs and developed amendments to the various sections of the policy. Additionally, feedback was used to determine and address gaps in training, supplemental documentation for staff and information for candidates for the 2026 municipal election.

For ease of reference, a "clean" version of the policy has been included in Appendix A, with a marked-up version to show the proposed changes included in Appendix B.

Highlights of the proposed updates

- Clarification of what is a campaign contribution for the purposes of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and the policy.
- Scope and Application has been updated to reflect that the election period for the purposes of this policy ends on the day that official results are certified by the City Clerk.

- Principles section has been updated to clarify process on the provision of information regarding special events to candidates.
- Additional definitions have been provided for further clarity, and the section has been moved up in the document for ease of reference.
- Additional information has been included in the section titled “Attendance at City Events.” This section provides clarity on the permissibility of Council members who are also candidates to attend City-organized events and act as ceremonial participants in their capacity as elected officials.
- A provision about attending Food for Feedback in an election year has been added to reflect what has been done in practice in previous elections and will be applied moving forward.
- The section on social media has been updated to provide more detail and additional clarity regarding the utilization of Council members’ use of social media for the election period.
- Additional clarification has been included in the provision on the printing and distribution of newsletters.
- A section titled “Access to City Information During an Election Period” has been added to the policy to reflect practice and procedure during the election period. Candidates will be provided with protocols on how to request information from the City during their nomination appointment.
- Additional clarification has been included in the “City Staff” section to ensure clarity on staff responsibilities under this policy. This includes a provision for staff directly supporting the City Clerk in the administration of the election.
- Additional details have been included to provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the City Clerk, the leadership team, Members of Council and staff regarding compliance with this policy.

The updated policy provides comprehensive rules and procedures for the use of corporate resources during an election period as required by the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended. Once approved, policy implementation will include training and supplemental information documents for staff. While no policy, no matter how comprehensive, will be able to capture and interpret all potential scenarios, the City Clerk and the elections team will provide support on the implementation of this policy to staff and candidates during the election.

Candidates for the 2026 municipal election will receive a copy of the policy with supplemental information included in their nomination packages. The policy will be reviewed with candidates when they file their nomination papers to ensure awareness and compliance. Third-party advertisers will also be made aware of the policy when they register.

Recommendation Details

Staff recommend that Council approve the policy with the proposed amendments to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, and to ensure transparent and accountable election practices. The proposed changes are aimed at providing further clarity and response to feedback as to what worked and what did not work in 2022. The updated policy will protect the interests of the Corporation, Members of Council, candidates and staff.

Key Dates & Milestones

- May 1, 2026: legislated deadline to establish rules on the use of municipal resources during an election.
 - May 1, 2026: Nomination period begins.
 - Aug 21, 2026: Nomination Day – last day for a candidate to file their nomination paper.
 - Oct 14 – 23, 2026: On-line voting period
 - Oct 17 & Oct 20, 2026: In-person advance polls
 - Oct 26, 2026: Election Day. Unofficial results are published on election night.
 - Oct 27, 2026: Official tabulation begins. Official results are certified and published once official tabulation is completed.
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Implications

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, requires that municipalities establish rules that govern the use of municipal resources during an election, by May 1 in the year a regular election is held.

References

[CL-05-22](#) Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy

Strategic Alignment

- Designing and delivering complete communities
 - Providing the best services and experiences
 - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
 - Driving organizational performance
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Appendices:

- A. Use of Corporate Resources During an Election policy draft (clean version)
- B. Use of Corporate Resources During an Election policy draft (marked up version)

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Commissioner, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.