

POLICY MANUAL	Policy No. 12-1
For Municipality of South Dundas	Effective Date: February 20, 2018 REVISED: April 8, 2026
SUBJECT: Corporate Resources for Elections	Department: All Departments

Policy Statement

The Corporation of the Municipality of South Dundas and its local boards are committed to ensuring accountable and transparent election practices relating to the use of corporate resources during Elections. This Policy establishes clear parameters for the use of Municipal facilities, resources, and infrastructure during an Election period, to preserve public trust and integrity in the election process and to comply with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, requires municipalities to establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal resources during an election period. Municipalities are prohibited from making campaign contributions to municipal Candidates or Registered Third Parties. As a campaign contribution may take the form of money, goods, or services, this Policy provides fair and consistent guidelines for what Municipal Corporate resources can and cannot be used for during municipal, provincial, and federal Elections.

Nothing in this Policy shall preclude a Member of Council from performing their duties as a Councillor, nor inhibit them from representing the interests of their constituents.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- Members of Council and its local boards (including those not seeking re-election)
- Municipal and local board employees
- Registered Election Candidates (including acclaimed Candidates)
- Registered Third Parties
- Members of the public

Where applicable, this Policy also applies to all registered Candidates and Registered Third Parties for a provincial or federal election or by-election.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- a) Ensure compliance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* regarding prohibitions against the Municipality contributing to a municipal or trustee election campaign;
- b) Ensure Candidates and Registered Third Parties are treated fairly and consistently within the Municipality;
- c) Ensure the integrity of the election process is maintained at all times;
- d) Establish appropriate use of Corporate resources during an Election period in order to protect the interests of Elected Officials, Candidates, Registered Third Parties, Staff, and the Corporation, and to ensure accountable and transparent election practices; and
- e) Maintain non-partisanship and demonstrate impartiality towards provincial and federal partisan political activities during the Campaign Period.

Definitions

"Acclaimed" means a Candidate elected by acclamation pursuant to Section 37 of the Act.

"Act" means the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, S.O. 1996, c. 32, as amended.

"Campaign" means any activity performed with the intention to solicit or influence votes in support of or in opposition to a Candidate in a federal, provincial, or municipal election or by-election, or a question on a ballot.

"Campaign Material" means material in any media format — including print, radio, television, websites, digital platforms, and social media — used to promote or oppose a Candidate, political party, or question on the ballot. Campaign Material includes, but is not limited to, pamphlets, brochures, cards, posters, buttons, clothing, car wraps, and online advertising.

"Candidate" means a person who has filed a nomination for an office pursuant to Section 33 of the Act, including a person who has filed a nomination for election to a school board pursuant to the *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, as amended, and including acclaimed Candidates.

"Clerk" means the Clerk of the Municipality of South Dundas or their designate.

"Corporate Resource" means real property, goods and/or services owned, controlled, leased, acquired, or operated by the Municipality including, but not limited to: facilities, parks, materials, equipment, monetary funds, technology, Municipal IT systems and resources, databases, Social Media accounts, intellectual property, images, logos, and supplies. Working hours — meaning the time during which the Municipality compensates employees to perform certain duties or tasks — are also considered to be a Corporate Resource.

"Council" means the Council of the Municipality of South Dundas.

"Elected Official" means a person elected to an office of municipal, provincial, or federal government, or a local board.

"Election" means a municipal, provincial, or federal election or by-election, including a school board trustee election.

"Elections Blackout Period" means the specific timeframe during which political advertising is prohibited, typically beginning the day before Voting Day and ending at the close of polls on Voting Day, unless otherwise specified in legislation. The blackout period applies to broadcast, print, electronic, and other media.

"Member" means a Member of the Council of the Municipality of South Dundas and includes the Mayor.

"Municipal Publication" means any publication produced, funded, or distributed by the Municipality in any format, including print and digital.

"Municipality" means The Corporation of the Municipality of South Dundas.

"Municipality-organized Event" means an event organized or funded solely or jointly by the Municipality.

"Nomination Day" means the deadline to file a nomination; for a regular Election, this will be the fourth Friday in July.

"Nomination Form" means the prescribed form and declaration of qualification executed and filed by a Candidate.

"Registered Third Party" means an individual, corporation, or trade union that has filed a Notice of Registration as a third-party advertiser in a federal, provincial, or municipal election.

"Social Media" means online technologies and platforms used to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives through text, images, video, and audio. Social media includes, but is not limited to, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Threads, TikTok, Bluesky, internet forums, blogs, podcasts, and messaging platforms.

"Staff" means all full-time, part-time, contract, temporary, student, and volunteer employees of the Municipality, including but not limited to the Chief Administrative Officer, Directors, Supervisors, Coordinators, salaried employees, administrative staff, and Members of Council office staff.

"Voting Day" means, in the case of a regular Election, the fourth Monday in October in the year of the Election; or, in the case of a by-election, the 45th day after Nomination Day, as noted in Section 5 and Subsection 65(4) of the Act.

"Voting Place" means the location, both convenient and accessible to the electors, for the purpose of casting a ballot as established by the Clerk.

2.0 Policy

General Provisions

2.1 In accordance with the provisions of the Act:

- a) Corporate resources and funding may not be used for any Election-related purposes;
- b) Staff may not canvass or actively work in support of or in opposition to a Municipal Candidate or Registered Third Party during normal working hours unless they are on a leave of absence without pay, lieu time, float day, or vacation leave;
- a) Municipal facilities and property may not be used for any Election-related purposes, including the display of any Campaign Material on such premises, unless all Candidates are afforded the same opportunity;

The Clerk is delegated authority to provide guidance and written interpretation on the application of this Policy and to make administrative amendments required due to legislative changes, provided such amendments do not change the intent of the Policy.

Specific Regulations

Members of Council – Advertising and Publications

2.2. The following services, if supplied by the Municipality, shall be discontinued for all Members of Council throughout the period from May 1st of the Municipal Election year until Voting Day, inclusive; or, in the case of a Municipal By-Election, for the period 60 days prior to and inclusive of Voting Day, for any Members running as Candidates in the By-Election:

- a) All forms of advertising, including advertising in Municipal publications;
- b) All printing, photocopying, and distribution, including newsletters;
- c) The ordering of any stationery, office supplies, or furnishings unless approved by the Clerk;
- d) Links to Member of Council-related websites or Social Media accounts;
- e) The posting of information relating to the activities of Council or any Member of Council on the Municipal website, excluding the minutes of

Council and committee meetings;

- f) Only the photos and contact information posted for each Member of Council at the commencement of their term shall remain on the corporate website.

Members of Council – Prohibited Activities

2.3 Members of Council, Candidates and Third-Party Advertisers (as applicable) shall not:

- a) Print or distribute any material paid for by Municipal funds that illustrates that a Member of Council or any other individual is registered in any Election or identifies where they will be running for office;
- b) Profile (by name or photograph), or refer to, in any material paid for by Municipal funds, any individual who is registered as a Candidate in any Election;
- c) Use the Corporate website, domain names, or other Corporate systems for campaigning, advertising, or as a substitute for distributing newsletters or flyers throughout the applicable election period;
- d) Use the Municipal logo, crest, coat of arms, slogans, or any other images, illustrations, or videos owned or controlled by the Municipality in any Campaign Material. The Municipality's brand and identifiers are owned by South Dundas and their use for election purposes is strictly prohibited;
- e) Use the Municipality's voicemail system to record Election-related messages;
- f) Use the Municipality's computer network, including the Municipal email system, for Election-related correspondence;
- g) Use any photographs produced for and owned by South Dundas, or any photos taken using Municipal equipment or sent through Municipal email accounts, for any Election-related purposes;

- h) Use Municipal property or Staff in any campaign photos or images unless all Candidates are afforded the same opportunity. Photos of external Municipal facilities taken from publicly accessible areas are permitted. Photos of internal Municipal facilities are not permitted;
- i) Use any Municipal facility/property or Voting Place location for any campaign related purpose unless the rental fee is paid and the rental of such location is available to all Candidates and Third Party Advertisers. Notwithstanding the foregoing, no facility/property or Voting Place location shall be rented or used for any Municipal campaign related purpose by Members of Council, Candidates, Third Party Advertisers or the public while voting is taking place on the property. This includes the time for set-up, hosting or take-down activities; or
- j) Benefit from the use of any Municipal pricing established under the Municipality's purchasing policy.

3.0 Social Media

Members of Council – Social Media During Campaign Period

3.1 From May 1st of a municipal election year until Voting Day, or in the case of a by-election, for the period 60 days in advance of Voting Day. To avoid any confusion with any website or social media accounts used for Council work, Members of Council who create or use their own websites or social media accounts shall:

- a) Include a clear and easily readable statement on each website or Social Media account's home page indicating whether the account is being used solely for Council work, for both Council work and Election campaign purposes, or solely for Election campaign purposes;
- b) Maintain the statement in clause (a) for as long as the website or account is publicly accessible;
- c) Not use any electronic materials paid for by the Municipality for municipal Election campaign purposes; and

4.0 Compelling Corporate Need

4.1 Notwithstanding the restrictions set out in Sections 1 and 2 above, if a compelling corporate need arises between Nomination Day and Voting Day, a Member of Council who is a Candidate may use Corporate Resources to advise or contact their constituents, provided that:

- a) The need is directly related to the Member's duties as an elected official and is not election-related in purpose or effect;
- b) The communication is clearly non-partisan and contains no Campaign Material.
- c) The Member shall consult with the Clerk before using any Corporate Resource for this purpose if they are uncertain whether the use qualifies as a compelling corporate need; and

4.2 The Clerk shall maintain a record of all requests made under this section and their disposition. Consent granted under this section shall not be construed as Municipal endorsement of any Candidate.

5.0 Staff Conduct

5.1 Staff is discouraged from assisting with or having any involvement in Municipal election campaigns, including posting election signs on their property, phone and email solicitations, signing nomination papers, distribution of brochures and wearing candidate buttons or any other candidate paraphernalia. This is due to perceived conflict of interest.

5.2 Staff, including full time, part-time and contract employees shall:

- a) Behave in a manner that is impartial, fair, and unbiased toward all registered Candidates and Registered Third Parties at all times;
- b) Consult with their direct Supervisor prior to performing any task requested by a Member of Council, registered Candidate, or Registered Third Party that exceeds their normal duties or could be construed as contributing to an Election campaign;
- c) Not rent any Municipal facility or property for any Municipal Election-related purpose to Members of Council, Candidates, Third

Party Advertiser or the public during any day that voting is taking place on the property, including set-up, hosting, or take-down activities;

- d) Not canvass or actively work in support of or in opposition to a Candidate or Registered Third Party during normal working hours unless on a leave of absence without pay, lieu time, float day, or vacation leave;
- e) Not engage in any political activity while wearing a Municipal uniform, badge, name tag, lanyard, hat, or any other item identifying them as a South Dundas employee, or while using a Municipally owned or leased vehicle;
- f) Not use their official title or position within the Municipality in a way that may lead a member of the public to infer that the Municipality is endorsing a Candidate, Registered Third Party, or political party;

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The Clerk is responsible for:

- a) Communicating this Policy to municipal Candidates, Registered Third Parties, Members of Council, and Staff;
- b) Ensuring this Policy is reviewed and updated prior to each municipal election or by-election, and as required by legislative change;
- c) Ensuring all municipal Candidates and Registered Third Parties are treated equally; and
- d) Receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints related to this Policy.

6.2 This Policy shall be reviewed by the Clerk prior to each municipal election year and no less than once every three years, to ensure it remains current with legislative requirements and best practices.

6.3 The CAO and Directors are responsible for:

- a) Communicating this Policy to their Staff;

- b) Ensuring compliance with this Policy;
- c) Investigating reported contraventions and escalating as required.

6.4 Staff are responsible for:

- a) Complying with this Policy; and
- b) Seeking clarification from their supervisor if any aspect of this Policy is not understood.

6.5 Members of Council, Candidates, and Registered Third Parties shall, without exception, comply with this Policy.

7.0 Authority

7.1 This Policy is established pursuant to:

- a) *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (Ontario), Section 88.18 — requires municipalities to establish rules regarding the use of municipal resources during an election period
- b) *Election Finances Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.7 — prohibits contributions from municipalities to provincial political parties, candidates, and constituency associations
- c) *Canada Elections Act*, S.C. 2000, c. 9, Section 370 — prohibits indirect contributions, including those from municipalities