



GRAND VALLEY

STAFF REPORT

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Donna Tremblay, Deputy Clerk/Communications Coordinator
Meeting Date: March 24, 2026
Report Number: 2026-052
Subject: 2026 Municipal and School Board Election – Policy and By-Law Updates

Recommendation

THAT Council receive the report 2026 Municipal and School Board Election– Policy and By-law Updates

AND FURTHER THAT Council approves the Use of Corporate Resources for Municipal Election Policy for the 2026 Municipal Election as presented in Appendix 1.

AND FURTHER THAT Council directs staff to present the necessary by-laws identified as Appendices to this Report for adoption.

Executive Summary

Purpose

To provide Council with various Policy and By-Law Updates for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election for Council's consideration and approval.

Key Findings

- [Section 88.18 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#) (MEA) requires the municipality to establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal resources during the election campaign period before May 1st of an election year.
- [Section 88.1](#) of the Municipal Elections Act, (MEA) sets out the regulations with respect to the election campaign and in particular references to signs and advertisements.

- [Section 42\(5\)](#) of the MEA states that when a by-law authorizing the use of an alternative voting method is in effect, [section 43 \(advance votes\)](#) applies only if the by-law so specifies
- Pursuant to [section 275 of the Municipal Act, 2001](#) (MA) there are certain actions of Council which may be restricted during two separate periods after the municipal nomination date, August 21, 2026.
- Municipal and School Board election will take place on Monday October 26, 2026

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Report

Background

As part of the election readiness planning for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election, staff have undertaken a review of various election policies and by-laws, including the following:

- Use of Corporate Resources Policy
- Sign By-law
- Advance Voting periods; and
- Restricted Acts By-Law (referred to as Lame Duck)

Policies and by-laws were reviewed to promote equitable treatment of candidates, provide clearer expectations for campaign teams, and strengthen the Town's ability to manage elections in a manner that is consistent with governing legislation.

Council feedback received will inform final refinements prior to enactment and implementation for the 2026 election cycle.

Discussion

Use of Corporate Resources

Under [Section 88.18 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#) (MEA), the municipality is required to establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal resources during the election campaign period before May 1st of an election year. The purpose of the policy is to provide a consistent approach and direction regarding the use of Corporate Resources during the election campaign period in accordance with the MEA and clarify that all candidates and third parties, including Members of Council, are required to follow the provisions of the MEA. Appendix 1 to this report is the draft Use of Corporate Resources for Municipal Elections Policy that staff are recommending for approval for the 2026 Municipal Election.

The approved policy will be placed on the [municipal elections webpage](#) and will be included in all Candidates and Third Party Advertiser information packages.

Sign By-law

[Section 88.1](#) of the Municipal Elections Act (MEA) sets out the regulations with respect to the election campaign and in particular references to signs and advertisements as follows:

- [88.2](#) Display of signs at residential premises,
- [88.3](#) Candidates election campaign advertisements,
- [88.4](#) Third party advertisements,
- [88.5](#) Mandatory information in third party advertisements and
- [88.7](#) Municipality authority to remove advertisements.

Staff conducted a review of the Town's current Sign By-law with respect to election signs to ensure the by-law complies with MEA regulations. The review focused on election sign placement and timing, maximum number per lot, sizes, election sign information, and vandalism or theft penalties. Through the review, it was identified that although the current Sign By-Law addresses sign placement in [section 2](#), it remains silent on timing, maximum number and size, language and vandalism or theft penalties.

Given that the existing Sign By-Law will require amendments to address these issues, staff are recommending the development of a standalone Election Sign By-law. The existing Sign By-law framework can be difficult for candidates to navigate and/or to share specific by-law provisions associated with election signs within the broader Sign By-law. A standalone Election Sign By-law will provide candidates with only the relevant information they need to campaign, which can be included as a part of their candidate's package reference material that is distributed upon receipt of their nomination.

Currently, the [Town of Shelburne](#) and [Town of Orangeville](#) have standalone Election Sign By-laws, and staff are aware that the Township of Mulmur is currently conducting a review of their Sign By-Law to address issues with respect to election signs.

Staff will provide a future report to Council with respect to the Election Sign by-law and/or any amendments to the current Sign By-law.

Advance Voting Periods

On November 10, 2025 Council received [Report – 2026 Election Format](#) and passed By-Law 2025-60 (Appendix 2) being a By-Law to Authorize the Use of Alternative Voting Methods (telephone and internet) for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election (voting method by-

law). Following the adoption of the voting method bylaw, the CAO/Clerk entered into an agreement with Intelivote Systems Inc. for the provision of online and telephone voting methods. [Section 42\(5\)](#) of the MEA states when a by-law authorizing the use of an alternative voting method is in effect, [section 43 \(advance votes\)](#) applies only if the authorizing by-law so specifies, and [Section 43\(1\)](#) of the MEA states the Clerk shall establish the date or dates on which the advance voting is held. The Clerk has set the dates for the voting period of internet and telephone voting to commence at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, October 16, 2026 and end at 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, Monday, October 26, 2026. In accordance with [Section 42\(5\)](#), an amendment to By-law 2025-60 is necessary to establish this advance voting period. The amending bylaw is attached as Appendix 3.

Restricted Acts after Nomination Day (Lame Duck) Provisions

Pursuant to [section 275 of the Municipal Act, 2001](#) (MA) there are certain actions of Council which may be restricted during two separate periods after the municipal nomination date, August 21, 2026. These restrictions may occur in the event that any one of the restricted acts thresholds set out in Section 275(1) are satisfied. A Council can become “lame duck” in one or both of two separate time periods:

- a) The period from nomination date (August 21, 2026) to the day of the election (October 26, 2026) and
- b) The period from the day of the election (October 26, 2026) to the end of the current term of Council (November 15, 2026).

Typically, a Council becomes “lame duck” if it is determined with certainty that the new Council will have less than three-quarters of the members of the outgoing one. The determination is based on the nominations that have been certified and any acclamations made to the new Council, as well as the results of the election.

Based on the current Council having 5 elected members, the Clerk must be able to certify that there will be 4 returning members in order to avoid becoming “lame duck”, which would only occur with acclamations of all 3 Councillor positions, plus either the Mayor or Deputy Mayor position. In other words, if on either the Nomination Day or Election Day it can be determined with certainty that one (1) or more members of the outgoing Council are not returning, then the restrictions in Section 275 of the Act will apply.

[Section 275 \(3\)](#) of the MA sets out the four restrictions that apply, they are:

- a) The appointment or removal from office of any officer of the municipality.
- b) The hiring or dismissal of any employee of the municipality.

- c) The disposition of any real or personal property of the municipality which has a value exceeding \$50,000 at the time of disposal; and
- d) Making any expenditure or incurring any other liability that exceeds \$50,000.

Sections 275(3(a) and (b) do not restrict the hiring or dismissal of officers or employees of the municipality where such powers have been delegated to staff prior to Nomination Day. The MA also provides that nothing in Section 275 prevents a municipality from taking any action in the event of an emergency or completing tasks that were included in the most recent budget adopted before nomination day.

Delegation of Powers

[Section 23.1](#) of the MA authorizes a municipality to delegate its powers and duties to the officers and employees of the municipality. To prevent any disruption to ongoing Town operations, and to mitigate any possible impacts that may arise as a result of a Restricted Acts circumstance, it is recommended that Council delegate authority to the CAO to address the following matters:

- a) Dispose of any real or personal property of the municipality which has a value exceeding \$50,000 at the time of disposition, except in those cases where disposition was included in the most recent budget adopted by Council before Nomination Day in the election;
- b) Making any unbudgeted expenditures or incurring any other liability that exceeds \$50,000 except in those circumstances where the liability was included in the most recent budget adopted by Council before Nomination Day in the election.

In addition, it is recommended that the CAO be required to provide a written report to Council in the first quarter of 2027 regarding any exercise of the authority delegated under the by-law. The authority delegated pursuant to the by-law would only take effect when Council is deemed to be in a Restricted Act Period in accordance with the Act and will expire when the Restricted Acts period is no longer applicable, or when the Council elect takes office. A draft bylaw delegating authority to the Chief Administrative Officer for Restricted Acts During the Lame Duck period is attached as Appendix 4.

Financial Impact

None.

Consultations

Meghan Townsend, CAO/Clerk

Attachments

Appendix 1 – Use of Corporate Resources for Municipal Elections Policy

Appendix 2 – By-Law 2025-60 Being a By-law to Authorize the Use of alternative voting methods (telephone and internet) for the 2026 municipal and school board election.

Appendix 3 – Draft By-law to Amend By-Law 2025-60 Use of alternative voting methods for 2026 School Board and Municipal Election – Advance Voting

Appendix 4 – Draft Being a By-Law to Delegate the Authority to the Chief Administrative Officer for Restricted Acts During the Restricted Acts Period.

This report was submitted by

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This report was approved by

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Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk

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