

Policy: Use of Corporate Resource for Election Purposes Policy

Main Contact: Clerk

Last Revision:

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Policy Statement

The Corporation of the Town of Renfrew and its local boards and committees are committed to ensuring accountable and transparent election practices relating to the use of corporate resources. This policy sets out provisions for the use of the Town's facilities, resources and infrastructure during an election period, in order to preserve the public trust and integrity in the elections process and to comply with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, establishes rules and regulations governing the financing of municipal election campaigns in Ontario.

The *Municipal Elections Act*, the *Election Finances Act (Ontario)*, and the *Canada Elections Act* prohibit a Municipality from making contributions in any form to a candidate or registered third party.

All provisions contained within this policy shall serve to ensure the protection of freedom of expression while maintaining that:

- Corporate resources shall not be used during an election period to promote or provide an unfair advantage to any candidate, political party, constituency association, registered third party, or a person or group supporting or opposing a question on a ballot;

- Members of Council shall not be precluded from performing their duties as an elected Official, nor inhibited from representing the interests of their constituents; and
- Information and communication related to an election shall continue to be open and accessible to the public with content to be produced, and approved by the Clerk's Office.

Purpose

This policy balances the need for freedom of expression and assembly of candidates and the Town's legal responsibility to ensure that no candidate, registered third party advertiser or political party is provided with an unfair advantage.

Definitions

1. Definitions

- 1.1. **"Campaign(ing)"** means any activity by, or on behalf of a Candidate, political party, constituency association, Registered Third Party, or question on a ballot meant to elicit support during the Election Period. This does not include the appearance of elected officials, other candidates or their supporters, or registrants at an event in their personal capacity without the display of any signage or graphics which identify the individual as a candidate or registrant without the solicitation of votes.
- 1.2. **"Campaign Materials"** means any materials used to solicit votes for a Candidate(s) or question during the Election Period including, but not limited to, literature, banners, posters, pictures, buttons, clothing, or other paraphernalia. Campaign Materials include materials in all media, for example, print, displays, electronic radio or television, online including websites or social media.
- 1.3. **"Campaign Period"** means:
 - In the case of a regular municipal election the date a candidate files their nomination through to Voting Day in a municipal election year or in the event of a by-election.
 - In the case of a provincial or federal election or by-election, the date the Writ is issued until Voting Day.
- 1.4. **"Candidate"** means any person who has filed, and not withdrawn a nomination, in a municipal, school board, provincial or federal election or

by-election, or a candidate seeking nomination for a political party in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c.32, Part 6 of the Canada Elections Act, S.C. 2000, c.9. and the Election Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.E.6. Where referred to in this Policy, the term Candidate can also be substituted to read political party, constituency association, Registered Third Party, or a person or group supporting or opposing a question on a ballot.

- 1.5. **“Corporate Resource”** means items, staff, services, or resources which are the property of the Town of Renfrew including, but not limited to: materials, equipment, vehicles, facilities, land, technology (computers, smartphones, tablets, etc.), intellectual property, images, logos, and supplies. Working hours, the time where the Municipality pays its employees to complete certain duties or tasks, is also considered to be a Corporate Resource.
- 1.6. **“Election”** means municipal, federal or provincial election including by-elections.
- 1.7. **“Election Period”** means the official Campaign period of an election for:
 - A municipal or school board election; the Election Period commences on the first day prescribed for the filing of nominations in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act and ends on voting day.
 - A provincial or federal election; the Election Period commences the day the writ for the election is issued and ends on voting day.
 - A nomination for a political party, the Election Period is the nomination contesting period as determined by the Party.
 - A question on the ballot; the period commences the day Council passes a by-law to put a question to the electorate and ends on voting day.
 - A municipal or school board by-election; the period commences on the first day nominations may be filed and ends on voting day.
- 1.8. **“Local Board”** has the same meaning as found in Section 1 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.
- 1.9. **“MEA”** means the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, S.O. 1996, c. 32*.
- 1.10. **“Member(s)”** means Town Councillors, the Reeve, the Mayor or anyone acting on behalf of a Town Councillor, Reeve, or the Mayor.
- 1.11. **“Municipal Facility/Building”** means any building or facility owned or operated by the Town of Renfrew or its local board.

- 1.12. **“Municipal Office”** means the Town of Renfrew administration building located at 127 Raglan Street South, Renfrew, Ontario.
- 1.13. **“Registered Third Party”** shall have the same meaning as “Registered Third Party” as found in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* or the term “Third Party” as defined in the *Election Finances Act (Ontario)* and *Canada Elections Act*, as the context requires.
- 1.14. **“Town”** means The Corporation of the Town of Renfrew and includes its agencies, local boards and commissions.
- 1.15. **“Town Clerk”** means the Town Clerk of The Corporation of the Town of Renfrew or their designate, or a returning officer appointed under Section 7(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c.32*.
- 1.16. **“Town Employee”** means for the purpose of this Policy any individual working for, or receiving compensation from the Town of Renfrew; including those in part-time, seasonal or contract positions.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1. Candidates and Registered Third Parties are to adhere to the guidelines and parameters established by this policy.
- 2.2. The Town Clerk is to administer this policy and provide any related procedures as deemed necessary or desirable for conducting an election.
- 2.3. Members of Council, Members of Local Agencies, Boards and Committees, and Town Employees are to ensure that Corporate Resources, as identified by this Policy, are not used for campaigning.

3. General Provisions

In accordance with the spirit and intent of the election related legislation:

- 3.1. Corporate Resources and funding shall not be used by a Candidate or Registered Third Party for Campaigning or election-related purposes.
- 3.2. This Policy also applies to an acclaimed Member or a Member not seeking re-election.

- 3.3. The Town Clerk is authorized, and directed to take the necessary action, to give effect to this Policy.
- 3.4. This Policy does not preclude a Member of Council from performing their duties as a Councillor, nor inhibit a Member of Council from representing the interests of their constituents.
- 3.5. Individuals who have questions about this Policy are encouraged to contact the Town Clerk to obtain further clarification.

4. Corporate Resources – Technology

Further to Section 3.1 above, the following is provided for greater clarity when considering the use of corporate technology resources:

- 4.1. Members of Council are provided access to corporate information technology (I.T.) assets to fulfill their duties and responsibilities as an elected official but may not use those assets for Campaigning or the development of Campaign Materials. This includes, but is not limited to, functionality through municipally issued smartphones such as calendar, email, texts, etc.
- 4.2. Websites or domain names that are funded by the Town may not be used for campaigning. The Town's official election website or webpages will provide Candidate contact information, but shall in no way endorse any Candidate.
- 4.3. Once a Member of Council registers to be a Candidate, any links from the Town's website or social media account to their website or social media pages will be removed from the Town's webpages if the Member's website or social media page contains or will contain Campaign Material. Subsequently, all Council biographies will be removed from the Town's website effective the first day of the nomination period. During the election period, Mayor and Council information on the Town's website will be reduced to council-related contact information only.
- 4.4. The Town's voicemail system shall not be used by Candidates to record campaign-related messages nor shall the computer network, including the email system, be used to distribute campaign-related correspondence.

5. Corporate Resources – Communications

Further to Section 3.1 above, the following is provided for greater clarity when considering the use of corporate communication resources:

- 5.1 Members of Council may not use Council portraits funded by the Town, either as a corporate or Member expense, in Campaign Materials.
- 5.2 Photographs produced for and owned by the Town may not be used for any election purposes.
- 5.3 Candidates or Registered Third Parties may not print, distribute or make reference to any of the Town's email addresses, telephone numbers, or facility addresses on any Campaign Materials.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Candidates or Registered Third Parties may provide the election telephone number, election email address, or a link to the Town's official election website or webpages in Campaign Materials for electors to access additional information about the election and the voting process (see also Section 4.2).

- 5.4 The Town Clerk may develop and distribute information through various means for the purpose of advising and educating electors. Candidates or Registered Third Parties are permitted to promote and distribute election information provided by the Town Clerk, provided that such information is not modified in any way.

6. Corporate Resources - Municipality Facilities/Buildings

Further to Section 3.1 above, the following is provided for greater clarity when considering the use of Municipal Facilities/Buildings, including Municipality owned or leased lands, as Corporate Resources:

- 6.1. Candidates or Registered Third Parties are prohibited from using the Town's Municipal Office for any election-related purpose.
- 6.2. Any Candidate may attend any public Standing Committee, Advisory Committee or Council meeting; however, they shall not use this forum to speak on, or address, any matter relating to their Campaign.
- 6.3. Candidates or Registered Third Parties are prohibited from renting space (e.g., a booth) as part of a Town organized event.
- 6.4. Candidates or Registered Third Parties that have rented a Municipal Facility/Building for campaigning purposes the distribution or display of campaign materials is only permitted during the rental period and only within the rented area.

- 6.5. All Candidates and Registered Third Parties must adhere to the provisions set out in any other municipal policies pertaining to Municipal Facilities/Buildings.

7. Corporate Resources – Town Employees

- 7.1. Town Employees are prohibited from using Corporate Resources for the benefit of a Candidate or Campaign. The Town's Municipal Code of Ethics Policy also includes the rules for participation in political activities by Town Employees.

8. Corporate Resources - Integrity Commissioner

- 8.1. The Town's appointed Integrity Commissioner is considered to be a Corporate Resource, under contract with the Town and may receive, from time to time, compensation from the Town in accordance with services provided.
- 8.2. Members of Council shall not use the services of the Town's Integrity Commissioner during the Election Period for the purposes of seeking advice related to their Campaign.

9. Corporate Resources – Limitation

- 9.1. Nothing in this Policy shall prohibit a Member of Council from performing their job as Mayor or as a Councillor, nor inhibit them from representing the interests of the constituents who elected them. This policy is subject to the exception of Members' actions associated with fulfilling their normal and ongoing representative roles as Members of Council, such as attending annual or regular scheduled events, up until the official end of the term they are serving.

Policy Requirements

This policy is applicable to all Members of Council and Municipal Staff. It does not apply to expenses budgeted and incurred by the Clerk/Returning Officer for the effective running of the Municipal Election.

Nothing in this policy shall preclude a Member of Council from performing their duty as a Councillor, nor inhibit them from representing the interests of the constituents who elected them.

Monitoring

The Town Clerk shall be responsible for receiving complaints and/or concerns related to this policy.

Authority

Section 88.18 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, requires that municipalities and local boards establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal resources during the election campaign period.

Contact

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Change History

Policy Name	Effective Date	Significant Changes	By-law No.
Use of Corporate Resource for Election Purposes Policy	April 26, 2022	New policy	31-2022