

Table AI-XX – Policy Number AI-XX – USE OF BOARD RESOURCES FOR ELECTION PURPOSES

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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE / AUTHORITY	<i>Municipal Elections Act, section 88.18</i>
DATE APPROVED	XX xxxx 2026
DATE REVIEWED	N/A
DATES AMENDED	N/A
DATE TO BE REVIEWED	2029
REPORTING REQUIREMENT	As set out in the policy

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE / AUTHORITY

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 or board resources during the election campaign period before May 1 in a regular election year. The Ottawa Police Service Board is a local board subject to this requirement.

POLICY INTENT

This policy provides direction with regard to the use of Board Resources during elections. It is intended to:

- Preserve the public trust by ensuring that Board Resources are not used for election-related purposes;
- Protect the institutional and political neutrality of the Board and the Service;
- Ensure consistent and fair treatment of all Candidates and Elected Officials;
- Comply with section 88.18 of the MEA.

This policy does not restrict the ability of Elected Officials to engage with the Board or the Service in their capacity as representatives of the public.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

“Act” means the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, and includes any regulation made thereunder.

“Board” means the Ottawa Police Service Board.

“Board Resources” means all facilities, equipment, supplies, services, personnel, funds, communications assets, and digital infrastructure that are owned or leased by the Board, including resources operated by the Service, and including but not limited to Board and Service offices, Board and Service-issued devices, Board and Service email accounts, the Board's and Service's websites, and the Board's and Service's social media accounts.

“Campaign Materials” means any materials used to solicit votes for, or in opposition to, a candidate or a question on the ballot, including but not limited to literature, banners, posters, photographs, images, video content, audio content, social media posts, electronic communications, and any other materials in print, digital, or broadcast form.

“Candidate” means any person who has filed and not withdrawn a nomination for an elected office at the municipal (including school board), provincial, or federal level, or who has publicly declared an intention to seek elected office. For the purposes of this policy, this also includes Registered Third Party, and a person who is publicly seeking election or publicly campaigning for elected office before formal nomination or registration.

“Chief” means the Chief of Police of the Ottawa Police Service.

“Corporate identifiers” means names, titles used in official capacity, logos, crests, letterhead, badges, uniforms, patches, podium backdrops, vehicle markings, official photographs, video assets, and any other visual or verbal identifier associated with the Board or the Service.

“Elected Official” means any person currently holding elected office at the municipal, provincial, or federal level, including members of Ottawa City Council, Members of Provincial Parliament, and Members of Parliament.

“Election” means an election or by-election at the municipal (including school board), provincial, or federal level of government, or the submission of a question or by-law to the electors.

“Election Period” means the official campaign period of an election, as follows:

- For a municipal (including school board) election: from May 1 of the election year to voting day.
- For a provincial or federal election: from the day the writ for the election is issued to voting day.
- For a question on the ballot: from the day the relevant resolution or by-law is passed to voting day.
- For a by-election: from the day the by-election is called to voting day.

"Election Year" means, for a municipal election, the calendar year in which a regular municipal election is scheduled to occur.

"Employees" include full-time, part-time, and contract employees of the Board, including members of the Ottawa Police Service.

"Registered Third Party" means an individual, corporation or trade union that is registered with a local municipality under section 88.6 of the *Act*.

"Service" means the Ottawa Police Service.

BOARD POLICY

1. APPLICATION

- 1.1. Unless stated otherwise, the provisions of this policy apply during the Election Period.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 2.1. **Public trust.** Board Resources are publicly funded. They must not be used, directly or indirectly, to advance the private or political interests of any individual.
- 2.2. **Political neutrality.** The Board and the Service must remain institutionally and politically neutral.
- 2.3. **Electoral benefit from Board Resources.** Board Resources must not be used to confer, or be reasonably perceived as conferring, electoral benefit, recognizing that such use may compromise public confidence in the Board or Service.
- 2.4. **Fairness and consistency.** All Elected Officials and Candidates are entitled to equal and consistent treatment by the Board and Service.
- 2.5. **Legitimate representative access.** This policy regulates the use of institutional resources. It does not restrict the ability of Elected Officials to engage with the Board or the Service in their capacity as representatives of the public.

2.6. **Board member duties.** Nothing in this policy prevents a Board member who is also an Elected Official or a Candidate from exercising their governance and ceremonial duties in their capacity as a member of the Board.

3. USE OF BOARD RESOURCES

3.1. **General prohibition.** The Board and the Service shall not use, or permit the use of, Board Resources for any election-related purpose, including campaigning, the production or distribution of Campaign Materials, or the provision of any advantage to a Candidate.

3.2. **Corporate identifiers.** The Board and the Service shall not authorize or permit the use of Corporate identifiers in Campaign Materials or on any campaign-related website, social media account, or other platform.

3.3. **Corporate photographs and video.** The Board and the Service shall not authorize or permit the use of photographs, images, or video content produced by or for the Board or Service in Campaign Materials.

3.4. **Photographs and videos with Board Employees.** Employees shall not, while on duty or in uniform, knowingly pose for photographs or video with a Candidate where the photograph or video is intended for, or is reasonably likely to be used in, Campaign Materials.

3.5. **Employee obligations.** Subject to the political activity provisions of Ontario Regulation 402/23, Employees may participate in election-related activities in their personal capacity, provided that they do not engage in any political activity during working hours, do not use Board Resources for any election-related purpose, and do not identify themselves as Board or Service employees when engaged in political activity.

4. INSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION

4.1. **Institutional association.** During an Election Period, the Board and the Service shall not lend their institutional presence, brand, or communications resources to any activity involving a Candidate in a manner that could reasonably be perceived as conferring an electoral advantage. This standard applies to events, announcements, press conferences, and public activities of any kind, subject to section 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4.

4.2. **Permitted participation.** Section 4.1 does not prevent Board Members, the Chief or a designate from attending or participating in announcements, events, public activities or media availabilities hosted by the City of Ottawa, the Province

of Ontario, the Government of Canada, or any of their agencies, where: (a) participation is required by a funding agreement, contribution agreement, or similar instrument as a condition of a grant or program; or (b) the announcement relates to a matter of public safety or policing operations in which Board or Service participation is reasonably expected.

4.3. **Government announcements.** Participation under section 4.2 shall be limited to what is reasonably necessary to inform the public of the substance of the matter. Board and Service communications, production, and social media resources shall not be used in a manner that amplifies the electoral profile of any Candidate beyond that purpose.

4.4. **Donor recognition obligations.** Where a provincial or federal funding agreement or contribution agreement requires the Board or the Service to acknowledge the funding source in public communications, the Board and the Service shall comply with those requirements, including during an Election Period. Any such acknowledgement shall be factual, shall follow the terms of the agreement, and shall not go beyond what is required by the agreement.

5. BOARD AND SERVICE COMMUNICATIONS (ELECTION YEAR)

5.1. **Scope.** The communications restrictions set out in this section apply throughout the Election Year, including before the commencement of the Election Period.

5.2. **Board communications.** During the Election Year, official Board and Service communications shall not deliberately feature an Elected Official or Candidate.

5.3. **Exceptions.** An exception to section 5.2 may be made only where the involvement of the Elected Official or Candidate is necessary for a statutory, governance, intergovernmental, emergency management, ceremonial, or public-safety purpose.

5.4. **Exception requirements.** Even where an exception under section 5.2 applies, the communication shall: (a) be factual and non-promotional; (b) avoid performances or formats likely to confer profile-boosting benefit; (c) avoid campaign slogans, campaign imagery, campaign-adjacent branding, or links to campaign-related accounts or materials; (d) minimize individual prominence; and (e) not state or imply endorsement by the Board or the Service.

6. BOARD MEETINGS, BOARD EVENTS, AND SERVICE EVENTS

6.1. **Board meetings.** The Board shall permit Candidates to attend Board meetings that are open to the public and to participate as delegates in accordance with the

Board's usual delegation rules and procedural by-law. The Chair shall ensure that Board meetings are not used for campaign announcements, campaign remarks, fundraising, solicitation, or distribution of Campaign Materials.

- 6.2. **Board and Service events.** At Board and Service events, the Board and the Service shall not permit campaign activity, including the display or distribution of campaign signs, campaign literature, campaign apparel intended for campaigning, or fundraising materials, or the solicitation of votes or donations.
- 6.3. **Equal treatment.** The Board and Service shall not provide preferential speaking opportunities, seating, acknowledgements, promotional exposure, or event access to a Candidate because of their office or candidacy, except where required by law, protocol, or a legitimate official purpose.

7. ADMINISTRATION

- 7.1. **Chief's procedures.** The Chief of Police shall establish and maintain written procedures implementing the standards set out in this policy within the Service.
- 7.2. **Notices.** The Chief shall notify the Board in writing of any actual or suspected breach of this policy or related procedures without unreasonable delay.