

Subject: Update on the 2026 Municipal Elections and amendments to election-related by-laws

File Number: ACS2026-OCC-GEN-0002

**Report to Finance and Corporate Services Committee on 3 March 2026
and Council 11 March 2026**

Submitted on February 20, 2026 by Caitlin Salter MacDonald, City Clerk

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Ward: Citywide

**Objet : Mise à jour sur les élections municipales de 2026 et la modification de
règlements liés aux élections**

Numéro de dossier : ACS2026-OCC-GEN-0002

Rapport présenté au Comité des finances et des services organisationnels

Rapport soumis le 3 mars 2026

et au Conseil le 11 mars 2026

Soumis le 20 février 2026 par Caitlin Salter MacDonald, Greffière municipale

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Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

**That the Finance and Corporate Services Committee recommend that City
Council:**

- 1. Receive this update on the 2026 Municipal Elections for information;**

2. Approve and enact a *By-Law to Authorize the Use of an Alternative Voting Method*, attached as Document 1, to authorize the use of a special mail-in ballot that does not require electors to attend a voting place in order to vote in accordance with Section 42 of the *Municipal Election Act, 1996*, for the 2026 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2026-2030 Term of Council, as described in this report;
3. Approve housekeeping amendments to the *Contribution Rebate Program By-law* (By-law No. 2022-76) as described in this report and as attached in Document 3; and
4. Approve the establishment of the 2026-2030 Election Compliance Audit Committee, as described in this report and including:
 - a) The Terms of Reference for the Election Compliance Audit Committee as outlined in Document 4;
 - b) Delegating the authority to appoint the members of the Election Compliance Audit Committee to the Selection Panel made up of the City Clerk, the Auditor General, and the Integrity Commissioner; and
 - c) Exempting the Election Compliance Audit Committee from Subsections B.1, 2, 3, and 5 of the Appointment Policy – Council-Appointed Public Members of Committees, Boards, and other External Authorities.

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des finances et des services organisationnels recommande au Conseil municipal :

1. de prendre acte à titre informatif de la mise à jour sur les élections municipales de 2026;
2. d'approuver et de promulguer un *Règlement autorisant l'utilisation d'un mode de scrutin de remplacement*, annexé en tant que document 1, afin d'autoriser l'utilisation d'un bulletin de vote spécial par la poste qui n'exige pas des électeurs qu'ils se rendent dans un bureau de vote pour exercer leur droit de vote, conformément à l'article 42 de la *Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales*, pour les élections municipales de 2026 et toute

élection partielle qui pourrait se dérouler durant le mandat 2026-2030 du Conseil municipal, comme il est décrit dans le présent rapport;

- 3. d'approuver les modifications d'ordre administratif apportées au *Règlement sur le Programme de remises de contributions (Règlement 2022-76)*, annexé en tant que document 3, comme il est décrit dans le présent rapport;**
- 4. d'approuver la mise sur pied du Comité de vérification de conformité des élections de 2026-2030, comme il est décrit dans le présent rapport, y compris pour ce qui est :**
 - a) du mandat du Comité de vérification de conformité des élections défini dans le document 4;**
 - b) de la délégation au comité de sélection composé de la greffière municipale, de la vérificatrice générale et de la commissaire à l'intégrité du pouvoir de nommer les membres du Comité de vérification de conformité des élections;**
 - c) d'exempter le Comité de vérification de conformité des élections des paragraphes B.1, 2, 3 et 5 de la Politique de nomination – Membres du public nommés par le Conseil à des comités, des conseils et d'autres autorités externes.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Municipal elections in Ontario are governed by the [*Municipal Elections Act, 1996*](#) (the MEA) which requires that municipalities conduct both municipal council and school board elections, at no cost to school boards, every four years. The next regular municipal election to elect a Mayor, City Councillors, and School Board Trustees will take place on Monday, October 26, 2026. The 2026-2030 Term of Council will begin on Sunday, November 15, 2026, and end on Thursday, November 14, 2030.

The MEA also provides rules for the administration of elections, addressing areas such as voter and candidate eligibility, third party advertising, methods of voting, campaign and campaign finance rules, and legislative dates in the election cycle. It provides provisions with respect to compliance, enforcement, and penalties, and sets out the election-related roles and responsibilities of City Council, school boards, electors, candidates, third party advertisers, and the City Clerk.

In accordance with the MEA, the City Clerk is responsible for the preparation and conduct of municipal elections. This includes preparing for the election and maintaining peace and order in connection with the election, in accordance with Section 11 of the MEA.

In addition to adhering to provisions of the MEA, the City Clerk has a duty to prepare for and conduct the election in a manner consistent with the principles of the legislation as established by the courts.

While the City Clerk is responsible for the preparation and conduct of elections, the MEA stipulates that City Council approval is required to enact or amend various election-related by-laws including those related to alternative voting methods and the Contribution Rebate Program. City Council is also required to approve the establishment of the Election Compliance Audit Committee for the 2026-2030 Term of Council before October 1 in the year of a regular election. As such, this report seeks the required approvals through Recommendations 2, 3, and 4 as further described in the Discussion section of this report.

2026 Municipal Elections

During the 2026 Municipal Elections, eligible electors will have several opportunities to cast their ballot, either by voting in person or by proxy. Staff is also recommending that the special mail-in ballot voting option continue to be offered to electors, and that City Council enact a by-law authorizing the use of a special mail-in ballot for the 2026 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2026-2030 Term of Council, attached as Document 1.

The following election schedule has been established by the City Clerk in accordance with the MEA to ensure equitable access to voting opportunities for electors in every ward. A detailed election calendar is attached as Document 2.

Table 1: 2026 Municipal Elections Schedule

Date	Election milestone
Friday, May 1	Candidate nomination and third party advertiser registration periods begin
Friday, August 21 at 2 pm	Nomination Day (last day to submit or withdraw a nomination)
Tuesday, September 1, to Sunday, September 20	Revision Period

Date	Election milestone
Thursday, October 1, to Sunday, October 4	Special Advance Voting Days (“anywhere voting”)
Friday, October 16	Advance Voting Day
Friday, October 23 at 4:30 pm	Final day to register as a third party advertiser
Monday, October 26	Voting Day
Friday, October 30	Expected declaration of results

Voting in person

Based on the above-noted election schedule, there will be three separate voting events with a total of six in-person voting days for electors to cast their ballot in the 2026 Municipal Elections:

- Special Advance Voting Days will take place from October 1-4, 2026. During this voting event, voting places will offer “anywhere voting” which allows electors to attend any voting place, regardless of their address, to cast their ballot.
- Advance Voting Day will take place on October 16, 2026. On this day, electors may vote at their assigned voting place in their ward.
- Voting Day will take place on October 26, 2026. Electors may vote at their assigned voting place in their ward on this day.

In accordance with Section 45 of the MEA, the City Clerk will establish the number and location of voting places for an election as she “considers most convenient for the electors”, and that are accessible to electors with disabilities. The MEA also requires that voting places be established in select institutions and retirement homes.

In addition to the provisions of the MEA, the Elections Office considers Ottawa’s diverse geography (urban, suburban, and rural) as well as the social and economic makeup of the population to ensure that there is equitable access to all electors in every ward and that no undue hardship is experienced when participating in the democratic process of electing their representatives.

To meet these requirements, and to ensure equitable access to voting for electors in every ward, it is anticipated that approximately 635 voting places will be established and over 5,000 election worker positions will be filled to support voting events in the 2026 Municipal Elections.

Voting by special mail-in ballot

Should City Council approve Recommendation 2 of this report, all eligible electors may request to vote by special mail-in ballot by submitting an application to the Elections Office using the online application tool on ottawa.ca/vote, by email, mail, or in person to the Elections Office. An elector's name must appear on, or be added to, the Voters' List in order to apply and receive a special mail-in ballot.

Following a review of the applications received, the Elections Office will send a Special Ballot Voter Kit to applicants by mail, which will include instructions on how to vote, a voter declaration form, a ballot, a ballot secrecy envelope, and a prepaid return envelope.

More information regarding the special mail-in ballot process, including application timelines and the deadline to submit completed mail-in ballots, will be available in advance of May 1 when the City Clerk finalizes vote counting procedures in accordance with the MEA.

Voting by proxy

In accordance with Section 44 of the MEA, an eligible elector may appoint a proxy to go to the voting place and vote on their behalf. A proxy must be an eligible elector in the City of Ottawa and can still cast their own ballot. A person can act as a proxy for only one other person unless they are representing members of their own family.

To appoint a proxy, the elector and the person they want to appoint must fill out two copies of an Appointment for Voting Proxy (Form 3), which will be made available on ottawa.ca/vote. The individual who has been appointed must take the completed forms to the City's Elections Office or any Client Service Centre during regular business hours and have them certified by City staff. Eligible electors may appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf from September 1 to October 26 at 4:30 pm.

Candidate nominations and third party advertiser registrations

The candidate nomination period will take place from May 1 to August 21 at 2 pm, and the third party advertiser registration period will take place from May 1 to October 23 at 4:30 pm, in accordance with the MEA.

At the writing of this report, the Ministry of Education is reviewing the governance of Ontario's school boards including the election of School Board Trustees. Staff is closely monitoring for updates from the Ministry and will adjust the 2026 Municipal Elections

plan as required to account for changes related to the election of School Board Trustees, as well as any other changes to the MEA. Should any changes be required, the City Clerk will notify City Council and members of the public.

Communications and outreach

To raise awareness about the 2026 Municipal Elections, communications will be issued throughout the election cycle about a variety of election-related matters including information about becoming a candidate or third party advertiser, how, when, and where to vote, and accessibility tools.

Following City Council's approval of the City's [Anti-Racism Strategy](#), multilingual communications will also be issued regarding key milestones in the election cycle as further described in the Discussion section of this report.

The Elections Office will work with Public Information and Media Relations to develop a thorough communications plan in order to share election-related messaging on a variety of platforms.

Estimated cost of the 2026 Municipal Elections

The estimated cost of the 2026 Municipal Elections is \$9,262,207, which includes the costs associated with the growth in the number of electors and costs to implement the recommended special mail-in ballot process.

The Office of the City Clerk is of the opinion that election processes and the estimated budget as described in this report allow the 2026 Municipal Elections to proceed in an efficient manner that is consistent with the legislative requirements and principles of the MEA.

The processes and estimated budget for the 2026 Municipal Elections also reflect the Elections Office's commitment to continuous improvement, the work that has been done since the last election to review and refine processes to maximize the effective and efficient use of resources, and deliver a consistent and positive voter experience that is reflective of the legislative requirements and principles of the MEA.

Funding for the 2026 Municipal Elections will be drawn from the Tax Stabilization Reserve, which is the primary fund for elections. A detailed budget table is provided in the Discussion section of this report.

Amendments to the Contribution Rebate Program By-law No. 2022-76

As permitted under Section 88.11 of the MEA, City Council first established the City of Ottawa's Contribution Rebate Program for the 2003 Municipal Elections, and the City's [Contribution Rebate Program By-law](#) (No. 2022-76) remains in effect for any regular election or by-election, including the 2026 Municipal Elections.

As is usual practice in advance of a regular election, staff has reviewed By-law No. 2022-76 and is recommending minor housekeeping amendments to improve clarity and administration of the program as further described in the Discussion section of this report. An updated By-law is set out in full for City Council's consideration in Document 3.

Establishing the 2026-2030 Election Compliance Audit Committee

In accordance with Section 88.37 of the MEA, each municipality is required to establish an Election Compliance Audit Committee (ECAC) before October 1 of an election year, and the term of office of the ECAC is the same as the term of office of the City Council or School Board that takes office following the next regular election. The next term of office will begin on November 15, 2026, and end of November 14, 2030.

The ECAC is an independent, statutory body whose responsibilities and powers are largely prescribed by the MEA. The ECAC is responsible for reviewing and making decisions on applications for municipal election campaign finance compliance audits, and on reports from the City Clerk regarding apparent contraventions of contribution limits prescribed by the MEA, resulting from the regular municipal election or any by-election held during the term of office for the City Council for which the ECAC was appointed.

In keeping with past practice, this report sets out recommendations to establish the ECAC for the 2026-2030 Term of Council which includes:

- Approval of the ECAC's Terms of Reference as outlined in Document 4.
- Delegating authority to the City Clerk, the Auditor General, and the Integrity Commissioner to appoint members to the ECAC.
- Approval to exempt the ECAC from various provisions of the Appointment Policy.

Following City Council's approval of this report, the Office of the City Clerk will begin the member recruitment and appointment process as further described in this report. Staff

will subsequently provide City Council with an update indicating the membership of the ECAC and any other updated procedures prior to the legislative deadline to establish the committee by October 1.

RÉSUMÉ

Les élections municipales en Ontario sont encadrées par la [Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales](#) (LEM). Cette loi exige que les municipalités organisent une élection au Conseil municipal et aux conseils scolaires (sans frais pour les conseils scolaires) tous les quatre ans. Les prochaines élections municipales ordinaires visant à élire un maire, des conseillers municipaux et des conseillers scolaires auront lieu le lundi 26 octobre 2026. Le mandat 2026-2030 du Conseil municipal commencera le dimanche 15 novembre 2026 et se terminera le jeudi 14 novembre 2030.

La LEM établit également les règles qui régissent la tenue d'une élection et des aspects comme le droit de vote des électeurs et l'admissibilité des candidats, la publicité des tiers annonceurs, les modes de scrutin, les campagnes électorales et leur financement, ainsi que les dates prescrites du cycle électoral. Elle contient des dispositions relatives à la conformité, à l'application et aux sanctions, en plus de définir les rôles et les responsabilités liés aux élections du Conseil municipal, des conseils scolaires, des électeurs, des candidats, des tiers annonceurs et de la greffière municipale.

En vertu de la LEM, la greffière municipale doit préparer et tenir des élections municipales. Le mandat comprend la préparation des élections et le maintien de la paix et de l'ordre pendant l'élection, comme le précise l'article 11 de la LEM.

En plus d'adhérer aux dispositions de la LEM, la greffière municipale a le devoir de préparer et de tenir les élections d'une manière conforme aux principes de la loi qui ont été établis par les tribunaux.

Bien que la greffière municipale soit responsable de la préparation et de la tenue des élections, la LEM stipule que l'approbation du Conseil municipal est requise pour la promulgation ou la modification de divers règlements municipaux liés aux élections, y compris ceux qui concernent les modes de scrutin de remplacement et le Programme de remises de contributions. L'approbation du Conseil est également requise pour mettre sur pied le Comité de vérification de conformité des élections pour le mandat 2026-2030 du Conseil avant le 1^{er} octobre d'une élection ordinaire. C'est pourquoi le présent rapport vise à solliciter les approbations requises par le truchement des recommandations 2, 3 et 4, qui sont décrites plus en détail dans la section d'analyse du rapport.

Élections municipales de 2026

Pendant les élections municipales de 2026, les électeurs admissibles auront plusieurs occasions d'exercer leur droit de vote en personne ou par mandataire. Le personnel recommande également que le vote par bulletin de vote spécial par la poste demeure une option pour les électeurs et que le Conseil municipal adopte un règlement autorisant les électeurs à se prévaloir de cette option pour les élections municipales de 2026 et toute élection partielle qui pourrait avoir lieu pendant le mandat 2026-2030 du Conseil. Ce document est annexé en tant que document 1.

La greffière municipale a établi le calendrier électoral ci-après conformément à la LEM afin de garantir un accès équitable aux possibilités de vote aux électeurs de chaque quartier. Un calendrier électoral détaillé est annexé en tant que document 2.

Tableau 1: Calendrier des élections municipales de 2026

Date	Étape
Vendredi 1 ^{er} mai	Début de la période de déclaration des candidatures et d'inscription des tiers annonceurs
Vendredi 21 août, à 14 h	Jour de la déclaration des candidatures (dernier jour pour soumettre ou retirer une candidature)
Mardi 1 ^{er} septembre au dimanche 20 septembre	Période de révision
Jeudi 1 ^{er} octobre au dimanche 4 octobre	Jours de vote par anticipation spécial (vote sans bureau de vote fixe)
Vendredi 16 octobre	Jour de vote par anticipation
Vendredi 23 octobre, à 16 h 30	Dernier jour pour s'inscrire à titre de tiers annonceur
Lundi 26 octobre	Jour du scrutin
Vendredi 30 octobre	Proclamation attendue des résultats

Vote en personne

Comme le montre ce calendrier, il y aura trois possibilités de vote distinctes avec un total de six jours de vote en personne pour les électeurs qui souhaitent exercer leur droit de vote aux élections municipales de 2026.

- Les jours de vote par anticipation spécial auront lieu du 1^{er} au 4 octobre 2026. Pendant ces journées de vote, les bureaux de vote offriront le vote « sans

bureau de vote fixe », ce qui permet aux électeurs de se rendre dans n'importe quel bureau de vote, quelle que soit leur adresse, pour voter.

- Le jour de vote par anticipation aura lieu le 16 octobre 2026. Ce jour-là, les électeurs pourront voter au bureau de vote qui leur a été attribué dans leur quartier.
- Le jour du scrutin se tiendra le lundi 26 octobre 2024. Les électeurs pourront voter au bureau de vote qui leur a été attribué dans leur quartier ce jour-là aussi.

Conformément à l'article 45 de la LEM, la greffière municipale établira le nombre et l'emplacement des bureaux de vote pour une élection selon ce qu'elle considère être le plus pratique pour les électeurs et elle doit choisir des emplacements accessibles aux électeurs en situation de handicap. Cette loi exige également la mise en place de bureaux de vote dans certains établissements et certaines maisons de retraite.

Outre les dispositions de la LEM, le Bureau des élections prend en compte la diversité géographique d'Ottawa (secteurs urbain, suburbain et rural), ainsi que les caractéristiques sociales et économiques de la population afin que tous les électeurs aient un accès équitable dans chaque quartier et ne vivent pas de difficultés injustifiées lorsqu'ils participent au processus démocratique visant à élire leurs représentants.

Il est donc prévu de mettre en place environ 635 bureaux de vote et de pourvoir plus de 5 000 postes de travailleurs électoraux afin de répondre à ces exigences et d'assurer aux électeurs un accès équitable au vote dans chaque quartier, et de garantir le bon déroulement des élections municipales de 2026.

Vote par bulletin de vote spécial par la poste

Si le Conseil municipal approuve la recommandation 2 du présent rapport, tous les électeurs admissibles pourront demander un bulletin de vote spécial par la poste en soumettant une demande au Bureau des élections à l'aide de l'outil en ligne (ottawa.ca/votez), par courriel, par la poste ou en personne au Bureau des élections. Leur nom doit figurer sur la liste électorale ou y être ajouté pour qu'ils puissent présenter une demande et recevoir un bulletin de vote spécial par la poste.

À la suite de l'examen des demandes reçues, le Bureau des élections enverra par la poste aux personnes admissibles une trousse de vote par bulletin de vote spécial qui comprendra des instructions sur la manière de voter, un formulaire de déclaration de l'électeur, un bulletin de vote, une enveloppe de vote secret et une enveloppe-réponse affranchie.

De plus amples renseignements concernant le processus de vote par bulletin de vote spécial par la poste, notamment les dates limites pour présenter une demande et soumettre les bulletins de vote spécial par la poste dûment remplis seront disponibles avant le 1^{er} mai, une fois que la greffière municipale aura mis au point les procédures de dépouillement des votes conformément à la LEM.

Vote par procuration

Conformément à l'article 44 de la LEM, un électeur admissible peut nommer un mandataire pour que cette personne se rende au bureau de vote afin de voter en son nom. Le mandataire doit être un électeur admissible dans la Ville d'Ottawa et sa fonction de mandataire ne l'empêche pas de déposer un bulletin de vote en son propre nom. Une personne peut agir à titre de mandataire seulement pour une seule personne, sauf si elle représente des membres de sa propre famille.

Pour nommer un mandataire, l'électeur et la personne qu'il veut mandater doivent remplir deux copies du formulaire Nomination d'un mandataire (Formulaire 3) qui sera disponible à ottawa.ca/votez. La personne qui a été nommée mandataire doit apporter les formulaires dûment remplis au Bureau des élections ou dans un centre du service à la clientèle pendant les heures normales d'ouverture et les faire certifier par le personnel de la Ville. Les électeurs admissibles peuvent désigner un mandataire pour voter en leur nom entre le 1^{er} septembre et le 26 octobre à 16 h 30.

Déclaration des candidatures et inscription des tiers annonceurs

Conformément à la LEM, la période de déclaration des candidatures débute le 1^{er} mai et se termine le 21 août à 14 h, et la période d'inscription des tiers annonceurs débute le 1^{er} mai et se termine le 23 octobre à 16 h 30.

À la date de rédaction du présent rapport, le ministre de l'Éducation examine la gouvernance des conseils scolaires de l'Ontario, notamment l'élection des conseillers scolaires. Le personnel suit de près les mises à jour du Ministère et ajustera le plan pour les élections municipales de 2026, au besoin, afin de tenir compte des changements liés à l'élection des conseillers scolaires, ainsi que de tout autre changement apporté à la LEM. Si des changements sont requis, la greffière municipale avisera le Conseil municipal et les membres du public.

Communications et sensibilisation

Afin de sensibiliser la population aux élections municipales de 2026, des communications seront diffusées tout au long du cycle électoral sur divers sujets liés aux élections, notamment des renseignements sur la façon de se porter candidat ou de devenir tiers annonceur, sur les modalités, les dates et les lieux de vote, ainsi que sur les outils d'accessibilité. Il

À la suite de l'approbation de la [Stratégie de lutte contre le racisme](#) par le Conseil municipal, des communications multilingues seront également transmises concernant les étapes clés du cycle électoral, comme décrit plus en détail dans la section réservée à l'analyse du présent rapport.

Le Bureau des élections travaillera avec les Services de l'information du public et des relations avec les médias afin d'élaborer un plan de communication détaillé qui permettra de transmettre des messages liés aux élections sur diverses plateformes.

Coût estimé des élections municipales de 2026

Le coût estimé des élections municipales de 2026 s'élève à 9 262 207 \$, ce qui comprend les coûts liés à l'augmentation du nombre d'électeurs et à la mise en œuvre du processus recommandé de vote spécial par la poste.

Le Bureau du greffe municipal estime que les processus électoraux et le budget estimé décrits dans le présent rapport permettent de tenir les élections municipales de 2026 de façon efficace et conforme aux exigences législatives et aux principes établis au titre de la LEM.

Ces processus et ce budget témoignent également l'engagement du Bureau des élections en faveur de l'amélioration continue, ainsi que du travail accompli depuis les dernières élections pour examiner et peaufiner les processus afin de maximiser l'utilisation efficace et efficiente des ressources et d'offrir une expérience électorale cohérente et positive qui respecte les exigences législatives et les principes établis au titre de la LEM.

Le financement des élections municipales de 2026 proviendra du Fonds de réserve pour la stabilisation des taxes, qui est la principale source de financement des élections. Un tableau détaillé du budget figure à la section d'analyse du présent rapport.

Modifications du Règlement sur le Programme de remises de contributions (2022-76)

Tel que le permet l'article 88.11 de la LEM, le Conseil municipal a initialement créé le Programme de remises de contributions dans le contexte des élections municipales de 2003. Le [Règlement sur le Programme de remises de contributions](#) (Règlement n° 2022-76) demeure en vigueur pour toute élection municipale ordinaire ou partielle, y compris pour les élections municipales de 2026.

Comme il est d'usage avant une élection ordinaire, le personnel a examiné ce règlement et recommande d'y apporter des modifications mineures d'ordre administratif afin d'améliorer la clarté et l'administration du programme, comme décrit plus en détail dans la section d'analyse du présent rapport. La version intégrale actualisée de ce règlement est annexée en tant que document 3 à des fins d'examen par le Conseil municipal.

Mise sur pied du Comité de vérification de conformité des élections de 2026-2030

Conformément à l'article 88.37 de la LEM, toutes les municipalités de l'Ontario doivent se doter d'un comité de vérification de conformité des élections (CVCE) avant le 1^{er} octobre d'une année électorale. La durée du mandat du CVCE est identique à celle du Conseil municipal ou du conseil scolaire qui entre en fonction après les prochaines élections ordinaires. Le prochain mandat commencera le 15 novembre 2026 et prendra fin le 14 novembre 2030.

Le CVCE est une instance indépendante créée au titre de la LEM. Ses responsabilités et ses pouvoirs sont largement prescrits par cette loi. Il est chargé d'étudier les demandes de vérification de conformité du financement de campagnes électorales municipales, ainsi que les rapports de la greffière municipale sur la violation apparente de limites de contributions établies par la LEM à la suite des élections municipales ordinaires ou d'une élection partielle tenue pendant le mandat du Conseil municipal pour lequel le CVCE a été nommé. Il doit également statuer sur ces demandes et ces rapports.

Conformément à la pratique antérieure, le présent rapport présente des recommandations visant à établir le CVCE pour le mandat 2026-2030 du Conseil, à savoir :

- approuver le mandat du CVCE décrit dans le document 4;

- déléguer à la greffière municipale, à la vérificatrice générale et à la commissaire à l'intégrité le pouvoir de nommer les membres du CVCE;
- exempter le CVCE de diverses dispositions de la Politique de nomination.

Une fois le présent rapport approuvé par le Conseil municipal, le Bureau du greffe municipal lancera le processus de recrutement et de nomination de membres décrit davantage en détail dans le présent rapport. Le personnel informera ensuite le Conseil municipal de la composition du CVCE et de toute autre procédure actualisée, le cas échéant, avant la date limite prescrite par la loi pour établir ledit comité (le 1^{er} octobre).

BACKGROUND

Municipal elections in Ontario are governed by the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#) (the MEA) which requires that municipalities conduct both municipal council and school board elections, at no cost to school boards, every four years. The next regular municipal election to elect a Mayor, City Councillors, and School Board Trustees will take place on Monday, October 26, 2026. The 2026-2030 Term of Council will begin on Sunday, November 15, 2026, and end on Thursday, November 14, 2030.

The MEA also provides rules for the administration of elections, addressing areas such as voter and candidate eligibility, third party advertising, methods of voting, campaign and campaign finance rules, and legislative dates in the election cycle. It provides provisions with respect to compliance, enforcement, and penalties, and sets out the election-related roles and responsibilities of City Council, school boards, electors, candidates, third party advertisers, and the City Clerk.

In accordance with the MEA, the City Clerk is responsible for the preparation and conduct of municipal elections. This includes preparing for the election and maintaining peace and order in connection with the election, in accordance with Section 11 of the MEA. More specifically, Subsection 11(2) of the MEA provides that the City Clerk's responsibility for conducting an election includes the following:

Duties of Clerk

- preparing for the election;
- preparing for and conducting a recount in the election;
- maintaining peace and order in connection with the election; and

- in a regular election, preparing and submitting the report described in Subsection 12.1(2) [relating to the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities].

In addition to adhering to provisions of the MEA, the City Clerk has a duty to prepare for and conduct the election in a manner consistent with the principles of the legislation. While not defined in the MEA, the courts have established these principles as follows:

1. Secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process is paramount.
2. The election shall be fair and must not favour one candidate over another.
3. The election shall be accessible to voters.
4. Integrity of the process shall be maintained throughout the election.
5. There is to be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast.
6. Proper majority vote decides the election, which is achieved by ensuring, so far as is reasonably possible, that valid votes be counted and invalid votes be rejected.
7. Voters and candidates shall be treated fairly and consistently.

While the MEA is generally prescriptive, it includes provisions that allow the City Clerk to make decisions not otherwise provided for in the Act and / or that are required to administer the election in the case of an emergency.

More specifically, Section 12 of the MEA allows the City Clerk to provide for any matter or procedure that is not otherwise provided for in an Act or regulation, and that is, in the City Clerk's opinion, "necessary or desirable" for conducting the election, as follows:

Powers of Clerk

12(1) A Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election may provide for any matter or procedure that,

(a) is not otherwise provided for in an Act or regulation; and

(b) in the Clerk's opinion, is necessary or desirable for conducting the election.

Additionally, Section 53 of the MEA authorizes the City Clerk to declare an emergency when circumstances have arisen that are likely to prevent the election from being

conducted in accordance with the MEA, and further allows the City Clerk to make arrangements that she considers advisable for conduct of the election, as follows:

Emergency

53(1) The Clerk may declare an emergency if he or she is of the opinion that circumstances have arisen that are likely to prevent the election being conducted in accordance with this Act.

Arrangements

(2) On declaring an emergency, the Clerk shall make such arrangements as he or she considers advisable for the conduct of the election.

Conflict

(3) The arrangements made by the Clerk, if they are consistent with the principles of this Act, prevail over anything in this Act and the regulations made under it.

Time

(4) The emergency continues until the Clerk declares that it has ended.

No review or setting aside

(5) If made in good faith, the Clerk's declaration of emergency and arrangements shall not be reviewed or set aside on account of unreasonableness or supposed unreasonableness.

While the City Clerk is responsible for the preparation and conduct of elections, the MEA stipulates that City Council approval is required for the enactment or amendment of various election-related by-laws including those related to alternative voting methods and the Contribution Rebate Program. City Council is also required to approve the establishment of the Election Compliance Audit Committee for the 2026-2030 Term of Council before October 1 in the year of a regular election. As such, this report seeks the required approvals through Recommendations 2, 3, and 4.

Ward boundaries that take effect in the 2026 Municipal Elections

On December 11, 2024, City Council approved the [2024 Ward Boundary Review](#) report which made minor amendments to ward boundaries between Wards 6 Stittsville and 21 Rideau-Jock; Wards 9 Knoxdale-Merivale and 24 Barrhaven East; and Wards 11

Beacon Hill-Cyrville and 13 Rideau-Rockcliffe. City Council subsequently enacted the related By-law No. 2025-5, “A by-law of the City of Ottawa to amend By-law No. 2021-3, as amended by the Ontario Land Tribunal, respecting the ward boundaries of Wards 6, 9, 11, 13, 21, 24”, on January 22, 2025.

The ward boundary changes will be in effect beginning November 15, 2026, and in effect for the purposes of the 2026 Municipal Elections. Staff will develop communications to ensure that electors, candidates and third party advertisers are aware of the ward boundary changes, and the Discussion section of this report provides further details on the communications plan and public education efforts for the 2026 Municipal Elections.

DISCUSSION

The City Clerk is responsible for preparing and conducting elections in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA), and the principles established by the courts.

This report has been prepared for City Council’s information and to seek approval for various items as required; and discusses the following election-related matters in advance of the 2026 Municipal Elections:

- Section 1: Provides an update on the 2026 Municipal Elections for City Council’s information, including a recommendation to approve and enact a *By-Law to Authorize the Use of an Alternative Voting Method* to authorize the use of a special mail-in ballot for the 2026 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2026-2030 Term of Council.
- Section 2: Discusses recommended housekeeping amendments to the *Contribution Rebate By-law* to improve the administration of the program and to provide additional clarity to contributors and candidates who participate in the program.
- Section 3: Provides information about the Election Compliance Audit Committee and discusses the legislative requirement to establish the City’s Election Compliance Audit Committee for the 2026-2030 Term of Council in advance of October 1, 2026, in accordance with Subsection 88.37(1) of the MEA.

Section 1: Update on the 2026 Municipal Elections

Report recommendations

That City Council:

1. Receive this update on the 2026 Municipal Elections for information;
2. Approve and enact a *By-Law to Authorize the Use of an Alternative Voting Method*, attached as Document 1, to authorize the use of a special mail-in ballot that does not require electors to attend a voting place in order to vote in accordance with Section 42 of the *Municipal Election Act, 1996*, for the 2026 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2026-2030 Term of Council, as described in this report;

During the 2026 Municipal Elections, eligible electors will have several opportunities to cast their ballot, either by voting in person or by proxy. Staff is also recommending that City Council enact a by-law authorizing the use of a special mail-in ballot for the 2026 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2026-2030 Term of Council, attached as Document 1.

The following election schedule has been established by the City Clerk in accordance with the MEA to ensure equitable access to voting opportunities for electors in every ward. A detailed election calendar is attached as Document 2.

Table 1: 2026 Municipal Elections schedule

Date	Election milestone
Friday, May 1	Candidate nomination and third party advertiser registration periods begin
Friday, August 21 at 2 pm	Nomination Day (last day to submit or withdraw a nomination)
Tuesday, September 1, to Sunday, September 20	Revision Period
Thursday, October 1, to Sunday, October 4	Special Advance Voting Days (“anywhere voting”)
Friday, October 16	Advance Voting Day
Friday, October 23 at 4:30 pm	Final day to register as a third party advertiser
Monday, October 26	Voting Day

Date	Election milestone
Friday, October 30	Expected declaration of results

Voting in person

Based on the above-noted election schedule, the statutory requirements for voting places, and to ensure that staff can administer the election in an efficient manner, there will be three separate voting events with a total of six in-person voting days for electors to cast their ballot in the 2026 Municipal Elections: (1) Special Advance Voting Days; (2) Advance Voting Day; and (3) Voting Day, as further described below. Approximately 635 voting places will be established to support these voting events.

(1) Special Advance Vote Days

Special Advance Voting Days will take place from October 1 to October 4 from 10 am to 8 pm. During this voting event, voting places will offer “anywhere voting” which allows electors to attend any voting place, regardless of their address, to cast their ballot. Anywhere voting uses an electronic Voters’ List and election workers print ballots on demand.

Anywhere voting has been implemented as part of the 2014, 2018, and 2022 Municipal Elections, the 2020 Cumberland By-election, and the 2025 Osgoode By-election.

Due to its success and popularity in previous elections and to better serve electors in every ward, staff is expanding this voting opportunity to 10 locations across the City of Ottawa for the 2026 Municipal Elections.

Special Advance Voting Day locations will be established in City facilities as they are best suited to support the “anywhere voting” model. The selected voting places are typically landmarks in the community that are fully accessible, offer multiple services to residents and have high foot traffic in their day-to-day operations. City facilities also have existing City network access that supports the use of the electronic Voters’ List.

(2) Advance Voting Day

Advance Voting Day will take place from 10 am to 8 pm on October 16. On this day, electors will have the opportunity to vote at their assigned voting place in their ward.

At this time, staff anticipate that approximately 230 voting places will be established on Advance Voting Day.

(3) Voting Day

Voting Day in the 2026 Municipal Elections will take place on October 26, in accordance with the MEA. Electors will once again have the opportunity to vote at their assigned voting place in their ward, from 10 am to 8 pm, with the exception of long-term care centres and retirement homes that may have reduced hours.

At this time, staff anticipate that 365 voting places will be required on Voting Day.

It is estimated that over 5,000 election worker positions will be needed to support voting events in the 2026 Municipal Elections, and the Elections Office will begin recruiting and hiring both City staff and members of the public to work as election workers in Q2 2026. Interested individuals will be able to apply online at ottawa.ca/vote or complete an application in person at the Elections Office or at the various outreach events attended by Elections Office staff. Recruitment will be ongoing until all positions are filled. Information about election worker roles and the application process will be made available on ottawa.ca/vote and the City's social media channels.

Voting by special mail-in ballot

Should City Council approve Recommendation 2 of this report, all eligible electors may request to vote by special mail-in ballot by submitting an application to the Elections Office using the online application tool on ottawa.ca/vote, by email, mail, or in person to the Elections Office. An elector's name must appear on, or be added to, the Voters' List in order to apply and receive a special mail-in ballot.

Following a review of the applications received, the Elections Office will send a Special Ballot Voter Kit to applicants by mail, which will include instructions on how to vote, a voter declaration form, a ballot, a ballot secrecy envelope, and a prepaid return envelope.

More information regarding the special mail-in ballot process, including application timelines and the deadline to submit completed mail-in ballots, will be available in advance of May 1 when the City Clerk finalizes vote counting procedures in accordance with the MEA.

The City Clerk is also recommending that City Council approve the by-law to authorize a vote by mail option for the 2026 Municipal Elections following a review of homebound voting options as directed by the [2025-2029 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan](#). Approval of the by-law will allow electors with disabilities to vote privately and independently without needing to attend a voting place in person.

City Council approved the 2025-2029 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan on November 13, 2024, which included the following election-related action item:

The Elections Office will explore the feasibility of home-bound voting, with regard to established practices in other jurisdictions and the safety of electors and election workers. This will be done in consultation with Legal Services and Accessibility Office

In consultation with the City's Accessibility Office and following a review of homebound voting including practices in other jurisdictions, safety considerations, resource and logistical considerations, and other opportunities to provide accessibility support, homebound voting is not being recommended as a voting method in the 2026 Municipal Elections. That said, and subject to City Council's approval of the special mail-in ballot process, the Elections Office will leverage existing processes and tools, including voting by proxy, to provide enhanced accessibility service.

Eligible electors who are unable to leave their homes to cast their ballot or require assistance with the vote by proxy and vote by mail options will also be encouraged to contact the Elections Office, and staff will review accessibility support that can be provided to these electors on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Accessibility Office.

Voting by proxy

In accordance with Section 44 of the MEA, an eligible elector may appoint a proxy to go to the voting place and vote on their behalf. A proxy must be an eligible elector in the City of Ottawa and can still cast their own ballot. A person can act as a proxy for only one other person unless they are representing members of their own family.

To appoint a proxy, the elector and the person they want to appoint must fill out two copies of an Appointment for Voting Proxy (Form 3), which will be made available on ottawa.ca/vote. The individual who has been appointed must take the completed forms to the City's Elections Office or any Client Service Centre during regular business hours and have them certified by City staff. Eligible electors may appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf from September 1 to October 26 at 4:30 pm.

In accordance with Subsection 44(6) of the MEA, and in keeping with past practice, all [Client Service Centres](#) and the Elections Office will be open from 8:30 to 5 pm on Advance Voting Day for the purpose of certifying proxies and receiving special mail-in

ballots. All Client Service Centres will also be open from 8:30 to 4:30 pm on Special Advance Voting Days and Voting Day to further support electors.

The Elections Office will work with Service Ottawa to ensure that changes to Client Service Centre hours to support the election is communicated to the public and posted on ottawa.ca.

Staff not recommending internet or telephone voting

Staff has continued to monitor internet and telephone voting and many of the concerns outlined in staff's report to City Council titled "[Update on the 2022 Municipal Elections and Amendments to Election-related By-laws and Policies](#)" still remain. Namely, concerns relate to the security of these voting methods, an inability to conduct recounts, the quality of the Voters' List, and barriers to internet connectivity for electors.

These concerns are considerable for municipalities the size of Ottawa (with an anticipated eligible elector count of over 800,000 for the 2026 Municipal Elections) where the administration of elections is already complex. As such, staff do not recommend internet or telephone voting as viable voting options for the 2026 Municipal Elections. Additional information related to these concerns is provided below.

With regard to internet voting, the security of internet voting systems remains a significant and ongoing concern. In addition, there are currently no provincial standards that exist for certifying online voting systems, auditing, or verifying the results that are produced. As far as staff is aware, none of the current internet voting systems produce an accompanying physical paper trail. As such, conducting a recount would not be possible as a paper ballot does not exist.

The quality of the Voters' List also remains a concern as significant revisions to the data have been required in each election. For example, during the 2022 Municipal Elections, over 123,000 changes were made to elector information received from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, including the addition of 60,166 names, the removal of 44,300 names, and 19,068 amendments to elector information.

While the responsibility for maintaining elector information has shifted to the Province's Chief Electoral Officer, this is the first regular election where municipalities will receive elector information from Elections Ontario and there remains the possibility of inaccurate, outdated, and / or duplicate elector information on the Voters' List. This directly impacts staff's ability to effectively and efficiently administer a secure election where internet voting is an option.

Internet voting systems typically require electors to authenticate themselves using a personal identification number (PIN) which is typically included in the elector's voter notification letter. Any inaccuracies in the Voters' List can result in these letters—and therefore the associated PINs—being undelivered, delivered with errors, or sent to the wrong address, creating opportunities for fraud. Staff also note the risk that voter notification letters may be improperly discarded, which could further increase the potential for fraudulent activity.

Concerns also remain that internet voting could create barriers and disenfranchise electors who do not have access to a computer and / or internet at home, do not feel comfortable using technology, and / or do not have reliable connectivity. While recent reports from Statistics Canada and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission have indicated an increase in general internet availability and access to internet at home nationally, reliable internet connectivity remains a concern, particularly in Ottawa's rural wards, and thereby affects staff's ability to provide equitable access to voting should internet voting be offered at this time.

As noted in the most recent report to City Council titled "[Rural Internet Connectivity Update](#)" in July 2022, a significant portion of rural residents in Ottawa do not have reliable internet connectivity required to work, learn, or conduct day to day activities online. In addition, while the [Province of Ontario](#) has announced a plan to ensure all residents in Ontario have access to high-speed internet by the end of 2028, information available on the Province's website show that this plan remains in progress in Ottawa's rural areas.

The reliability of internet voting also remains a concern. In the 2010, 2018 and 2022 Municipal Elections, there were wide-spread issues reported across Ontario with various internet voting or Voters' List technology platforms that led to delays in closing polls and tabulating results, and voting was required to be extended in several municipalities.

With respect to telephone voting, staff has determined that voting by telephone has not been an efficient or effective method of voting based on discussions with other municipalities. Furthermore, voting by telephone is not considered to be an accessible voting option; lengthy ballots prove difficult to navigate through the telephone system and take too long to complete, resulting in possible voter frustration.

In addition to the above City's current election software provider no longer offers the technology required to support telephone or internet voting in Ottawa. Sourcing these

components from a third party and integrating them into existing systems would be a significant undertaking and staff is not able to complete the procurement process, test, audit, and implement either voting method in time for the 2026 Municipal Elections.

For these reasons, neither internet nor telephone voting are recommended as viable options for the 2026 Municipal Elections. Staff will continue to monitor internet voting and the feasibility of implementing it in future general elections.

As a result of the above, internet and telephone voting are not viable voting methods for the 2026 Municipal Elections; however, staff will continue to monitor the feasibility of implementing alternate methods of voting in future municipal elections.

Statutory requirements for voting places

Section 45 of the MEA prescribes that the City Clerk has the statutory duty to establish the number and location of voting places for an election as she “considers most convenient for the electors”. Under this same provision, the City Clerk is also mandated to ensure that voting places are accessible to electors with disabilities.

Subsection 45(7) of the MEA mandates that on Voting Day, a voting place be provided on the premise of:

1. An institution for the reception, treatment or vocational training of members or former members of the Canadian Forces;
2. An institution in which, on September 1, 20 or more beds are occupied by persons who are disabled, chronically ill or infirm; and
3. A retirement home in which, on September 1, 50 or more beds are occupied.

In addition to those identified in the above-noted requirements, voting places in Ottawa’s municipal elections may also be established in multi-residential facilities that provide care that do not meet the “bed count” threshold set out in the legislation.

In addition to the provisions of the MEA, the Elections Office considers Ottawa’s diverse geography (urban, suburban, and rural) as well as the social and economic makeup of the population to ensure that there is equitable access to all electors in every ward and that no undue hardship is experienced when participating in the democratic process of electing their representatives.

Voting places in the 2026 Municipal Elections

Based on the above-noted requirements, staff has currently identified approximately 635 voting places for the 2026 Municipal Elections. Voting places are typically established in a variety of buildings including places of worship, community and multi-residential buildings, and long term care and retirement residences.

Due to the size of Ottawa's elections, a regular election also cannot be conducted without the use of recreational facilities and schools as these locations are heavily relied on to provide large, convenient, and accessible voting places for electors.

Before a voting place is confirmed, staff conduct a thorough site visit process at each location which includes the completion of a detailed accessibility checklist, the evaluation of existing or potential barriers or safety concerns, and any mitigation measures required.

Staff is in the process of reviewing voting places that will be used in the 2026 Municipal Elections and the list of voting places will be made available to the public on the City's Open Data platform by September 1. Electors will also be able to find their assigned voting places using the "Where do I vote?" platform on ottawa.ca/vote and by viewing their voter notification letter.

The Voters' List and Revision Period

As described in the "[Office of the City Clerk 2024 Annual Report](#)", the Province of Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer assumed responsibility for preparing the preliminary list of electors (PLE) for municipal elections, a responsibility previously held by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC). In accordance with the MEA, the preliminary list of electors is provided to the City Clerk to prepare the Voters' List in a municipal election.

The Chief Electoral Officer is also responsible for maintaining the [Permanent Register of Electors for Ontario](#) ("the Register"). Eligible electors can use Elections Ontario's [Voter Registration tool](#) to verify, update, or add their voter information on the Register for municipal and provincial elections, outside of an election cycle. Updates made to elector information using the tool in advance of August 12, 2026, will be captured on the PLE provided to the City of Ottawa for the 2026 Municipal Elections.

Once the PLE is received by the Province and the Voters' List is prepared, the City Clerk is required to make the Voters' List available to the public for a "Revision Period." Electors may also use the Revision Period to add, amend, or remove their name from

the Voters' List by submitting applications online or by submitting a paper application form at the Elections Office or a Client Service Centre during regular business hours.

The Revision Period for the 2026 Municipal Elections will take place from September 1 to September 20 at 4:30 pm. During this period, electors will be able to verify, add or amend their information online by using the "Am I on the Voters' List?" tool on ottawa.ca/vote or by submitting an "Application to add or amend my information on the Voters' List" to the Elections Office.

Electors may also make these changes at their voting place on voting days and the application form will be available on ottawa.ca/vote.

Candidate nominations and third party advertiser registrations

The candidate nomination period will take place from May 1 to August 21 at 2 pm, and the third party advertiser registration period will take place from May 1 until October 23 at 4:30 pm, in accordance with the MEA.

While the MEA permits the City Clerk to put conditions in place that would allow candidates and third party advertisers to submit their nomination and registration forms electronically, all forms will be required to be filed in person for the 2026 Municipal Elections.

As previously described in the "[Update on the 2022 Municipal Elections and Amendments to Election-related By-laws and Policies](#)" report, staff has identified a number of issues with moving the filing process online, including concerns regarding validating personal identification documents and eligibility, privacy requirements, and operational feasibility.

Further, staff also determined that an in-person nomination and registration process allows staff the opportunity to explain the nomination and registration process in detail, answer any questions that may arise, and provide candidates and third party advertisers with important information related to the election process.

Staff will continue to monitor electronic filing systems and strategies in other jurisdictions in Ontario to determine if such a system could be introduced in future municipal elections in the City of Ottawa.

Information about the filing requirements and process for candidates and third party advertisers will be made available to the public on ottawa.ca/vote and circulated in statutory advertisements.

Becoming a candidate in the 2026 Municipal Elections

In accordance with the *Municipal Act, 2001*, a person is eligible to be a candidate in a municipal election if they are an eligible elector as of the day they file their nomination papers. Subsection 17(2) of the MEA sets out the eligibility requirements for electors, and therefore candidates, as further described below.

Candidates for City Council

A person is eligible to be a candidate for the Office of Mayor or City Councillor if they are:

- A resident of the City of Ottawa, or an owner or tenant of land in the City of Ottawa, or the spouse of such an owner or tenant.
- A Canadian citizen.
- At least 18 years old.
- Not legally prohibited from voting.

The following people are disqualified from being elected as a Member of Council, or from holding Office as a Member of Council:

- An employee of the municipality unless they take an unpaid leave of absence beginning the day they are nominated and resign if elected to the Office.
- A judge of any court.
- A member of the Provincial Legislature, the Federal House of Commons, or Senate who has not resigned from their office by the close of nominations. Proof of resignation must be provided by the close of nominations or the City Clerk will not certify the nomination.
- A candidate who failed to file the necessary financial statement(s) in the last municipal election or by-election.

As noted above, employees of the City of Ottawa who wish to run for City Council must take an unpaid leave of absence before filing their nomination papers. The employee must provide the City Clerk with a copy of the documentation showing that they have taken the leave of absence and the effective date.

Candidates for School Board Trustee

A person is eligible to be a candidate for School Board Trustee if they are,

- A Canadian citizen.
- At least 18 years old.
- A resident within the board's area of jurisdiction.
- A supporter of that school board.
- Not legally prohibited from voting.

The following people are disqualified from being elected as a School Board Trustee or from holding office on any school board:

- An employee of the school board unless they take an unpaid leave of absence beginning the day they are nominated and resign if elected to the Office.
- A clerk, treasurer, deputy-clerk, or deputy-treasurer of any municipality within the area of jurisdiction of the school board except those on an unpaid leave of absence.
- A member of the Provincial Legislature, the Federal House of Commons, or Senate who has not resigned from their office by the close of nominations. Proof of resignation must be provided by the close of nominations.
- A candidate who failed to file the necessary financial statement(s) in the last municipal election or by-election.

At the writing of this report, the Ministry of Education is in the process of reviewing the governance of Ontario's school boards including the election of School Board Trustees. Staff is closely monitoring for updates from the Ministry and will adjust the 2026 Municipal Elections plan as required to account for changes related to the election of School Board Trustees, as well as any other changes to the MEA. Should any changes be required, the City Clerk will notify City Council and members of the public.

Becoming a registered third party advertiser in the 2026 Municipal Elections

A third party advertiser in a municipal election is an Ontario resident, corporation, or trade union that incurs expenses relating to an advertisement in any medium that

supports or opposes a candidate in an election, or a "yes" or "no" answer to a question on the ballot.

In accordance with Section 88.4(1) of the MEA, third party advertisers must register with the City Clerk before they can begin advertising.

The following are not eligible to register as a third party advertiser:

- A candidate whose nomination has been filed under Section 33.
- A federal political party registered under the *Canada Elections Act (Canada)* or any federal constituency association or registered candidate at a federal election endorsed by that party.
- A provincial political party, constituency association, registered candidate or leadership contestant registered under the *Election Finances Act*.
- The Crown in right of Canada or Ontario, a municipality or local board.

Third party advertising is separate from any candidate's campaign and must be done independently from a candidate.

Accessible and bilingual elections

The Elections Office is committed to providing an accessible, bilingual election experience to electors, candidates, third party advertisers, and election workers in accordance with the MEA, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and related standards and regulations, and the City's Bilingualism Policy.

All communications issued by the Elections Office, including advertisements, signage, and forms, are bilingual. In addition, bilingual service will be available to electors at every voting place.

The following accessibility tools and services will be available to electors in the 2026 Municipal Elections:

- Large print ballots
- Magnifying sheets
- Braille listing of candidates
- Braille ballot templates

- Access to a cell phone with Elections call centre staff on standby. Electors may use this feature to call Elections staff to have their ballot read to them over the phone.
- Curbside voting

In addition, accessible vote tabulators will be available at all Special Advance Voting Day locations, at area-wide voting places on Advance Voting Day, and at retirement and long-term care homes on Voting Day. Accessible vote tabulators include bilingual visual support through a 19-inch screen with zoom capabilities and high contrast features, a braille keypad; left-right paddles (colour-coded left and right paddles), a sip-puff device, and bilingual audio through headphones.

As with previous municipal elections, OC Transpo is extending the Para Transpo booking windows for electors booking trips to voting places in the 2026 Municipal Elections. This booking window will be extended from 24 hours in advance of the trip to 7 days in advance, and information about this offering will be communicated to electors accordingly.

As previously noted, electors also have the opportunity to cast their ballot without attending a voting place by appointing a proxy or, if approved by City Council, voting by special mail-in ballot.

Staff consulted the Accessibility Advisory Committee and French Language Services Committee to seek feedback on ways to improve accessibility and bilingual offerings in the 2026 Municipal Elections and will work with the Accessibility Office and French Language Services to implement feedback received where possible in 2026 and in future municipal elections.

Communications and outreach

To raise awareness about the 2026 Municipal Elections, communications will be issued about a variety of election-related matters including information about becoming a candidate or third party advertiser, how, when, and where to vote, and accessibility tools.

Communications will also be issued regarding the minor ward boundary changes that will be in place for the 2026 Municipal Elections, to ensure that electors, candidates, and third party advertisers are aware of the new ward structure, to provide clarity for electors about which ward their address is located in, which candidates are running in their ward, and where their voting places will be located on voting days.

A variety of channels will be used to communicate election-related information, including voter notification letters, the elections website (ottawa.ca/vote), newspaper and billboard advertisements, Public Service Announcements, and social media posts on both the City of Ottawa and Elections Office's corporate accounts. A call centre will also be available on voting days to assist electors and provide election-related information.

Staff will also increase outreach efforts for the 2026 Municipal Elections, which will include attending a variety of public events, the expansion of the Voters in Training program, candidate and third party advertiser information sessions, and presentations to target audiences including racialized communities, community groups and organizations, etc.

Update on election-related action items from the City's Anti-Racism Strategy

The [Anti-Racism Strategy](#) identified the following action items for the Elections Office:

1. Identify the cost and feasibility of multi-lingual election-related communication materials and voting tools and make recommendations as part of the 2026 Elections report, where permitted by the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.
2. Engage with Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities to identify barriers to participate in the municipal election process and, make recommendations to address barriers through the 2026 Elections report.

To assist with the above-noted action items and as described in the [2024 Annual Report on the Elections Office](#), the Elections Office conducted a city-wide public consultation on the electoral experience in Ottawa's municipal elections from September 5 to October 3, 2024.

In addition, and to further increase engagement with racialized communities, the Elections Office also worked with the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Relations branch (EDIIR) to develop a consultation plan to inform engagement with racialized communities. The plan included identifying community partners for initial engagement and the creation of a survey to be shared with the community partners, their networks, and the City's Affinity Groups. This survey was conducted from November 17 to December 5, 2025.

Both consultations sought feedback on a variety of items including electors' experience participating in previous municipal elections, preferred communication methods, and barriers to participation.

The information received through the above-noted engagements helped inform processes and procedures for the 2026 Municipal Elections as well as staff's review of multilingual tools and communications.

Staff note that feedback primarily related to communications and general awareness of the election, including requests for more information about where, when, and how to vote. Participants also provided that communications should be increased regarding candidate platforms.

As a result, staff will work with stakeholders to identify in person and virtual outreach opportunities, develop focused engagement strategies and identify the preferred methods of communication for various target audiences, including racialized communities, the unhoused population, and electors remanded in custody.

While the Elections Office has no role in candidate campaigns and must remain impartial in its duty to administer the election, staff will provide information about becoming a candidate and where to find the list of candidates using a variety of channels. As part of the nomination and registration process, staff also provide candidates and third party advertisers with the option of making their contact information, website and/or social media platforms available on ottawa.ca/vote.

Feedback was also received regarding election workers' knowledge of accessibility tools and how they are used. Updates have been made to the election worker training program to improve the training and increase focus on accessibility tools and their use.

Staff continue to engage with and welcome feedback from all residents, including racialized communities and community partners, in advance of the 2026 Municipal Elections and throughout the election cycle.

Regarding multilingual communications and voting tools, the Elections Office anticipates piloting the following multi-lingual products for the 2026 Municipal Elections:

- Multilingual "Municipal Elections Guide" in English, French, Arabic, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese, containing important information about the 2026 Municipal Elections including elector eligibility, offices for election, and voting opportunities.
- Multilingual voting instructions at voting places in English, French, Arabic, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese.
- Interpretation service offered via telephone through the City of Ottawa in over 170 languages.

- Sign at the entrance to all voting places that indicates that service is available in English and French, and that multilingual tools are offered upon request (multilingual voting instructions, access to phone line with interpretation services).
- Multilingual advertisements on social media in English, French, Arabic, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese, regarding key election information (candidate nominations and third party advertiser registrations, Voters' List revision period and special mail-in ballot application period, and voting dates and times).

The above-noted languages were identified as the most commonly used languages in Ottawa based on the most recent census data available from 2021, in consultation with Public Information and Media Relations (PIMR), and following a review of public consultation survey results.

The Elections Office is working in partnership with PIMR to ensure that the communications and public education efforts outlined in this report are successful.

Automated vote counting equipment

In accordance with Section 42 of the MEA, the City's By-law No. 2003-275 authorizes the use of vote-counting equipment and continues to be in effect for any regular elections or by-elections. This equipment ensures consistent and accurate counting of votes and the timely production of unofficial election results, and all votes cast in the 2026 Municipal Elections will be counted by vote tabulator in accordance with By-law No. 2003-275 and the vote counting procedures established by the City Clerk.

Dominion Voting Systems ("Dominion") has supplied the City's vote tabulation system for the 2014, 2018 and 2022 Municipal Elections as well as the 2019, 2020, and 2025 by-elections. As described in the [Office of the City Clerk's 2024 Annual Report](#), the City's previous contract with Dominion was set to expire before the 2026 Municipal Elections. As such, the Elections Office worked with Supply Services, in collaboration with Information Technology Services (ITS), to source a vote tabulation system for 2026 and future municipal elections and by-elections.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued on January 10, 2025, and closed on January 31, 2025, in accordance with the City's Procurement By-law (By-law No. 2000-50) and procurement processes. Following a thorough review of the proposals received, Dominion was selected as the successful vendor, and their services were provisioned

for the 2026 Municipal Elections and any by-elections during the 2026-2030 Term of Council.

The Elections Office will continue to work with ITS and other partners to implement and test voting systems in preparation for the 2026 Municipal Elections. To ensure the integrity of the election, the vote tabulating equipment and election-related business processes are rigorously tested and validated by external auditors well in advance of each voting event.

Election results

Unofficial results will be posted on ottawa.ca/vote after the close of voting at 8 pm on October 26. Most of the results are expected within an hour or two of the polls closing. Based on past experience, unofficial results are expected to be received within three hours. Unofficial results will be updated frequently until all votes have been counted.

Official results

In accordance with the MEA, the City Clerk shall, as soon as possible after Voting Day, declare the candidate who received the highest number of votes elected.

As is past practice, an external auditor will validate election processes to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the results. The City Clerk will only declare the results official after the auditor provides a final report. As noted in the 2026 Municipal Elections schedule in Document 2, official results are expected to be declared on October 30.

Official results will be posted on ottawa.ca/vote.

2026-2030 Term of Council and transition of City Council

In accordance with the MEA, the 2026-2030 Term of Council will begin on November 15. The City Clerk anticipates that the transition of City Council will begin shortly after the City Clerk declares the election results official.

All newly elected Members of Council will participate in essential orientation meetings and transition activities prior to the first City Council meeting of the 2026-2030 Term of Council. These orientation meetings and transition activities will be confirmed by the Office of the City Clerk in the fall of 2026.

Estimated cost of the 2026 Municipal Elections

The estimated cost of the 2026 Municipal Elections as described in this report is \$9,262,207, which includes costs to implement the recommended special mail-in ballot process. The estimated budget also accounts for an increase in the number of eligible electors (approximately 100,000 more electors than in 2022), and the number of voting places required to support this growth, including an additional voting location during the four-day Special Advance Voting event.

These factors directly influence the cost of an election by increasing the number of vote tabulators and voting place supplies required, as well as the associated needs for printing, mailing, election worker staffing, bilingual and accessible tools, communications, and overall operational support for voting events.

The estimated budget also reflects inflationary increases to materials and supplies, and higher staffing costs for voting places as hourly rates for election workers have increased to meet Ontario's minimum wage requirements and pay levels in other municipalities.

The Office of the City Clerk is of the opinion that the election processes and the estimated budget as described in this report allow the 2026 Municipal Elections to proceed in an efficient manner that is consistent with the legislative requirements and principles of the MEA.

The processes and estimated budget for the 2026 Municipal Elections also reflect the Elections Office's commitment to continuous improvement, the work that has been done since the last election to review and refine processes to maximize the effective and efficient use of resources, and deliver a consistent and positive voter experience that is reflective of the legislative requirements and principles of the MEA.

As previously noted, staff also continue to monitor potential changes to the MEA, including the uncertainty surrounding School Board Trustees, which may result in changes to the election process.

Funding for the 2026 Municipal Elections will be drawn from the Tax Stabilization Reserve, which is the primary fund for elections. A detailed budget table is provided below.

Table 2: Estimated cost of the 2026 Municipal Elections

Category	Estimated Cost
Staffing	\$2,983,625
Voting events (including election worker costs, supplies, vote tabulators, etc.)	\$3,482,765
Print production and mailing (including ballots, voter notification letters etc.)	\$2,156,200
Communications and outreach	\$195,000
Legislative requirements and elections audit (including accessibility requirements, bilingualism, external audit, etc.)	\$208,100
Special Mail-in Ballot	\$236,517
Total	\$9,262,207

Section 2: Amendments to election-related by-laws

Report recommendation

- 3. Approve housekeeping amendments to the Contribution Rebate Program By-law (By-law No. 2022-76) as described in this report and as attached in Document 3.**

Section 88.11 of the MEA provides that a municipality may pass a by-law to allow for the payment of rebates to individuals who contribute to candidates for the Office of Mayor or City Councillor and may establish conditions under which such a rebate is paid.

City Council first established the City of Ottawa’s Contribution Rebate Program for the 2003 Municipal Elections, and the City’s [Contribution Rebate Program By-law](#) (No. 2022-76) remains in effect for any regular election or by-election, including the 2026 Municipal Elections.

This program allows for the payment of rebates to individuals residing in Ontario who contribute to participating candidates running for municipal council in regular elections and by-elections. In accordance with the by-law, candidates for School Board Trustee and third party advertisers are not eligible to participate in the Contribution Rebate Program.

As is usual practice in advance of a regular election, staff has reviewed By-law No. 2022-76 and is recommending minor housekeeping amendments to the By-law to:

- Permit the electronic submission of rebate applications by email;
- Extend the deadline to submit a contribution rebate application from 2 pm to 4:30 pm on the date that is 60 days after the filing deadline for supplementary financial statements to align with regular business hours; and
- Clarify that, for a contribution rebate to be issued, any legal proceedings commenced by the Election Compliance Audit Committee or prosecutor in relation to the contribution limits permitted under Section 88.9 or 88.13 have concluded without a conviction.

Additional housekeeping amendments (wording and terminology updates) are recommended for consistency and clarity throughout the By-law. An updated By-law is set out in full for City Council's consideration in Document 3.

Section 3: Establishing the 2026-2030 Election Compliance Audit Committee

Report recommendation:

- 4. Approve the establishment of the 2026-2030 Election Compliance Audit Committee, as described in this report and including:**
 - a) The Terms of Reference for the Election Compliance Audit Committee as outlined in Document 4;**
 - b) Delegating the authority to appoint the members of the Election Compliance Audit Committee to the Selection Panel made up of the City Clerk, the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner; and**
 - c) Exempting the Election Compliance Audit Committee from Subsections B.1, 2, 3, and 5 of the Appointment Policy – Council-Appointed Public Members of Committees, Boards, and other External Authorities.**

In accordance with Section 88.37 of the MEA, each municipality is required to establish an Election Compliance Audit Committee (ECAC) before October 1 of an election year, and the term of office of the ECAC is the same as the term of office of the City Council or School Board that takes office following the next regular election. The next term of office will begin on November 15, 2026, and end of November 14, 2030.

The ECAC is an independent, statutory body whose responsibilities and powers are largely prescribed by the MEA. The ECAC is responsible for reviewing and making decisions on applications for municipal election campaign finance compliance audits, and on reports from the City Clerk regarding apparent contraventions of contribution limits prescribed by the MEA, resulting from the regular municipal election or any by-election held during the term of office for the City Council for which the ECAC was appointed.

Under the MEA, any eligible elector who believes that a candidate or registered third party advertiser has contravened the campaign finance rules in the statute may apply for a compliance audit of that party's election campaign finances.

Applications related to candidates for City Council and third party advertisers must be made in writing to the City Clerk of the municipality. Applications relating to candidates for School Board Trustee must be made to the secretary of the applicable school board. The applications must be in writing, include the reasons for the application, and be made within 90 days after the filing date for financial statements or within 90 days of the 30-day grace period for filing a financial statement under the MEA.

Following consideration of applications for a compliance audit, the ECAC may appoint an auditor to review campaign finances as required and decide whether to commence a legal proceeding against a candidate or a third party advertiser.

The MEA also requires that the City Clerk review the financial statements submitted by candidates and third party advertisers to determine whether any contributor appears to have exceeded the contribution limits established in the legislation. Should this review find any apparent contraventions of the contribution limits, a report(s) on the matter is forwarded to the ECAC for consideration.

Following consideration of reports from the City Clerk regarding apparent contraventions of contribution limits (if any), the ECAC may decide whether to commence a legal proceeding against a contributor who appears to have exceeded the contribution limits prescribed by the MEA.

2022-2026 Election Compliance Audit Committee

On Wednesday, March 23, 2022, City Council approved the staff report titled "[Update on the 2022 Municipal Elections and Amendments to Election-Related By-laws and Policies](#)" which included recommendations to establish the 2022-2026 Election Compliance Audit Committee (the "Committee"), pursuant to Section 88.37 of the

Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (the “MEA”). The 2022-2026 Committee’s term of office began on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, and will end on Saturday, November 14, 2026.

On August 25, 2022, the City Clerk issued a Memorandum to City Council identifying the [appointed Members](#) of the 2022-2026 ECAC.

Prior to considering any election compliance matters, the 2022-2026 ECAC received a training session on the general role and statutory mandate of the committee as well as specific training on quasi-judicial procedures.

As described in the City Clerk’s memo to City Council titled “[Update on election compliance audit matters from the 2022 Municipal Elections](#)”, the ECAC received three election compliance audit applications regarding candidate and third party advertiser campaign finances and two reports from the City Clerk on apparent contraventions of contribution limits related to the 2022 Municipal Elections. All matters are now closed.

The ECAC did not consider any matters related to the 2025 Osgoode By-election as no applications for a compliance audit were received, and the City Clerk’s review of contributions did not find any apparent contraventions of the contribution limits set out in the MEA.

Cost of the 2022-2026 Election Compliance Audit Committee

Subsection 88.37(7) requires that the municipality pay all costs associated with the ECAC. This includes costs associated with ECAC Members (honorarium, per diem, and parking), external legal counsel (assigned to the committee to assist Members in carrying out their duties), the services of an independent auditor (to conduct compliance audits and the City Clerk’s review of contributions), and an independent prosecutor (to review matters that the ECAC has escalated to a legal proceeding and determine whether to proceed with prosecution) as required.

At the writing of this report, the total cost of the 2022-2026 ECAC to date is \$460,124 as set out in the below table. Additional costs are not anticipated at this time.

Table 3: ECAC costs from the 2022-2026 Term of Council

Item	Cost
Committee costs (Member’s honorarium, per diem, parking, hospitality)	\$24,454
External Legal Counsel	\$114,226
Auditors	\$193,229
Candidate Shawn Menard	\$60,517
Candidate Doug Thompson	\$96,725
Third Party Advertiser Horizon Ottawa	\$35,987
Prosecutors	\$7,058
City Clerk’s review of contributions	\$121,157
2022 Municipal Elections	\$101,502
2025 Osgoode By-election	\$19,655
Total	\$460,124

Status quo recommendations for the 2026-2030 Election Compliance Audit Committee

In keeping with past practice, this report sets out recommendations to establish the ECAC for the 2026-2030 Term of Council; delegate authority to the City Clerk, the Auditor General, and the Integrity Commissioner to appoint members to the ECAC; and seeks City Council’s approval to exempt the ECAC from various provisions of the Appointment Policy and approval of the ECAC’s Terms of Reference as outlined in Document 4.

Following City Council’s approval of this report, the Office of the City Clerk will undertake the same recruitment and appointment process that was used to establish the previous ECAC, as further described in this report. Staff will subsequently provide City Council with an update indicating the membership of the ECAC and any other updated procedures prior to the legislative deadline to establish the committee by October 1.

Establishment of the 2026-2030 ECAC

Section 88.37 of the MEA requires that the ECAC be composed of not fewer than three and not more than seven members and shall not include:

- Employees or officers of the municipality or local board;
- Members of the Council or local board;
- Any persons who are candidates in the election for which the committee is established; or
- Any persons who are registered third party advertisers in the municipality in the election for which the committee is established.

Subsection 95(1)(f) of the MEA also provides the Minister of Municipal Affairs with the authority to prescribe additional qualifications and eligibility requirements for ECAC Members. No regulation has been issued at this time.

In order to ensure that the ECAC is able to meet all the legislated timeframes outlined in the MEA, and consistent with past practice, staff recommends a five-member committee with three being quorum. At least two of these members will be bilingual.

In addition, and consistent with the City's 2022-2026 ECAC, the City Clerk has advised Ottawa's school boards that the City will not enter into a cost-sharing agreement with the school boards for the 2026-2030 Term of Council. As a result, the City's 2026-2030 ECAC will only deal with applications for compliance audits of candidates for City Council and third party advertisers, and school boards will be required to establish their own ECAC.

Member recruitment and appointment

Consistent with previous recruitment efforts and given the specialized nature of the ECAC's work, staff believe that ECAC Members should possess knowledge of municipal campaign finance rules and accounting principles. Ideal candidates would have practical experience in administering elections, with a specific focus on municipal election finance. It would also be valuable for Members to have previous experience on committees or tribunals, as the ECAC is quasi-judicial in nature. Ideal candidates may include former municipal clerks or Elections Office managers, auditors, accountants, lawyers, or other individuals with knowledge of the campaign financing rules of the MEA.

Recruitment will continue to be targeted towards relevant organizations and professional bodies such as the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, and the Law Society of Ontario.

As is past practise, staff will approach senior administrative staff of post-secondary institutions including the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, Algonquin College and La Cité collégiale requesting they circulate information regarding the appointment opportunity to their faculty who possess relevant background and experience.

Extra precaution will be taken to ensure that, particularly in the case of auditors or accountants, individuals appointed to the ECAC do not audit or prepare financial statements or have any other formal relationship (e.g., being a member of a campaign team or a contributor) with:

- Any candidate running for office on City Council; or
- Any registered third party advertiser in the City of Ottawa.

An appointed Member who fails to adhere to these requirements would no longer be able to serve as a Member of the ECAC.

Delegation of authority to Selection Panel

As has been past practice, staff is recommending that City Council delegate the selection of the members of the Committee to a selection panel comprised of the City Clerk, the Auditor General, and the Integrity Commissioner to ensure the appropriate distance between ECAC Members and elected officials who may at some point be the subject of a request for a compliance audit.

Appointment Policy exemptions

Staff is seeking Council's approval to exempt the Election Compliance Audit Committee from Subsections B.1, 2, 3, and 5 of the City's [Appointment Policy – Council-Appointed Public Members of Committees, Boards, and other External Authorities](#) ("Appointment Policy"). Subsections B.1-3 speak to the maximum amount of time that a Member may serve on the same committee or board, with that limit being eight consecutive years regardless of their Term of Office. Should a Member wish to be considered for the same committee in the future, they must sit out at least one year before being reconsidered for appointment. Given the specialized nature of the ECAC and the often-limited pool of experienced individuals suited for the role, staff is recommending that the ECAC be exempted from Subsections B.1-3 of the Appointment Policy.

Subsection B.5 states that a citizen member may only serve on one committee or board at any one time. Given that the ECAC could potentially draw from the same pool of candidates as other city bodies, such as the Committee of Adjustment, the License and

Property Standards Committee and the Conservation Authorities, staff is recommending that the ECAC be exempted from Subsection B.5 of the Appointment Policy.

Upon City Council's approval of this report, staff will undertake the recruitment process in Q2 2026. Staff will subsequently provide City Council with an update indicating the membership of the ECAC prior to the legislative deadline to establish the committee by October 1.

Costs of the 2026-2030 Election Compliance Audit Committee

As previously noted, Subsection 88.37(7) of the MEA requires the municipality to pay all costs associated with the ECAC.

It is anticipated that minimal costs will be incurred related to Member recruitment and associated advertisements, including newspapers and ads circulated through professional organizations.

Staff is recommending that members of the Committee be paid the same honorarium and *per diem* as the previous ECAC: \$600 annual retainer and \$175 an hour up to a maximum of \$1,250 per day. This is in line with the Member payment in other Ontario municipalities.

As is common practice, independent legal counsel will be retained and paid for by the Office of the City Clerk. The legal counsel will be assigned to the ECAC to assist the committee in its deliberations in order to ensure the ECAC remains arms-length from the City's administration and City Council.

At this time, staff cannot estimate the total costs associated with the ECAC's duties due to several factors including:

- An unknown number of election compliance audit applications and resulting compliance audits.
- An unknown number of reports that may need to be considered as a result of the City Clerk's mandatory review of contributions in regular elections and any potential by-elections.
- An unknown number of legal proceedings that may be commenced by the ECAC.

Total costs of the 2026-2030 ECAC will be reported to City Council in advance of the 2030 Municipal Elections.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for 2026 Municipal Elections would come from the Tax Stabilization Reserve.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations in this report.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS

As noted in the report, staff consulted with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and French Language Services Advisory Committee (FLSAC) regarding service offerings in the 2026 Municipal Elections.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The AAC received the presentation on the 2026 Municipal Elections and were supportive of the planned accessibility offerings. In response to feedback from the AAC, staff is reviewing how requests for sign language interpretation will be met for the 2026 Municipal Elections, as well as opportunities to increase awareness about the availability of election-related accessibility tools and supports.

French Language Services Advisory Committee

The FLSAC received the presentation on the 2026 Municipal Elections and were supportive of the planned bilingual service offerings and targets for bilingual capacity at voting places. In response to feedback from the FLSAC, staff is reviewing ways to expand outreach to French-speaking residents and will emphasize the importance of providing an active offer of bilingual service through election worker training.

CONSULTATION

As described in the report, staff conducted public consultations that sought feedback on a variety of items including electors' experience participating in previous municipal elections, preferred communication methods, and barriers to participation.

The Elections Office continues to welcome feedback on the municipal elections, and all feedback received is used to inform processes and procedures for the 2026 Municipal Elections and future municipal elections and by-elections.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

The City Clerk is required to ensure that municipal elections, by-elections, and appointment processes are accessible to people with disabilities, including electors, candidates, and applicants for appointment, in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

The Elections Office consults with the Corporate Accessibility Office on matters related to ensuring the accessibility of municipal elections, by-elections, and appointment processes. Further, as mentioned previously, the Elections Office also consults with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on initiatives that increase the accessibility of municipal elections, by-elections, and appointment processes.

As outlined in this report, a range of accessibility-related services and initiatives are available to voters to support an accessible 2026 municipal election for people with disabilities. The Elections Office continues to welcome and incorporates accessibility-related feedback, which has directly informed the introduction and continuation of initiatives that ensures an accessible voting process for everyone, such as special mail-in ballots.

The Elections Office will also leverage existing processes and tools, including voting by proxy, to provide enhanced accessibility service. Electors will also be encouraged to contact the Elections Office, and staff will review accessibility support that can be provided to these electors on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Accessibility Office.

INDIGENOUS, GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

As previously noted in the Discussion section of this report, the City Clerk has a duty to administer elections in a manner consistent with the principles of the MEA. While not defined in the MEA, the courts have established these principles as follows:

1. Secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process is paramount.
2. The election shall be fair and must not favour one candidate over another.
3. The election shall be accessible to voters.
4. Integrity of the process shall be maintained throughout the election.
5. There is to be certainty that the results of the election reflect the votes cast.

6. Proper majority vote decides the election, which is achieved by ensuring, so far as is reasonably possible, that valid votes be counted and invalid votes be rejected.
7. Voters and candidates shall be treated fairly and consistently.

As Elections staff must remain impartial, staff cannot participate in any campaign related activities, nor can they encourage candidates to file a nomination. That said, staff recognize the importance of encouraging diversity and inclusion on City Council and will work with internal stakeholders such as the Corporate Accessibility Office, French Language Services, and the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Relations Branch, as well as various community groups and organizations, in an effort to provide more information about how to become a candidate or third party advertiser in the 2026 Municipal Elections.

Staff will also work with the above-noted groups to provide general election information, including about how, when, and where to vote.

A thorough communications plan will include tactics for these outreach efforts in the 2026 Municipal Elections.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk implications associated with this report.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

This is a city-wide report. In addition to the provisions for voting places prescribed by the MEA, the Elections Office considers Ottawa's diverse geography (urban, suburban, and rural) as well as the social and economical makeup of the population to ensure that there is equitable access to all electors in every ward and that no undue hardship is experienced when participating in the democratic process of electing their representatives.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

Information Technology Services will support the Office of the City Clerk with the technology considerations and solutions required to conduct the 2026 Municipal Elections as outlined in this report.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

There are no impacts related to the Term of Council Priorities.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 - By-law to Authorize the Use of an Alternative Voting Method

Document 2 - Detailed Election Calendar

Document 3 - Proposed amendments to the *Contribution Rebate By-law*

Document 4 - Election Compliance Audit Committee Terms of Reference

DISPOSITION

The Office of the City Clerk will implement the report recommendations approved by City Council and will work with the City Solicitor to finalize the required by-laws for enactment.