

2025 Report on the Elections Office

BACKGROUND

On behalf of the City Clerk, the Elections Office prepares for and administers regular municipal elections and by-elections or appointment processes to fill City Council vacancies that occur during a term of Council. The City Clerk and the Elections Office ensure that the municipal elections, by-elections and appointment processes fully comply with the responsibilities, requirements and principles set out in the [Municipal Act, 2001](#) and the [Municipal Elections Act, 1996](#) (MEA). More specifically, Subsection 11(2) of the MEA provides that the City Clerk's responsibility for conducting an election includes the following:

- (a) preparing for the election;
- (b) preparing for and conducting a recount in the election;
- (c) maintaining peace and order in connection with the election; and
- (d) 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].

The City Clerk also has a duty to administer elections in a manner consistent with the principles of the statute as determined by the courts. These principles include but are not limited to:

- The secrecy and confidentiality of the voting process
- To be accessible to all voters
- To be undertaken in a fair and non-biased fashion
- Maintaining integrity of the process throughout an election

The Elections Office is also responsible for conducting election-related legislative reviews on behalf of the City Clerk, and implementing any changes required for future elections.

DISCUSSION

As previously noted, the Elections Office is required to prepare for and administer municipal elections and by-elections in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA). This includes executing associated deliverables as required throughout the four-year election cycle (before, during and after voting events) in accordance with

the MEA.

In 2025, the Elections Office administered the 2025 Osgoode By-election, which took place on June 16, 2025. Staff also continued preparations and planning for the 2026 Municipal Elections that will take place on October 26, 2026, as further described in this report.

Further, this report provides an update on the close-out of the remaining deliverables from the 2022 Municipal Elections, namely the resolution of Election Compliance Audit Committee and Contribution Rebate Program matters.

Overview of the 2025 Osgoode By-election

On February 27, 2025, former City Councillor George Darouze was elected as Member of Provincial Parliament for the riding of Carleton. On March 14, 2025, George Darouze provided the City Clerk with written notice of his resignation as City Councillor of Ward 20 (Osgoode), effective end of day March 14, 2025, pursuant to Subsection 260(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

On March 26, 2025, the City Clerk brought forward the [Ward 20 \(Osgoode\) Vacancy Options](#) report which outlined City Council's obligations under the MEA and the manners by which the vacancy could be filled. Following consideration of the report, City Council declared the Ward 20 (Osgoode) Office vacant and enacted a by-law requiring that the vacancy be filled by way of a by-election.

Candidate nominations and third party advertiser registrations

The candidate nomination period took place from March 27 to May 2, 2025, during which time 11 candidates filed nomination forms for the Office of City Councillor, Ward 20 (Osgoode). At the close of Nomination Day (May 2, 2025) the City Clerk reviewed all nomination forms to ensure that they met the requirements of the MEA and subsequently certified all 11 candidates.

The third party advertiser registration period took place from March 27 to June 13, 2025. No third party advertisers registered in the 2025 Osgoode By-election.

Voting opportunities

Eligible electors had the opportunity to cast their ballot in person, by proxy, or by special mail-in ballot in the 2025 Osgoode By-election.

In-person voting

There were two in-person voting opportunities, which were conducted using the "anywhere voting method." This allowed eligible electors to cast their ballot at any available voting place regardless of their address, with the exception of voting places in

identified institutions and retirement homes which were reserved for the residents of these facilities.

Advance Vote Day took place on Friday, June 6, 2025, where electors could cast their ballot at any of the three available “anywhere voting” places from 10 am to 8 pm.

Voting Day took place on Monday, June 16, 2025, in seven “anywhere voting” places from 10 am to 8 pm.

Voting places were also established in six institutions and retirement homes on Voting Day in accordance with the MEA.

There were 214 election worker positions filled to support voting events in the 2025 Osgoode By-election.

Voting by special mail-in ballot

On March 23, 2022, as part of the staff report titled, “[Update on the 2022 Municipal Elections and amendments to election-related by-laws and policies](#),” City Council approved and enacted By-law No. 2022-75, a by-law of the City of Ottawa to authorize the use of an alternative voting method for the 2022 Municipal Elections and any by-elections that may occur during the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

As such, eligible electors in the 2025 Osgoode By-election could submit an application to the Elections Office to receive a special mail-in ballot from May 15 to May 23, 2025. Following the application period, 78 Special Ballot Voter Kits were prepared for electors. The kits included instructions on how to vote, a voter declaration form, a ballot, a secrecy envelope, and a prepaid return envelope.

On May 22, 2025, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers announced an overtime ban due to ongoing contract negotiations with Canada Post. As a result of the overtime ban, and in preparation for a possible labour disruption in the near future, the Elections Office developed alternate special mail-in ballot delivery and drop-off procedures as further described below. These alternate procedures were feasible given the smaller scale of a by-election and ensured that the Elections Office could administer the special mail-in ballot voting option which was an important service offering in a rural ward.

As part of the alternate procedures, Special Ballot Voter Kits were delivered to electors by the City’s Mail Services Unit and a courier service in order to ensure that delivery was not affected by the potential postal labour disruption. The Elections Office also established a “pick-up location” at the Ottawa Public Library – Greely Branch, where electors could pick up kits from Elections Office staff that could not be delivered by Mail Services.

Special Ballot Voter Kits had to be received by the Elections Office by 4:30 pm on Voting Day, June 16, 2025, in order to be counted in accordance with established Vote

Counting Procedures. As such, while electors were able to return their kit using regular mail service if they wished, the Elections Office encouraged electors to drop off their completed kits in person at one of the established “drop-off locations.” Electors could drop off their kits to Elections Office staff at the Ottawa Public Library – Greely Branch and Carlsbad Springs Community Centre on three separate occasions before Voting Day. Electors could also deliver their kits to the Elections Office or any Client Service Centre.

As previously noted, kits were required to be received by 4:30 pm on Voting Day in order to be counted. Fifty-five special mail-in ballots were received in advance of this deadline and were counted in accordance with the Vote Counting Procedures.

Voting by proxy

Eligible electors were also able to appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf.

To appoint a proxy, the elector and the person they wanted to appoint were required to fill out two copies of an Appointment for Voting Proxy – Form 3. The individual who was appointed was required to take the completed forms to the Elections Office or any Client Service Centre from May 15, 2025, to Monday, June 16, 2025, to have them certified.

Once certified, the proxy was able to take the form to a voting place to receive a ballot and vote on behalf of the elector.

Two proxy forms were certified in the 2025 Osgoode By-election.

Voters’ List

The Preliminary List of Electors (PLE) is provided to the Elections Office by Elections Ontario in advance of a municipal election or by-election. Following receipt, staff, in accordance with Subsection 22(1) of the MEA, review the data to identify any obvious errors, duplicates, and decedents on the list. After this review, the PLE becomes the Voters’ List, and eligible electors can add, amend, or remove their information in accordance with the MEA.

The Revision Period for the 2025 Osgoode By-election took place from May 15, 2025, to May 23, 2025, at 4:30 pm. During this time, electors could verify, add, or amend their information on the Voters’ List using the “Am I on the Voters’ List?” tool on ottawa.ca/vote. Electors could also complete an “Application to add or amend my information on the Voters’ List” and bring it to the Elections Office to be processed.

Following the Revision Period, electors were able to update their information at a voting place on voting days.

In accordance with Subsection 27(2) of the MEA, the Elections Office was required to provide the Province’s Chief Electoral Officer with the final list of changes made to the

Voters' List during the 2025 Osgoode By-election. A total of 1,043 changes were provided to the Province, with 158 names added, 279 amendments made to elector information, and 606 names removed.

Election results and voter turnout

Following the certification of [results](#) by the City Clerk on June 17, 2025, Candidate Isabelle Skalski was elected to the Office of City Councillor, Ward 20 (Osgoode) for the remainder of the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

In the 2025 Osgoode By-election, 6,223 of 25,742 eligible electors cast their ballot for a turnout of 24.17 per cent.

Accessibility plan and report

In accordance with Subsection 12.1(2) of the MEA, the City Clerk is required to develop a plan on the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and make the plan available to the public before Voting Day. While preparing an accessibility plan is not required in a by-election, in the spirit of the MEA and its requirements, and the City Clerk's duty to administer an election that is accessible, the Elections Office prepared the [2025 Osgoode By-election Accessibility Plan](#). This plan was published on ottawa.ca/vote on May 20, 2025.

Further, Subsection 12.1(3) of the MEA requires that the City Clerk prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities. The City Clerk must make the report available to the public within 90 days after Voting Day.

In alignment with the approach taken for the 2025 Osgoode By-election Accessibility Plan, the Elections Office reviewed the implementation of the Accessibility Plan and feedback received on the accessibility of the 2025 Osgoode By-election and prepared the [2025 Osgoode By-election Accessibility Report](#), which was published on ottawa.ca/vote on August 29, 2025.

Communications and outreach

The Elections Office, in partnership with Public Information and Media Relations, provided information about becoming a candidate or third party advertiser and how, when, and where to vote using a variety of different channels, including voter notification letters, newspaper advertisements, social media messaging, Public Service Announcements, other online advertisements, and ottawa.ca/vote.

Staff also issued election-related information to community organizations in Osgoode and through the City's eSubscription channels including the Accessibility Spotlight and Older Adults newsletters.

In addition, posters were designed and displayed in all voting places in advance of voting events to inform electors that they were able to vote at those locations.

Destruction of records in accordance with the MEA

In accordance with Section 88 of the MEA, the City Clerk must retain the ballots, and all other documents and materials related to an election, for 120 days after declaring the results of the election. Once the 120-day period has elapsed, the City Clerk must destroy the ballots and may destroy any other materials related to the election unless a recount has been ordered or the court orders that they be retained in accordance with Subsection 88(3).

For the 2025 Osgoode By-election, the City Clerk declared the election results official on June 17, 2025, and the 120-day retention period elapsed on October 15, 2025, with no recount or retention order issued.

Following the retention period, the Elections Office retained the services of a commercial vendor to assist with the destruction of records. In accordance with Subsection 88(2) of the MEA, ballots were destroyed on-site in the presence of two witnesses. Further, election forms and other materials specific to the 2025 Osgoode By-election were also destroyed.

Financial statements will be retained until the next City Council and school board take office in accordance with Subsection 88(4) of the MEA.

Election Compliance Audit Committee

The Election Compliance Audit Committee (ECAC) is an independent statutory body with responsibilities and powers largely prescribed by the MEA. The ECAC is responsible for reviewing and making decisions on applications for municipal election campaign finance compliance audits received from eligible electors and reports from the City Clerk regarding apparent contraventions of contribution limits prescribed by the MEA. These apparent contraventions may result from a regular municipal election, or a by-election held during the term of office for the City Council or which the ECAC was appointed.

In accordance with Section 88.33 of MEA, any eligible elector who believes that a candidate or third party advertiser has contravened the campaign finance rules of the MEA may apply for a compliance audit even if the candidate or third party advertiser has not filed a financial statement.

The period to apply for a compliance audit of a candidate's campaign finances in the 2025 Osgoode By-election began on September 3, 2025, and ended on December 1, 2025. No compliance audit applications were filed.

In addition, Section 88.34 of the MEA requires that the City Clerk review the financial

statements submitted by candidates to determine whether any contributor appears to have exceeded the contribution limits established by the MEA.

To assist with this review, the City Clerk retained the services of an external auditor. The review took place following the financial statement filing deadline of September 2, 2025, and the Auditor submitted their report on November 28, 2025. The audit found no apparent contraventions of the contribution limits established by the MEA.

As such, the ECAC was not required to consider any matters related to the 2025 Osgoode By-election.

Contribution Rebate Program

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 Contribution Rebate Program for the 2003 Municipal Elections, and the City's *Contribution Rebate Program By-law* ([By-law No. 2022-76](#)) remains in effect for any regular election or by-election that may occur in the City of Ottawa.

The *Contribution Rebate Program By-law* authorizes the payment of rebates to individuals who make contributions to candidates for City Council who participate in the program.

Participation in the Contribution Rebate Program requires candidates to submit a Contribution Rebate Program Application form by the close of the nomination period for the relevant election and meet the requirements of the *Contribution Rebate Program By-law*. Campaign contributions from individuals are only eligible for a rebate if both the contributor and candidate meet the requirement of the by-law.

Six candidates registered to participate in the Contribution Rebate Program for the 2025 Osgoode By-election. Following the financial statement filing deadline on September 2, 2025, three candidates were in compliance with By-law No. 2022-76. Three candidates did not meet the requirements of the by-law as they filed a financial statement without an auditor's report and/or auditor's statement attached as is required by the by-law.

Individuals who contributed to a participating candidate's campaign are required to submit their contribution rebate applications by May 4, 2026.

Following this deadline, the Elections Office will review the application to ensure that the contributor and candidate were compliant with the requirements of the program before issuing a rebate. It is anticipated that rebates will be issued to eligible contributors by July 2026.

Cost of the 2025 Osgoode By-election

As described in the [Ward 20 \(Osgoode\) Vacancy Options](#) report, the estimated cost of the 2025 Osgoode By-election was \$522,491 and included “post-election” costs related to the City Clerk’s review of contributions and the Contribution Rebate Program. As previously noted, costs related to the Contribution Rebate Program remain outstanding as contributors may submit their applications for rebate until May 4, 2026. However, following a review of the contribution receipts submitted by candidates participating in the Contribution Rebate Program, it is anticipated that the maximum total cost of rebates issued will not exceed \$3,000 if all contributors apply for a rebate and if all rebate applications are granted.

At the writing of this report, the cost of the 2025 Osgoode By-election is approximately \$406,191. Pending the issuance of contribution rebates, the total cost is not anticipated to exceed \$409,191.

Staff reviewed the costs known to date and note that the largest variances occurred in relation to staffing, the special mail-in ballot program, and communications and outreach initiatives as further described below.

The variance related to staffing can largely be attributed to baseline staffing already in place at the Elections Office for the 2026 Municipal Elections. The availability of these staff allowed for a large majority of the work related to by-election preparations to take place during regular office hours, resulting in less overtime costs. The staffing model also allowed staff to support the special mail-in ballot program with existing resources and the designated support positions were not filled, resulting in additional savings.

In addition, there was a variance in cost for communications and outreach efforts as a result of lower than anticipated costs of various advertisements such as newspaper ads.

Funding for municipal elections comes from the Tax Stabilization Reserve, which is the primary fund for elections.

Close out of remaining deliverables from the 2022 Municipal Elections

As previously noted, all matters relating to the 2022 Municipal Elections were completed in 2025.

As described in the [Office of the City Clerk’s 2024 Annual Report](#), election compliance audit matters related to third party advertiser Horizon Ottawa and Candidate Shawn Menard from the 2022 Municipal Elections remained ongoing in 2025. All matters are now closed as further described below.

Following the ECAC’s [decision](#) to commence a legal proceeding against third party advertiser Horizon Ottawa, the matter was referred to an independent prosecutor for review. On September 25, 2025, the prosecutor advised that their review of the matter

was complete and that, in their opinion, it is not in the public interest to prosecute any of the apparent contraventions identified in the [Auditor's Report](#) on the matter.

On February 20, 2025, the appeal related to the committee's decision to reject the application for a compliance audit of candidate Shawn Menard's campaign finances was considered and granted by the Superior Court of Justice, and the committee was ordered to appoint an auditor to conduct a compliance audit. Upon consideration of the [Auditor's Report](#) at its meeting on September 9, 2025, the ECAC decided not to commence a legal proceeding against Candidate Shawn Menard.

The Office of the City Clerk's 2024 Annual Report also noted that, because of an ongoing compliance audit matter, contribution rebates related to Candidate Menard's campaign were being held until it could be confirmed that he was in compliance with the requirements of the *Contribution Rebate Program By-law*. Following the resolution of the above-noted compliance audit matter, Candidate Shawn Menard was compliant with the by-law's requirements and the rebates associated with his campaign were issued to eligible contributors.

All contribution rebates have now been issued to eligible contributors from the 2022 Municipal Elections, and the total cost of the Contribution Rebate Program was \$152,025. Funding for the Contribution Rebate Program comes from the Tax Stabilization Reserve.

Preparations for the 2026 Municipal Elections

In the City of Ottawa, preparations and planning for general municipal elections begin years in advance because of the City's vast geographic area and large population (it is anticipated there will be over 800,000 eligible electors in the 2026 Municipal Elections). Moreover, Ottawa provides bilingual and accessible services throughout the election process and at all voting places.

In 2025, the Elections Office continued preparations and planning for the 2026 Municipal Elections, which will take place on October 26, 2026.

As further described in staff's report to City Council on March 11, 2026, titled, "[Update on the 2026 Municipal Elections and amendments to election-related by-laws](#)," preparations included procuring a vote tabulation system for the 2026 Municipal Elections and any by-election that occurs during the 2026-2030 Term of Council; reviewing voting methods for the 2026 Municipal Elections; revising the election worker training model; and developing communication and outreach strategies for the upcoming election. Staff also worked closely with Information Technology Services to maintain and update election systems in advance of the 2026 Municipal Elections.

In addition, and following Council's approval of the City's [Anti-Racism Strategy](#), the Elections Office reviewed the feasibility and cost of offering multilingual election-related

communication materials and voting tools, and will pilot the use the following multilingual products for the 2026 Municipal Elections in Arabic, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese, in addition to English and French:

- Multilingual “Municipal Elections Guide.”
- Multilingual voting instructions at voting places.
- Signs 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 (including voting instructions and interpretation service offered via telephone through the City of Ottawa in over 170 languages).
- Multilingual advertisements on social media.

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.

Section 9 and 9.1 of the MEA requires that notices, forms, and other information provided under the MEA be provided in English, and in some instances, English and French, only, unless City Council enacts a by-law authorizing the use of other languages.

By-law No. 2003-21 currently permits the use of English and French in notices, forms, and other information related to municipal elections. To implement the above-noted multilingual products and to allow for multilingual communications in future municipal elections, it is recommended that City Council approve amendments to By-law No. 2003-21 to permit the use of additional languages other than English and French. Should Council approve this recommendation, staff will work with Legal Services to list the amended by-law on an upcoming Council agenda.

As described in the “Update on the 2026 Municipal Elections and amendments to election-related by-laws” report to City Council, information about the 2026 Municipal Elections will be made available on ottawa.ca/vote and a variety of other platforms beginning in Q2 2026.