



## Policy

Section: 1.0 Administration

Policy: Use of Corporate Resources Policy Update – 2026 Municipal Election

Policy By-Law: 12-2026

Date: January 26, 2026      Revision: Repeal By-law 10-2022

### Policy Statement:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie is committed to ensuring fair, transparent, and accountable election practices. In accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA), municipalities must establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal resources during an election campaign period. Corporate resources shall not be used to confer any advantage to a candidate or registered third party. [Ontario MEA, s. 88.18]

### Legislative Authority:

Ontario Municipal Elections Act, S.O. 1996, c. 32, Sch.

- Section 88.18: Requires municipalities and local boards to establish rules and procedures regarding the use of municipal resources during the election period.

### Purpose:

This policy provides consistent direction on how corporate resources may and may not be used during municipal election periods (including by-elections), and—where applicable—during provincial and federal elections. It aims to: (a) ensure compliance with the MEA; (b) treat candidates and registered third parties fairly and consistently; (c) preserve the integrity of the election process; and (d) maintain non-partisanship in municipal operations.

### Scope:

This policy applies to Members of Council (including acclaimed Members and Members not seeking re-election), municipal employees, election candidates, registered third-party advertisers, local boards and advisory committees, and members of the public interacting

with municipal facilities and services during municipal election periods.

## **Definitions**

**“Act”** means the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 32, as amended.

**“Campaign(ing)”** means any activity by, or on behalf of a Candidate, political party, constituency association, Registered Third Party, or question on a ballot intended to elicit support during the Election Period. This does not include the appearance of elected officials, other candidates or their supporters, or registrants at an event in their personal capacity without the display of any signage or graphics identifying the individual as a candidate or registrant, and without the solicitation of votes.

**“Campaign Materials”** Any materials, including political advertising, used to solicit votes for a candidate(s) or questions in an election, or any materials that promote or oppose the candidacy of a person for elected office. This includes, but is not limited to literature, banners, posters, pictures, buttons, clothing, or other paraphernalia. Campaign Materials also include, but are not limited to, materials in all media formats such as print, displays, radio, television, and online platforms including websites or social media. Campaign materials do not include election signs, which are governed by the Municipality’s Election Sign By-Law.

**“Campaign Period”** for candidates, the date on which the Nomination Form is filed until December 31 in the year of an election (unless a request for extension of campaign period has been filed).

**For Registered Third Parties, “Campaign Period”** is the date on which the Notice of Registration as a third-party advertiser is filed until December 31 in the year of an election (unless a request for extension or campaign period has been filed).

**“Candidate”** means a person who has filed a Nomination Form for an office pursuant to section 33 of the Act and includes a person who has filed a nomination for election to a school board pursuant to the Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, as amended.

**“Clerk”** means the Clerk of the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie or their designate.

**“Corporate Resources”** means real property, goods and/or services owned, controlled, leased, acquired, or operated by the Municipality including but not limited to: facilities, parks, materials, equipment, monetary funds, digital assets (including municipal websites, social media accounts, collaboration platforms), intellectual property, and supplies.

**“Disinformation”** means intentional dissemination of knowingly false information meant to mislead voters or influence the election outcome.

**“Election Day”** for a regular election is the fourth Monday in October in the year of the election, as prescribed by the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

**“Election Blackout Period”** means a specific timeframe during which political advertising is prohibited. This includes advertising that promotes or opposes a registered candidate, registered third party or registered political party. The blackout period typically begins the day before voting day and ends at the close of polls on voting day, unless otherwise specified and defined within legislation. The blackout period applies to broadcast, print, electronic, or other media.

**“Member”** means an elected Member of the Council of the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie.

**“Municipality”** means the Corporation of the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie.

**“Nomination Day”** for a regular election is the third Friday in August in the year of the election, as prescribed by the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

**“Official Municipal Event”** means an event organized or hosted by the Municipality (e.g., openings, ribbon-cuttings).

**“Online Platform”** means any digital communication channel including email, municipal websites, collaboration tools, and social media.

**“Policy”** means this Use of Corporate Resources for Municipal Elections Policy.

**“Registered Third Party”** means an individual, corporation or trade union that has filed a Notice of Registration as a third-party advertiser in the municipal election.

**“Staff”** means all full-time, part-time and contract persons hired by the Municipality.

**“Voting Day”** means, in a regular election, is the fourth Monday in October in the year of the election or, in the case of a by-election, the 45th day after Nomination Day, as noted in subsection 65(4) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

**“Ward-specific Business”** means activities that advance ward-specific issues (e.g., Municipality halls, public meetings) that are not celebratory in nature.

**“Ward-specific Events”** means social or celebratory events (e.g., barbeques, skating parties, meet and greets).

## **Policy**

In accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. as amended, Members of Council, Candidates, and/or Registered Third Parties in a Campaign Period are not permitted to:

- a) Use corporate resources, funding, supplies, services, staff, or other resources for any election-related purposes. Resources include but are not limited to:
  - Telephones, Voicemail
  - iPhone(s) or cell phone

- Corporate electronic devices including tablets, computers and cell phones
  - Printer/Photocopies
  - E-mail
  - Scanner
  - Fax Machine
  - Consumables related to the above equipment such as paper, toner, etc.
  - Municipal logo, crest, slogans, corporate program identifiers
- b) Use staff to canvass or actively work in support of a municipal candidate or party during normal working hours unless the staff member is on a leave of absence without pay, lieu time, float day, or vacation leave.
  - c) Use corporate Information Technology (IT) assets, infrastructure, or data (e.g. computers, wireless devices, portals, corporate email, web pages, blogs, telephone) to communicate election related messages.
  - d) Messages posted to the Municipality's social media may be shared by a candidate to the personal or campaign social media account using social media official channels. The post shall not be modified, manipulated or intentionally taken out of context.
  - e) Municipal websites, domains, and social media channels shall not include or link to election-related campaign material.
  - f) Use any Council or Councillor budgets for election-related purposes or to advertise, promote or support any Candidate, Registered Third Party or any position related to any questions which may be authorized to be placed on the ballot.
  - g) No use of municipal pricing or purchasing agreements to obtain goods/services for campaign purposes.
  - h) Use any municipally owned/provided facilities for any election-related purposes unless the facility is generally available for rent by the public and it is rented in accordance with the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie rental procedures. Notwithstanding the foregoing, no facility/property shall be rented or used for any municipal election related purpose by members of Council, Candidates, Registered Third Parties, or the public during any day that voting is taking place on the property, including the set-up, hosting or take-down activities.

The following will be discontinued for Members of Council from the day prior to Nomination Day in a municipal election year to Election Day (**blackout**):

- a) all forms of advertising, including in municipal publications.

- b) all printing services, including printing, photocopying and distribution of publications, such as newsletters, with the exception of communications specifically related to an authorized or scheduled Municipality event (i.e., Public Meeting).
- c) the ordering of stationery and business cards.
- d) the ordering of office furniture and furnishings, except those of an emergency nature, as well as no movement of furniture and furnishings.

Members of Council may not:

- a) print or distribute any materials paid by municipal funds for campaigning that illustrates that a Member of Council or any other individual is registered in any election or where they will be running for office.
- b) Profile (name or photo) or refer to in any material paid by municipal funds, any individual who is registered as a candidate in any election.
- c) Print or distribute any material using municipal funds that makes reference to, or contains the names or photographs, or identifies registered candidates or registered third parties for municipal elections.
- d) Use website or domain names that are funded by the municipality to include any election-related campaign materials.
- e) Use the Municipality's voice mail system to record election related messages.

All the above noted provisions apply to an elected or acclaimed Member or a member not seeking re-election.

Social Media

- a) If a Member of Council uses any social media account for campaigning, such account must not be created or supported by Municipal resources. Social media accounts used for campaign purposes must utilize personal cell phones, tablets, and/or computers.
- b) Members of Council who choose to create or use social media accounts for campaigning must include, for the duration of the election period, a clear statement on each campaign website or social media account's home page (or profile) indicating that the account is being used for election campaign purposes and is not related to their duties as a Member of Council.
- c) Online communications for official Municipality purposes will be supported in accordance with the Municipality's Communication Policy and related procedures.

## Technology

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

## Disinformation and Misinformation Protocol

The Municipality will monitor its official channels for false or misleading election-related information and promptly correct such information. Staff shall report such information incidents to the Clerk. Where appropriate, public advisories may be issued to maintain trust in election administration.

## Complaints, Investigation and Enforcement

Under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Clerk is the primary authority responsible for administering municipal elections and ensuring compliance with all legislative provisions. The Clerk is authorized to administer and enforce this policy, investigate complaints, take corrective action and provide guidance.

Where potential contraventions of the MEA are identified, matters may be referred to the Compliance Audit Committee and/or appropriate authorities.

Remedies may include revocation of access to corporate resources, recovery of costs, and public advisories as necessary to maintain transparency.

## Limitation

Subject to the blackout period, nothing in this policy precludes a member of Council from performing their official duties or representing constituent interests during the election

period, provided that corporate resources are not used for campaign purposes. All-candidate meetings held in municipal facilities remain permissible where access is equal and no corporate endorsement is implied.

Review

This policy shall be reviewed by the Clerk every four years prior to the next election to reflect legislative changes, technological advancements and best practices.