



The Corporation of the Township of Black River-Matheson Municipal Policy

USE OF MUNICIPAL RESOURCES – ELECTION POLICY

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USE OF MUNICIPAL RESOURCES – ELECTION POLICY

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The Township of Black River-Matheson is committed to maintaining a fair, transparent, and impartial election process.

The use of municipal resources for election-related purposes is prohibited in order to:

- Ensure all candidates are treated equitably;
- Prevent actual or perceived misuse of public resources; and
- Maintain public trust in municipal governance.

2.0 PURPOSE

This policy establishes clear rules regarding the use of municipal resources during the election campaign period and supports compliance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to the following:

- Members of Council and local boards
- Municipal employees
- Registered candidates
- Registered third-party advertisers
- Contractors, volunteers, and any person acting on behalf of the Municipality
- Members of the public when using municipal facilities or services

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Campaign Period

The period beginning on the day a candidate files nomination papers and ending on Voting Day. For third-party advertisers, the period begins upon registration in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

Election-Related Activity

Any activity that supports or opposes a candidate, campaign, third-party advertiser, or ballot question.

Municipal Resources

Includes, but is not limited to:

- Municipal facilities, property, and meeting spaces
- Equipment (computers, printers, phones, vehicles)
- Municipal funds, supplies, and services
- Staff time, expertise, or work product
- Email systems, websites, Wi-Fi, servers, software, and distribution lists
- Municipal branding, logos, uniforms, and intellectual property
- Photographs, videos, or digital content created or owned by the Municipality

Council Account

Any account (including social media, websites, newsletters, or email) used primarily for official municipal communications and that may reasonably be perceived as representing the Municipality.

Campaign Account

An account used solely for election campaign purposes and operated independently from any municipal role or municipal resources.

Dual-Function Account

An account used by a Member of Council for both official municipal communications and personal use.

Restricted (Lame Duck) Period

The period defined under Section 275 of the Municipal Act, 2001, where Council's authority is limited due to election-related circumstances.

5.0 GENERAL PROHIBITIONS

5.1 Municipal resources shall not be used for any election-related purpose.

5.2 Municipal resources shall not be used in a manner that could reasonably be perceived as providing an advantage or endorsement to any candidate or third-party advertiser.

5.3 Without limiting the generality of the above, prohibited uses include:

- Printing, copying, or distributing campaign materials
- Using municipal staff for campaign-related activities
- Using municipal equipment, vehicles, or supplies
- Using municipal contact information (email, phone, mailing address) for campaign purposes
- Using municipal photographs, videos, or digital assets

- Displaying or distributing campaign materials at municipal events, programs, or services

6.0 MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND PROPERTIES

6.1 Campaign activities may only occur in municipal facilities where:

- the space is available for public rental;
- standard booking procedures are followed; and
- access is provided equally to all candidates.

6.2 Campaigning is prohibited:

- inside or on the property of any voting location on Voting Day;
- within municipal offices or operational workspaces.

6.3 Campaign materials shall not be displayed, stored, or distributed within municipal facilities unless permitted as part of a public rental.

6.3 On Voting Day, candidates and their representatives shall not engage in campaigning at voting locations. Campaigning includes:

- Distributing materials
- Displaying signs
- Wearing campaign-branded apparel
- Soliciting votes or engaging in persuasive communication

The Clerk or designate may direct any individual to leave a voting location where this provision is violated.

7.0 CORPORATE IDENTITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

7.1 Municipal branding and assets shall not be used for campaign purposes, including:

- Logos, crests, slogans, or uniforms
- Official letterhead or templates
- Municipal photographs, videos, or media

7.2 Municipal communications must remain neutral and shall not:

- Reference a candidate's campaign or candidacy
- Promote or oppose any candidate or third-party advertiser
- Include campaign messaging

8.0 SOCIAL MEDIA AND ACCOUNTS

8.1 Members of Council shall maintain a clear separation between:

- Official municipal communications (Council Accounts); and
- Campaign-related communications (Campaign Accounts)

8.2 Dual-Function Accounts shall not be used for election-related content during the campaign period.

8.3 Campaign-related content must only be shared through a Campaign Account.

8.4 Communications made in an official capacity must remain neutral and shall not reference candidacy or the election.

9.0 MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

9.1 Members of Council may continue to perform their official duties during the campaign period.

9.2 When acting in their official capacity, Members shall:

- Not engage in campaign-related activity;
- Not reference their candidacy;
- Not use municipal resources for campaign purposes.

9.3 Members of Council shall not:

- Use staff for campaign assistance
- Use municipal property for campaign meetings unless publicly rented
- Use municipal communication tools for campaign messaging
- Use municipal vehicles or equipment for campaign purposes

10.0 MUNICIPAL STAFF

10.1 Municipal staff must remain politically neutral in the course of their duties.

10.2 Staff shall not:

- Participate in campaign activities during working hours
- Use municipal resources for campaign purposes
- Provide internal, confidential, or non-public information to candidates or third parties
- Appear in campaign materials in their capacity as municipal staff

10.3 Staff may participate in the election process on their own time, provided there is a clear separation from their professional role.

11.0 INFORMATION AND DATA ACCESS

11.1 All candidates and third-party advertisers shall have equal access to publicly available information.

11.2 Municipal staff shall not provide:

- Confidential information
- Internal documents or draft materials
- Municipal contact lists or data not otherwise publicly available

12.0 THIRD-PARTY ADVERTISERS

Registered third-party advertisers are subject to the same restrictions as candidates under this policy.

13.0 COMPLAINTS AND ENFORCEMENT

13.1 Complaints regarding the misuse of municipal resources shall be submitted in writing to the Clerk.

13.2 The Clerk may:

- Investigate complaints
- Direct the removal of materials
- Restrict access to municipal facilities
- Take appropriate administrative action

13.3 Alleged violations by Members of Council may be referred to the Township's Integrity Commissioner.

13.4 Staff violations shall be addressed in accordance with applicable municipal policies.

13.5 Potential violations of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* may be referred to the appropriate authority.

14.0 INTERPRETATION

Nothing in this policy shall:

- Restrict Members of Council from fulfilling their statutory duties
- Prevent staff from conducting municipal operations or administering the election
- Limit individuals from participating in the election process as private citizens

15.0 POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed:

- Prior to each municipal election; or
- As required by legislative changes