

Summary of Policy EO-021-21: Use of City Resources During an Election Policy

Purpose:

Ensures City of Hamilton resources are not used for election campaigning, preserving neutrality and public trust.

Outlines responsibilities under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Election Finances Act, and the Canada Elections Act regarding the prohibition of financial or in-kind contributions by the City to any candidate or third party.

Who This Policy Applies To:

Members of Council

Candidates (municipal, provincial, federal, school board)

Third party advertisers

City staff, including volunteers, students, and interns

Local boards

Exceptions

The following may continue during an election period:

- City-produced municipal information (e.g., Member names/photos, committee listings)
- Council/committee agendas and minutes
- City materials describing intergovernmental activities of the Mayor as Head of Council

Key Rules and Restrictions

1. Use of City Resources

City resources cannot be used for any campaign activity, including:

- City facilities, equipment, supplies, staff time, IT systems, email, or data
- City branding, logos, crests, or images
- Photographs or videos produced by the City
- Distribution lists or contact lists created using City resources

Campaign activities are prohibited in City facilities unless renting space under normal public rules.

2. Communications & Advertising

- No campaign materials may appear in City facilities (subject to sign by-law rules).
- City-funded printing, newsletters, and advertising for Members of Council end August 31 in an election year.
- Members cannot use City newsletters, websites, or social media for campaign purposes.
- Only City-approved election information intended for public education is permitted.

3. Conduct at City Events

- Candidates/third parties may attend City events but cannot campaign.
- Members of Council attending as official representatives may not campaign.
- Campaigning toward City employees is prohibited in workplaces or on duty.

Staff Responsibilities

Staff must:

- Maintain strict neutrality and keep all campaigning separate from their work.
- Not perform campaign work during paid hours or using City equipment.
- Not post or distribute campaign materials on City property.
- Not reference candidates or parties on official City platforms or meetings.
- Provide equal service to all residents—no preferential treatment for candidates.

Roles & Enforcement

City Clerk: Communicates the policy, investigates alleged breaches, reports violations, and may consult the Integrity Commissioner.

People Leaders: Must inform staff and investigate staff-related breaches.

Consequences: Individuals who violate the policy must reimburse costs associated with unauthorized use of City resources.

Following the election, the Clerk issues a report detailing verified breaches.

Legislative Authority

Municipal Elections Act, 1996

Municipal Act, 2001

Election Finances Act

Canada Elections Act

Council Code of Conduct (By-law 16-290)

Election Sign By-law & Advertising/Sponsorship Policy