



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the General Committee

From: John Kennedy, City Clerk

Meeting Date: February 17, 2026

Report: 2026 Municipal Election Updates, Report LSCLK26-009

Subject

A report to provide Council with an update on the 2026 Municipal Election.

Recommendation

That Council approve the recommendation outlined in Report LSCLK26-009 dated February 17, 2026, of the City Clerk, as follows:

That Report LSCLK26-009 be received for information.

Executive Summary

- The 2026 Municipal Election will be held Monday October 26, 2026. Planning and preparations for the 2026 election continue.
- Candidates can submit their nomination papers to run for a position on city council or as a school board trustee starting May 1, 2026.
- Voters will be able to vote using the internet or by paper ballot at a walk-in voting location. Accessible voting equipment will be available to assist voters, if needed.

Background

The 2026 Municipal Election will be held Monday October 26, 2026. Planning and preparations for the 2026 election continues in areas such as, use of voting technology, communication plans, candidate and voter information, determination of polling locations, election procedures and accessibility considerations.

Key Election Timelines

The period for candidates to submit their nomination papers for a position on municipal council or for a position as a trustee on a school board, starts on May 1, 2026, and ends on Nomination Day, that being Friday August 21st at 2:00 p.m. Third Party Advertisers can register between May 1, 2026, and October 23, 2026. A third party advertisement is a message in any medium (billboard, newspaper, radio, etc.) that supports or opposes a candidate or a “yes” or “no” vote on a question on the ballot. The meaning of “third party” in this context means a person or entity who is not a candidate. Eligible individuals, corporations and trade unions can register to be third party advertisers. Third party advertising is separate from any candidate’s campaign and must be done independently from a candidate. Third party advertisers who want to spend money on advertisements during the election must register and must file a financial statement. A listing of other key dates for the 2026 municipal election is attached to the report as Appendix A.

Voters List/Preliminary List of Electors (PLE)

As of January 1, 2024, the responsibility for the PLE for municipal and school board trustee elections shifted from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to Elections Ontario. The voters list is a common way of referring to the Permanent Register of Electors for Ontario. It includes the names and addresses of people who are eligible to vote in municipal, district social services administration board, school board and provincial elections in Ontario. Elections Ontario uses information from multiple data sources to establish the list of voters including driver’s license, health card, vital statistics, and national register of electors. It is anticipated the Permanent Register of Electors for Ontario will be more efficient as voter information updated at the provincial level would then be reflected at the municipal level. As in previous elections, starting September 1, 2026, revisions can be made to the voters list.

Elections Ontario also manages the Register of Future Voters, which allows eligible 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register, ensures they are automatically added to the voters list when they turn 18.

Restricted Acts after Nomination Day

During an election year, the Municipal Act 2001 imposes restrictions on an outgoing Council, where the new council may not be composed of 75 per cent or more of the members of the current council, then the current council would be restricted from any of the following actions outlined in subsection 275(3) of the Act:

- (a) The appointment or removal from office of any officer of the municipality,
- (b) The hiring or dismissal of any employee of the municipality,
- (c) The disposition of any real or personal property of the municipality, which has a value exceeding \$50,000 at the time of the disposal; and
- (d) Making any expenditures or incurring any other liability which exceeds \$50,000.

A council may become restricted in some of its actions (often referred to as 'lame duck') between any one of two periods. First, the period from Nomination Day (August 21, 2026) to Election Day (October 26, 2026). In this circumstance, 75 per cent of the members of the current council would not be running for a seat on council again. The second period runs from Voting Day (October 26, 2026) to the end of the current term of council (November 14, 2026). In this example, 75 per cent of the members of the current council would not have been re-elected.

Section 14 of By-Law 24-077, Being a by-law to establish fair, transparent and accountable procurement practices and policies as required by Section 270 of the Municipal Act, 2001 and to delegate authority related thereto: cites, "During the period of an election year, when the actions of the outgoing Council have become restricted under Section 275 of the Act or when there are no meetings of the outgoing Council until the first meeting of the new Council, during which budget transfers could have been authorized by Council, the CAO, in consultation with the Treasurer, is authorized to transfer an Approved Budget, including any uncommitted general contingency, or the capital levy reserve, and to pre-commit future year(s)' budget(s) and that the ASC be delegated the authority to approve (1) an award of contract , or (2) a Contract Amendment, (3) exercise a Contract Renewal Option that would otherwise require Council's approval and all such acts of delegated authority will be reported in the next quarterly financial report".

Voting by Internet and Paper Ballot at Walk-in Polls

Council, at its meeting of September 3, 2025, through Report LSCLK25-015, Alternative Voting Methods for the 2026 Municipal Election, approved internet voting, the use of optical scan technology at walk-in voting locations and accessible voting.

The City of Peterborough has offered internet voting as an option since 2006. Since implementation, its use and acceptance by the electorate has continued to grow significantly. In 2022, 18,246 voters voted via the internet (69.24% of electors who cast a vote). This has greatly increased from 2018 (41%), 2014 (37.8%), 2010 (16.3%), and 2006 (13.9%). It is expected internet voting will be a popular choice among the electorate in the 2026 Municipal Election.

Electors who prefer to cast their vote using a paper ballot will have the ability to do so at a walk-in polling location. After electors fill out their paper ballot, the ballot is inserted into the optic scanning equipment (tabulator), and the vote is immediately recorded. The tabulator scans and records each cast ballot. Tabulators undergo extensive logic and

accuracy testing and are safe guarded by encryption techniques, multi-factor authentication, and lockable hardware ports. Results can be tabulated quickly after the voting location closes, which assists in determining the election results.

Staff are actively reviewing polling locations in each Ward to determine suitability for use in the municipal election based on criteria that includes, proximity to public transit, ample parking, accessible and a layout that provides sufficient voting space.

Accessible Voting

As in past elections, the 2026 election will include an accessibility plan to assist electors in voting. Accessibility initiatives include free public transit to in-person voting locations for advanced voting and on Voting Day, special advanced in-person voting polls at Fleming College and Trent University, outreach for vulnerable citizens and seniors and a weeklong advanced, in-person poll, at City Hall that will incorporate accessible voting equipment (sip & puff, voting paddles, etc.), along with an internet voting kiosk (voters not requiring accessible equipment can also utilize this voting location).

Staff have consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to receive input from the committee to help inform policies, procedures, voting locations, and how to ensure accessibility for all voters.

Cost to Administer the Election of School Board Trustees

Council, at its meeting of April 24, 2023, passed the following motion,

“That City Staff prepare a Report outlining the estimated cost to have administered the election of Local School Boards Trustees, as part of the 2022 Municipal Election”.

In determining the cost specific to administering the school board trustee portion of the 2022 municipal election, it became readily apparent that this was a challenging exercise. Many of the preparations for the election were not specific to either the municipal council positions or the school board trustee positions, hence a clear apportionment of costs was difficult. Staff concluded, when preparations for the school board trustee positions and the municipal council positions were conducted simultaneously, the cost savings that may be experienced in the circumstance where the city was not required to administer the election for the school board trustee positions, would not be significant. The reason being that key elements of the administration of the election would still need to occur. These include the establishment of walk-in voting locations, the use of voting tabulators, the preparation of the voters list, the use of internet voting technology and the requirement for poll workers.

Areas where a cost savings would be realized include a reduction from five ballot faces per Ward to one. This includes both the initial purchase price of ballots and the subsequent cost for their secure destruction post-election. Less staff time involved in the counting, packaging and securing of blank ballots destined for the voting locations. A reduction in candidate materials, such as, user guides, ward maps, and other

election-related documents. The cost savings in these areas is estimated to be approximately \$10,000 for the 2022 election.

Conversely, in a situation, such as a by-election where the City was required to administer the election solely for the school board trustee position(s), the cost would be significant and similar to the cost to administer the election for the municipal council positions, for some of the reasons cited above e.g. the need to establish walk-in voting locations, the use of voting tabulators, the preparation of the voters list, the use of internet voting technology and the requirement for poll workers.

Election Signs

Staff will provide a report at a future meeting regarding the use of election signs during the campaign period.

Candidate Information Session

In collaboration with neighboring municipalities, staff are hosting a free candidate information session on March 31, 2026, at Market Hall. Facilitated by a third party, the education session will provide candidates with insight related to life as an elected person, roles and responsibilities and time commitments.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Pillar: Governance & Fiscal Sustainability

Strategic Priority: Support a culture of continuous improvement, safety, and innovation to enhance cost-effective delivery of City programs and services.

Voters will have an opportunity to vote in the October municipal election for the positions of mayor, councillor and school board trustee.

Engagement and Consultation

Voter feedback and debriefing sessions with poll workers and staff involved in the administration of the 2022 election help inform the administration of the 2026 municipal election.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no budget implications in receiving the report for information. The approved 2026 budget for the administration of the municipal election is \$642,969.

Conclusion

The 2026 Municipal Election will be held Monday October 26, 2026. Planning and preparations for the 2026 election continue.

Attachments

Appendix A: 2026 Key Election Dates

Submitted by,

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City Clerk

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Appendix A:

2026 Key Election Dates

Election Item	2026 Election Key Dates
Last day to provide notice of the intent to pass a by-law to submit a question on the ballot	February 20, 2026
Last day to pass a by-law to submit a question on the ballot	March 2, 2026
No by-election to be held after this date	March 31, 2026
Last day for the school boards to provide a report on the distribution of school board trustees	April 7, 2026
Last day for municipalities and boards to establish rules and procedures for municipal and board resources during the campaign period	April 30, 2026
Opening of nomination period	May 1, 2026
Opening of third-party advertiser registration	May 1, 2026
Establishment - forms, policies, procedures for voting, vote counting equipment and alternative voting methods	June 1, 2026
Elections Ontario to deliver Preliminary List of Electors (PLE) to municipalities	August 14, 2026
Close of nomination period	August 21, 2026, at 2PM
Clerk to certify the nominations	August 24, 2026
Additional candidate nominations by be filed if the number of nominations filed is less than the number of persons to be elected to the office	August 26, 2026
Revisions to the voters' list begins	September 1, 2026
First possible day to hold an advance vote	September 26, 2026
End of compilation of interim list of changes to the voters' list	September 30, 2026

Last day to provide final certificates of applicable maximum spending limits in each office to candidates and third-party advertisers	September 30, 2026
Last day to establish a compliance audit committee	October 1, 2026
Close of third-party advertiser registration	October 23, 2026
Last day to provide candidates with a notice of penalties related to campaign finances and refund of nomination filing fees	October 25, 2026
Voting Day	October 26, 2026
Official election results are declared	October 27, 2026
Deadline for people provided with a copy of the voter's list to destroy the list	December 31, 2026
Campaign period ends	December 31, 2026
Last day for candidates and third-party advertisers to file financial statements	March 30, 2027