



## Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes

<b>Origin Date: March 1, 2026</b>	<b>Description: Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes</b>	<b>Policy #:</b>
<b>Supersedes: N/A</b>	<b>Scope: All Departments, Council Members, Election Candidates and Registered Third-Parties</b>	<b># of Pages: 9</b>
<b>Effective Date: March 23, 2026</b>	<b>Senior Leadership Team Approval: March 17, 2026 Council Approval: March 23, 2026</b>	

### Policy Statement/Purpose

Section 88.18 of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996 (the Act) now requires municipalities and local boards, before May 1 of an election year, to establish rules and procedures with respect to the use of municipal or board resources, as the case may be, during the election campaign period.

The Act specifies that a municipality or local board cannot make a contribution to a municipal election candidate Section 88.8 (4)(5) or to a registered third-party Section 88.12 (4)(3) as of April 1, 2018.

In an election year, the day-to-day business of the Township must continue to be carried out, and members are responsible to ensure that corporate resources are not used for any election-related purposes.

### Scope

This Policy shall apply to all Members of Ramara Township Council, all Candidates and Registered Third Parties who have submitted their nomination papers to the clerk or are intending to run for re-election, and Township employees during a campaign period of a municipal election. It also includes the Township’s local boards and committees as applicable.

### Definitions

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

**“Campaign Period”** means the official campaign period of a municipal election, being from May 1 to December 31 in a regular election year or in the case of a by-election, as determined by the Act.

**“Campaign Purposes or Campaign Materials”** means any activity in an election that seeks to promote or oppose the candidacy of an individual seeking office, or a “yes” or “no” answer to a question on the ballot, and includes any materials produced for that purpose and includes implied endorsement, name recognition efforts, or activities that could reasonably be perceived as campaign promotion.

**“Candidate”** means a person who has filed a Nomination Form for an office pursuant to Section 33 of the Act or anyone acting on their behalf.

**“Clerk”** means the individual appointed as the Township Clerk and includes his or her designate.

**“Corporate Resources”** means any staff time, expertise, intellectual property, databases, contact lists, communications systems, or any intangible asset developed, maintained, or funded by the Township.

**“Election Campaign”** means the period during which a person is a Candidate or Registered Third Party under the Act and is permitted to campaign in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.

**“Election-Related Activity”** means any activity that directly or indirectly promotes, supports, opposes, or is intended to influence the election of a Candidate or a “yes” or “no” vote on a question on the ballot, including, but not limited to: Advertising, Fundraising, Canvassing, Campaign messaging, Social media activity, Distribution of campaign materials, Media interviews in a campaign context.

**“Full Market Value”** is the fair market rental rate or user fee that would be charged to any member of the public or organization for comparable use of Township facilities, without preferential treatment.

**“Implied Endorsement”** means any action, communication, image, or association that could reasonably lead a member of the public to believe that the Township supports, endorses, or is affiliated with a Candidate or Registered Third Party.

**“Members of Council”** means the Council of the Township of Ramara.

**“Municipal Logo or Branding”** is any official logo, crest, seal, trademark, slogan, watermark, template, colour scheme, insignia, or other identifying mark owned, licensed, or used by the Township.

**“Municipal Resources”** means real property, goods and services owned, controlled, leased, acquired or operated by the Township including but not limited to: contact lists,

distribution lists, internal communication platforms (e.g. staff intranet), templates and branded documents, photography, video, or graphic assets, data collected through municipal operations facilities, parks, vehicles, equipment, monetary funds, technology, IT system and resources, social media, logos, and supplies.

**“Municipal Title”** is any reference to an elected or appointed office within the Township, including, but not limited to: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Councillor, Ward Councillor, Committee Chair, Any reference to a specific Ward, Any variation or abbreviation of these titles.

**“Normal Levels of Usage”** means the average usage of municipally funded services by a Member of Council during a comparable non-election period.

**“Registered Third Party” or “Third Party Advertiser”** means an individual, corporation or trade union that has filed a Notice of Registration with the Clerk in order to promote, support or oppose a Candidate or a “yes” or “no” vote related to a question on the ballot in accordance with the Act.

**“Regalia”** means any Township-issued clothing, accessory, or ceremonial item—such as a uniform, livery collar, or chain of office—that signifies an official role or authority.

**“Social Media”** means any digital platform, website, application, or online forum that allows users to create, share, or view content or participate in social networking, including, but not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, Blogs, Websites, Online forums, and Messaging platforms used for mass communication.

**“Staff”** means all full-time, part-time, and contract staff employed by the Township.

**“Township”** means The Corporation of the Township of Ramara.

**“Township Property”** means any land, building, structure, facility, vehicle, park, or space owned, leased, or operated by the Township.

## **Policy**

### **1. General Provisions**

#### **1.1 Candidates are prohibited from:**

- 1.1.1** Using the municipal facilities’ equipment, supplies, services, systems, staff or other resources of the Corporation of the Township of Ramara for any election campaign or campaign-related activities. Such resources would include, but

are not limited to, newsletters, desktop publishing and graphic services, postage, voicemail, or the use of fax machines;

- 1.1.2.** Using municipally funded expense allowances for electoral purposes or electoral gain;
- 1.1.3.** Undertaking any campaign-related activities on any municipal property, unless full market value rent is paid. No campaign-related activities shall be allowed at the Administration Building (2297 Highway 12, Brechin) or Ramara Centre (5482 ON-12, Orillia) at any time;
- 1.1.4.** The Township will not host, organize, or advertise all-candidate meetings or debates. Township facilities may be rented for the purpose of holding an all-candidates meetings or debate, provided the applicable rental fees are paid and all candidates nominated for the office are invited to attend and participate. The Township's role is limited to providing the facility and will not include organizing, promoting, or advertising the event. Such events are not permitted at the Administration Building (2297 Highway 12, Brechin), the Ramara Centre (5482 ON-12, Orillia), or any other voting location chosen by the Township for the election year.
- 1.1.5.** Using business cards, envelopes, letterhead, or any material imprinted with the municipal logo for election purposes;
- 1.1.6.** Enlisting the use of Township staff to work in support of a municipal candidate during working hours unless they are on a leave of absence without pay, lieu time, or vacation leave;
- 1.1.7.** Printing or distributing any material or photographs paid for by the municipality that illustrates that a Member of Council or any other individual is registered in any election or where they will be running for office;
- 1.1.8.** Printing or distributing any material using municipal funds that makes reference to, or contains the names or photographs, or identifies registered candidates for municipal elections. Minutes of Council and/or Committee Meetings are exempt;
- 1.1.9.** Profiling, or making reference to, in any material paid for by the municipality, any individual who is registered as a candidate in any election;
- 1.1.10.** Using the municipality's voicemail system to record election-related messages;

- 1.1.11.** Using the municipality’s website for election-related campaign material, inclusive of establishing links on the municipality’s website to a registered candidate’s website, email or blog;
- 1.1.12.** Campaigning at any Town-operated or hosted event, e.g. Canada Day celebrations. However, campaigning on public walkways, thoroughfares, and rights of way is permitted provided all campaigning is in accordance with all laws, including municipal by-laws;
- 1.1.13.** From posting, distributing, or otherwise using any photos of themselves or Township Staff wearing Township uniforms or regalia in campaign materials.
- 1.1.14.** Election signs on township property are only permitted in accordance with the Township of Ramara’s Election Sign Bylaw 2018.17.
- 1.1.15.** All registered candidates and registered third parties requesting information must adhere to the Township’s established access to information processes, including the Routine Disclosure Policy and Freedom of Information (FOI) request process. Where information of a general nature is provided to one candidate or registered third party and may reasonably be of value to others, the Township may provide the same information to all registered candidates and registered third parties to ensure equitable access to information. Township records, lists and files produced using municipal resources may not be used by any candidate or registered third-party advertiser, except where the information has been specifically prepared for candidate use in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996 or where the information has already been released for public use.

## **2. Technology**

### **2.1. Candidates are prohibited from:**

- 2.1.1** Using any website or domain names that are funded by the municipality for the dissemination of election-related messages and material.
- 2.1.2** Using municipal resources such as computers, cell/smart phones, telephones, tablets, printers, scanners, copiers, email, voicemail, file storage, or any other equipment or technology owned by the Township for campaign purposes.
- 2.1.3** Effective the first day of the nomination period in an election year, the Township will cease and remove any links to, likes/follows, and sharing of content from the social media accounts or websites of individuals who are registered candidates in the municipal election, including those who are incumbent members of Council. This restriction applies to all Township-

operated communication platforms, including corporate social media accounts and the municipal website, and will remain in effect until the inaugural meeting of the newly elected Council has been held.

**2.1.4** Using municipally funded services such as mobile phones for electoral purposes or electoral gain. Where it is impractical for Council Members to discontinue their use of these during the election campaign, Council Members shall report the usage to the Clerk and reimburse the Township for usage of those services that exceeds the normal levels.

**2.2** Social media accounts such as Facebook and X used for campaign purposes shall not be used for Township purposes, be created or supported by Township resources, and must not use any Township logos, trademarks, or branding. Existing social media accounts used by Members of Council solely for their duties as a Member of Council should not be re-designated as a campaign or third-party advertising account. If a Member uses their personal social account for election-related purposes/activities, such account may not be used for Township purposes, must not be created, or supported by Township resources, and must not use the elected Member's title or the Township logo or branding.

**2.2.1** To avoid confusion, Members of Council who choose to use social media accounts for election and campaign-related communications must include, for the entire duration of the election campaign, a clear statement on each campaign account's homepage indicating that the account is being used for campaign purposes only.

### **3. Township Staff**

**3.1.** Township Staff shall not participate in campaign activities during their normal working hours or anytime they are receiving remuneration from the Township. This includes providing administrative support to Candidates such as photocopying or providing technical assistance.

**3.2.** Notices, posters, or similar material promoting, supporting or opposing a particular Candidate are not to be produced, displayed or distributed by staff on Township work sites or property.

**3.3.** Township Staff may engage in election campaign activities on their own personal time, as long as those activities are separate from their official positions and duties. Township Staff must ensure that their political activities do not create a perceived or actual conflict of interest in their day-to-day work.

- 3.4. While engaging in election campaign activities, Township Staff shall not wear any clothing, such as a uniform or badge, that identifies them as a Township of Ramara employee.
- 3.5. While engaging in election campaign activities, Township Staff shall not use any vehicles, equipment, technology, supplies or other resources that are owned, leased or issued by the Township of Ramara.
- 3.6. Township Staff must also comply with the Township's Social Media Policy when using personal or Township affiliated social media accounts during an election period.

#### **4. Members of Council Running in Provincial and Federal Elections**

- 4.1. Members of Council shall not use Township resources to host, promote, sponsor or otherwise organize or assist with any event that involves direct participation by candidates at other levels of government, given that there is potential for partisanship, real or perceived, to occur at, or in the organization of, any such event that directly involves candidate participation.
- 4.2. Members of Council may communicate with constituents regarding federal/provincial matters relevant to the ward/ Township of Ramara, as well as any issues that have a direct bearing on municipal business between the federal/provincial government and the Township, and such communication shall be non-partisan in nature.
- 4.3. The following applies if a Member of Council becomes a candidate in a provincial or federal election/by-election:
  - 4.3.1. Corporate resources shall only be used for council-related purposes and to serve their constituents and shall not be used to support an election campaign.
  - 4.3.2. A Member, who is a candidate, shall seek guidance from the Township Clerk with respect to responsibilities and obligations required to comply with this policy. While certain restrictions may apply to ensure compliance with this policy and its purpose, it is recognized that the Member may continue to be the elected representative and may remain active in their capacity as the elected official.

## **5. Responsibility**

- 5.1.** The Clerk or Designate is responsible for communicating this policy to Members of Council, Candidates, Third-Party Advertisers, and Township Staff.
- 5.2.** Members of Council, Candidates, Third-Party Advertisers, and Township Staff are accountable to comply with this policy.

## **6. Limitation**

- 6.1.** Nothing in this policy shall preclude a Member of Council or Local Board from performing their responsibilities as a Council Member or Board Member, nor inhibit them from representing the interests of the constituents who elected them.
- 6.2.** Nothing in this policy shall prevent employees from conducting an election in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act* or providing non-partisan election information material on behalf of the Township so as to inform the public about the election and the election process.

## **7. Implementation**

- 7.1.** This Policy shall become effective immediately upon approval by Township Council.
- 7.2.** Procedures may be defined and amended from time to time at the discretion of the Clerk to address specific implementation of this Policy.

## **8. Administration**

- 8.1.** The Clerk is delegated the authority to make administrative changes to this policy that may be required from time to time due to legislative changes or if, in the opinion of the Clerk, the amendments do not change the overall intent of the policy.

## **9. Enforcement**

- 9.1.** In accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, as amended, the Clerk or designate is hereby authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect to this policy. All complaints shall be received in writing and addressed to the Clerk. If a breach of this policy is confirmed, the candidate shall be required to personally reimburse the municipality for any of the costs associated with the

breach. Staff will advise Members of Council of any breach through the Council Information Package.

## **10. References**

### **10.1. External references**

*Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

### **10.2. Internal references**

Council Code of Conduct By-law No. 2011.81, as amended by By-law 2013.39

Social Media Policy

Election Sign Bylaw 2018.17

Routine Disclosure Policy