

# **DELEGATION TO COUNCIL**

## **By-law No. 22-07 — Public and Candidate Access to Municipal Resources**

### **Clear, Equal and Publicly Disclosed Rules for the 2026 Municipal Election**

*Presented by Edwin Giesbrecht — RM of Springfield*

Mayor and Members of Council,

I am asking Council for an immediate, formal and publicly accessible determination of how By-law No. 22-07, Use of Municipal Resources in an Election, will be interpreted, funded and applied during the 2026 municipal election.

#### **Formal Declaration**

For the record, this is not a request for special access or advantage for me or any other candidate. It is a request for one clear, comprehensive and uniformly applicable standard serving all candidates, community organizations and the electorate.

This is not merely a staff matter. Council enacted the by-law and must ensure that administration, election officials, candidates and the public are working from the same authoritative rules.

#### **Why This Is Urgent**

As of August 18, 2026, only 60 days remain until the October 17 Advance Vote and 71 days until the October 28 General Election. Candidates and public organizations are planning events and incurring expenses. A determination is required now—not after facilities have been booked or costs incurred.

#### **The Unresolved Question**

By-law No. 22-07 broadly defines Municipal Resources to include municipal property, facilities, infrastructure, equipment, communications, employees, events and functions, identifying marks and certain information controlled by the Municipality.

Section 3 provides that, during the 42-day Restricted Period, a candidate may use a Municipal Resource for an election-related purpose only where it is normally available to the general public without permission or authorization and where the use does not unreasonably interfere with others.

The signed text also contains internal cross-references requiring clarification. Section 3 says it is subject to section 4. Section 4 says it is subject to itself. Section 5 applies the exceptions to sections 2 and 3, although section 2 contains definitions and section 4 contains the municipal-activity restrictions. Council must determine how these provisions operate together and whether amendment is required before enforcement.

Administration has provided its interpretation concerning certain individual municipal resources. I acknowledge those responses. They do not, however, constitute the complete, authoritative and publicly accessible determination I am requesting from the elected Council that enacted By-law No. 22-07.

I am asking Council for the five determinations expressly set out in this delegation: to clarify the rules, apply them equally, facilitate neutral public electoral engagement, identify the applicable funding authority, and disclose the resulting standard openly and equally.

This distinction is fundamental. Neutral municipal facilitation of informed public electoral participation is not the same thing as subsidizing the campaign of an individual candidate. The

standard sought here is one that serves all candidates, community organizations and the electorate equally.

The community-centre response illustrates the problem. Candidates may reportedly rent a centre at the normal public rate, yet an ordinary booking or rental necessarily involves a reservation or authorization. Council must determine whether that process is permitted under section 3 and whether identical access and conditions apply to every candidate.

### **The Public Interest Is Larger Than Candidate Access**

The public must know what resources are available for election-related participation. Residents and organizations may wish to arrange forums or debates so electors can hear competing positions and examine Springfield issues.

Council's determination must address access before and during the Restricted Period to community centres, meeting rooms, parks, outdoor spaces, street corners, boulevards and privately supplied tents or shelters. It must state what bookings, permits, insurance, fees and equal-opportunity conditions apply.

It should also identify the rules for school gymnasiums and libraries, the Springfield Public Library and other publicly funded spaces. Where another public body controls a venue, Council should identify that jurisdiction and seek a coordinated public standard.

### **Public Electoral Engagement and the Election Budget**

Electors are not charged admission to enter a polling place. Voting is the final act; access to candidates and public discussion enables an informed vote.

Council should publicly identify the approved 2026 municipal-election budget and determine whether it includes reasonable funding for public candidate forums, town halls, debates and access to designated community facilities during the Restricted Period.

The Municipality budgets for conferences, professional development, strategic planning, travel, communications, consultants and other institutional activities. Those expenditures may be legitimate. But what municipal purpose is more fundamental than ensuring electors can meet the people seeking office and examine the issues shaping the next four years?

Compared with broader municipal expenditures, facilitating electoral engagement would be a drop in the budgetary bucket. Yet it may be the most consequential expenditure of the term. The October 28 decision will determine Council's composition, direction and priorities for four years and affect more than 16,000 residents, together with Springfield's businesses, farms and property owners.

**In budgetary terms, the cost may be modest. In democratic terms, its importance for the next four years is second to none.**

### **Neutral and Equal Facilitation**

This is not a request for campaign subsidy. Municipal support must be nonpartisan, unbiased and content-neutral, facilitating informed participation without favouring or disadvantaging any candidate or position.

Mr. Mayor, when Council considered increasing candidate expense limits, you raised concern that doing so could unfairly advantage candidates with greater financial means. That same principle applies here. This is Council's opportunity to create a fair and level playing field by ensuring that access to public electoral venues and information does not depend upon a candidate's financial capacity, in the best interests of Springfield's residents.

Council should determine whether designated venues can be provided without charge for bona fide public all-candidate events and whether every registered candidate can receive an equal no-cost allocation under identical, objective written conditions.

### **The Written Standard Must Address**

- which Municipal Resources are available and unavailable before and during the Restricted Period;
- what constitutes ordinary public availability, permission and authorization, including bookings, rentals, permits and approvals;
- all fees, insurance requirements and conditions, and whether identical terms apply to every candidate;
- public forums organized by residents or community organizations, the meaning of equivalent opportunity, and the operation of section 5;
- the distinction between legitimate municipal duties of an incumbent and election-related activity;
- the internal cross-references, who may interpret and enforce the by-law, and the process for determining compliance; and
- the election-budget authority and funding available for neutral, accessible public electoral engagement.

### **Five Determinations Requested**

1. **CLARIFY** — Establish a complete, specific and written standard governing Municipal Resources before and during the Restricted Period.
2. **APPLY** — Ensure the standard is administered fairly and consistently for all candidates, organizations and the public.
3. **FACILITATE** — Provide neutral, unbiased and content-neutral support for accessible public electoral engagement.
4. **FUND** — Identify the election-budget authority and reasonable funding available for equal public participation.
5. **DISCLOSE** — Provide the determination to the CAO, relevant staff and Senior Election Official; communicate it equally to registered candidates; and prominently publish it on the Municipality's 2026 Election webpage.

### **Immediate Determination**

I request that Council make this determination sufficiently before the Restricted Period begins for candidates and the public to understand and act upon it. An open-ended referral would defeat the purpose of clarification.

**CLARIFY THE RULES. APPLY THEM EQUALLY. FACILITATE PARTICIPATION.  
FUND IT REASONABLY. DISCLOSE IT PROMINENTLY AND IN TIME.**

**One municipal election. One authoritative written standard. Equal application. Informed public participation.**

Thank you.