

Report to Infrastructure and Corporate Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Infrastructure and Corporate Services Committee
From: Michael Schulthess, City Clerk
Subject: 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections Update
Date: April 9, 2025

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the City Clerk, the following actions be taken with respect to the 2026 Municipal Election:

- a) the City Clerk **BE DIRECTED** to request local school boards to consider scheduling a Professional Activity Day (PA Day) on Voting Day, October 26, 2026, as elementary and secondary schools serve as voting locations for Municipal and School Board Elections;
- b) the attached proposed by-law (Appendix 'A') **BE INTRODUCED** at the Council meeting to be held on June 3, 2025 to authorize the use of vote tabulators, voting by mail, and proxy voting for Municipal and School Board Elections;
- c) no further action **BE TAKEN** with respect to adopting a candidate contribution rebate by-law; and
- d) the staff report dated April 9, 2025 entitled "2026 Municipal Election Update" **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Background Information

1.0 Previous Reports on this Matter

Corporate Services Committee – May 31, 2021 – 2022 Municipal Election Update

Corporate Services Committee – March 19, 2019 – 2018 Municipal Election

Corporate Services Committee – February 20, 2018 – 2018 Municipal Election Update

Corporate Services Committee – January 24, 2017 – Municipal Election Campaign Contributor Rebate By-law

Discussion and Considerations

2.0 Voting Locations

There are legislative requirements for voting locations. Under section 45(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, "the clerk shall establish the number and location of voting places for an election as he or she considers most convenient for the electors" and under section 45(2) "voting locations are accessible to electors with disabilities". Further, in accordance with section 7 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the City of London incurs the cost of the Municipal and School Board Elections and subsection 45(4)(6) provides that upon notice some landlords, condominium corporations, school boards and provincially funded institutions are required to provide the space free of any charge.

The following criteria and best practices are applied when establishing voting locations in Municipal and School Board Elections:

- convenience and proximity to electors;
- accessibility;
- on or close to transit routes;
- walkability; and

- sufficient parking.

Before 2022, Civic Administration faced challenges in securing suitable locations that met these criteria. Schools, along with city facilities, libraries, and places of worship, have traditionally been used as voting locations.

Schools, as public buildings, meet all legislative requirements and offer a convenient option for electors because they are centrally located within neighborhoods, often within walking distance, accessible by public transit, and compliant with accessibility standards. While schools have proven to be ideal voting locations, concerns have been raised about their use during school hours. These concerns, which arise with each election, include parking constraints, school safety, disruptions to regular programming and curriculum, and increased traffic congestion during drop-off and pick-up times.

On June 15, 2021, Council passed a resolution with respect to using elementary and secondary school as voting locations for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections:

- a) the City Clerk BE DIRECTED that as elementary and secondary schools are used as voting locations, the local school boards be requested to consider scheduling a Professional Development on Voting Day, October 24, 2022;

In 2022, Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) and London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) were supportive and scheduled a Professional Activity Day (PA Day) on Voting Day for the 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections. Civic Administration is appreciative of this approval as it ensured appropriate, accessible, and recognizable voting locations within the community. Below is a summary of voting locations used on Voting Day in 2022:

Location	Number
City Facilities (Community Centres, Arenas, etc.)	17
Libraries	9
Places of Worship	35
Post-secondary – Fanshawe College	1
Post-secondary – Western University	1
Privately Owned (legions, cultural centres, hospitality, multi-residential space, etc.)	12
Schools – Elementary and Secondary Schools	75
Special Voting Locations (Retirement or Long-Term Care Homes)	37
Total	187

There were 187 voting locations across the city on Voting Day in 2022, including 37 exclusively for retirement and long-term care residents. The remaining 150 locations served the broader community, with 75 of them in schools. Schools made up 50% of community voting locations and played a key role in ensuring well-run Municipal and School Board Elections.

Building on the success of the PA Day on Voting Day in 2022, Civic Administration is seeking Council's support in requesting a Professional Activity Day on October 26, 2026 (Voting Day), with a formal communication sent to each school board with this request.

3.0 Legislated By-law under *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

Under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* the Council can pass by-laws with respect to authorizing the use of vote and vote-counting equipment such as accessible voting devices and vote tabulators and authorizing the use of alternative voting methods such as voting by mail.

3.1 Use of Vote and Vote-Counting Equipment By-law – Accessible Voting Devices and Vote Tabulators

Subsection 42(1)(a) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, makes provision for the Council to pass a by-law authorizing the use of voting and vote-counting equipment, such as accessible voting devices and vote tabulators. The City of London began using vote tabulators at the 1991 Municipal and School Board Elections and has used similar equipment for each subsequent Municipal and School Board Elections. The City of London introduced accessible voting devices in 2010 allowing electors to mark their ballots independently using “sip-and-puff”, paddles, or a tactile device during the Advance Vote period.

3.2 Use of Alternate Voting Methods – Voting by Mail

The City of London has used voting by mail since the 2010 Municipal and School Board Elections. Subsection 42(1)(b) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, includes provisions for the Council to pass a by-law authorizing the electors to use an alternative voting method, such as voting by mail. Voting by mail is a low cost, safe and reliable alternative for voters who would not be able to vote at an advance poll, a Voting Day location, or vote by proxy.

3.3 Advance Vote and Appointment of Voting Proxy

The City of London will continue to offer the same number of Advance Vote days and for an elector to make an appointment of voting proxy. Under legislation, an elector may appoint someone to go to the voting location and cast a ballot on their behalf should the elector be unable to personally cast their ballot. Subsection 42(5) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, provides that when a by-law authorizing the use of an alternative voting method is in effect, sections 43 (advance vote) and 44 (voting proxies) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* apply only if the by-law so specifies.

Attached as Appendix ‘A’ to this report is a by-law to authorize the use vote tabulators, voting by mail, and proxy voting.

4.0 Municipal Election Contribution Rebate By-law

A municipality, through a by-law, may authorize the payment of rebates to individuals who contributed to candidates in a municipal election. The by-law shall define the eligibility criteria and calculation methods for determining a contributor's entitlement to a rebate, including the rebate amount for their contribution to a candidate's campaign. The by-law would only apply to candidates for municipal council and not school board candidates.

4.1 City of London Background

The Final Report of the Governance Task Force on December 1, 2008, contained a recommendation for Council to consider “exercising its option under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, to institute a municipal election campaign donations rebate program for individual residents”.

On October 5, 2009, Council resolved that “no further action be taken with respect to enacting a Municipal Election Campaign Rebate By-law for Municipal Elections” taking place in 2010. Similar resolutions were passed prior to elections in 2014, 2018, and 2022.

For Council's consideration, a recent by-law scan across similar sized cities estimates contribution rebates to cost between \$75,000 and \$147,000. This does not include administrative costs. If directed by Council, Civic Administration will submit a staff report outlining financial impacts, eligibility criteria, and required by-law for consideration.

Conclusion

Preparation for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election is underway. Civic Administration will continue monitoring any legislative changes at the provincial level while securing supplies and logistics to ensure efficient management of the election and accessibility for voters.

Prepared by:	Liridona Rafuna, Manager, Elections, Strategic Integration & Policy
Submitted by:	Sarah Corman, Deputy City Clerk
Recommended by:	Michael Schulthess, City Clerk

Appendix 'A' – Proposed By-law under *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

Bill No. [inserted by City Clerk's]
2025

By-law No. E.- [inserted by City Clerk's]

A by-law to authorize the use of optical scanning vote tabulators, voting by mail and proxy voting; and to repeal By-law No. E.-189-189 entitled "A by-law to authorize the use of poll optical scanning vote tabulators, voting by mail, advance voting and proxy voting for the 2022 Municipal Election"

WHEREAS subsection 42(1)(a) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, provides that the council of a local municipality may pass a by-law authorizing the use of voting and vote-counting equipment such as voting machines, voting recorders or optical scanning vote tabulators;

AND WHEREAS subsection 42(1)(b) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, provides that the council of a local municipality may pass a by-law authorizing electors to use an alternative voting method, such as voting by mail, that does not require electors to attend at a voting place in order to vote;

AND WHEREAS subsection 42(5) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, provides that when a by-law authorizing the use of an alternative voting method is in effect, sections 43 (advance vote) and 44 (voting proxies) apply only if the by-law so specifies;

NOW THEREFORE the Municipal Council of The Corporation of the City of London enacts as follows:

1. The use of optical scanning vote tabulators for the purpose of counting votes at municipal elections in the City of London is hereby authorized.
2. Sections 43 (Advance Votes) and 44 (Voting Proxy) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, as amended, apply to the City of London Municipal Elections.
3. The use of voting by mail be provided upon request to qualified voters as an alternative voting method that does not require electors to attend at a voting place to vote at municipal elections in the City of London is hereby authorized.
4. By-law No. E.-189-189 passed by the Municipal Council on June 15, 2021 is hereby repealed.
5. This by-law comes into force and effect on the day it is passed.

PASSED in Open Council on April 22, 2025.

Josh Morgan
Mayor

Michael Schulthess
City Clerk

First Reading – April 22, 2025
Second Reading – April 22, 2025
Third Reading – April 22, 2025