



ONTARIO, CA

COCHRANE
WONDERFULLY UNEXPECTED

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE – ME-2026-05

**THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING REGISTRATION & COMPLIANCE
PROCEDURE**

2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cassandra Child".

**Cassandra Child, AOMC, Dipl.M.A.
Clerk/Returning Officer**

Town of Cochrane

March 18, 2026

THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING REGISTRATION & COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE – ME-2026-05

1. PURPOSE

- a) The purpose of this procedure is to establish clear, lawful, and defensible administrative processes for the registration, certification, spending limit calculation, financial filing compliance, and statutory oversight of Third-Party Advertisers in the 2026 Municipal Election conducted by the Town of Cochrane.
- b) This procedure is intended to ensure consistency, transparency, and compliance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (the “Act”).

2. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- a) This procedure is established pursuant to:
 - i. Section 11(2) of the Act, which requires the Clerk to prepare for and conduct the election.
 - ii. Section 12 of the Act, which authorizes the Clerk to establish procedures respecting the conduct of the election; and
 - iii. Sections 88.3 to 88.32 of the Act governing Third Party Advertising.
- b) The Clerk may provide for any matter or procedure not otherwise prescribed where, in the opinion of the Clerk, it is necessary or desirable for the proper administration of Third-Party Advertising.

3. APPLICATION

- a) This procedure applies to:
 - i. The Clerk.
 - ii. Election officials appointed by the Clerk.
 - iii. Individuals, corporations, and trade unions seeking to register as Third Party Advertisers; and
 - iv. Registered Third Party Advertisers.
- b) This procedure governs internal administrative processes. Public-facing information is provided separately through the 2026 Third Party Advertiser Guide.

5. REGISTRATION AND CERTIFICATION

5.1 Filing Requirements

- a) An individual, corporation, or trade union wishing to register as a Third-Party Advertiser shall file a completed *Notice of Registration – Third Party (Form 7)* with the Clerk within the legislated registration period.

THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING REGISTRATION & COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE – ME-2026-05

- b) The Clerk may establish administrative requirements respecting the manner of filing, identification verification, and supporting documentation, provided such requirements are consistent with the Act.
- c) Registration shall close at the close of business on the Friday before Voting Day, being Friday, October 23, 2026. No registrations shall be accepted after that time, except as may be permitted by statute or court order.
- d) Registration shall include all prescribed forms required under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, including *Form 7 – Notice of Registration – Third Party Advertiser* and, where applicable, *Form 9 – Declaration of Identity*. The Clerk may require such additional documentation as is necessary to verify identity and eligibility in accordance with the Act.
- e) No registration is effective unless certified by the Clerk.

5.2 Review and Verification

- a) Upon receipt of a registration, the Clerk shall review the filing to confirm eligibility under the Act, completeness of the prescribed form, verification of identity, and proper authorization where the registrant is a corporation or trade union.
- b) The Clerk may request additional documentation where necessary to determine eligibility or completeness.

5.3 Certification Decision

- a) A registration shall not take effect until certified by the Clerk. The Clerk's decision respecting certification is final.
- b) No Third-Party Advertising expenses shall be incurred prior to certification.
- c) Where a registration is not certified, the Clerk shall document the decision and the basis for refusal in accordance with the Act and shall retain such record as part of the election file.

6. REGISTRATION RECORDS

- a) The Clerk shall maintain a register of certified Third-Party Advertisers in accordance with the Act. The register shall record the name of the registrant, date of certification, and issued spending limits.
- b) Public posting shall occur in accordance with statutory requirements.
- c) The Clerk may maintain such additional administrative records as are necessary to document the registration, certification, and status of Third Party Advertisers, including internal tracking records and certification logs.

THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING REGISTRATION & COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE – ME-2026-05

7. SPENDING LIMITS

7.1 Estimated Spending Limit

- a) At the time of certification, the Clerk shall provide an estimated spending limit (*Form EL37D – Third Party Estimated Spending Limit*) calculated in accordance with section 88.21 of the Act, being \$5,000 plus \$0.05 per elector entitled to cast a ballot in the municipality, to a maximum of \$25,000.

7.2 Final Spending Limit

- a) On or before September 25, 2026, the Clerk shall calculate and issue the final spending limit using the official Voters' List for the 2026 Municipal Election (*Form EL51A – Certificate of Maximum Amount of Expenses – Registered Third Parties*).
- b) The higher of the estimated or final spending limit shall be the official spending limit. Issuance of spending limits shall be documented as part of the election record.

8. ADMINISTRATION OF THE RESTRICTED ADVERTISING PERIOD

- a) The Clerk shall administer the Restricted Advertising Period in accordance with the Act.
- b) Where concerns are raised regarding advertising outside the Restricted Advertising Period or by an uncertified registrant, the Clerk shall document the matter and respond in accordance with statutory authority. The Clerk does not conduct investigative functions but may refer matters to appropriate authorities where required.
- c) All third-party advertising shall comply with the Restricted Advertising Period as established under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.
- d) For the purposes of this Procedure, the determination of whether advertising is permitted within the Restricted Advertising Period shall be made in accordance with the Act.
- e) Compliance with municipal by-laws, including any sign by-law governing the placement, size, timing, or location of advertising, is required in addition to compliance with the Act and does not replace or modify the legislated requirements.
- f) Compliance with the Election Sign By-law is a condition of lawful campaign advertising within the municipality.
- g) This Procedure shall be read in conjunction with *ME-2026-01 (Election Advertising and Information Plan)* and *ME-2026-12 (Election Communications and Media Protocol)*.

**THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING REGISTRATION & COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE – ME-2026-05**

9. FINANCIAL STATEMENT ADMINISTRATION

9.1 Filing Deadline

- a) Every registered Third-Party Advertiser shall file a Financial Statement (*Form 8 – Financial Statement, Third Party*) with the Clerk no later than 2:00 p.m. on the prescribed filing deadline.

9.2 Administrative Review

- a) Upon receipt, the Clerk shall conduct an administrative review to confirm that the prescribed form has been used, that required declarations are signed, that auditor's reports are included where required, and that the filing appears complete.
- b) The Clerk may issue a *Notice of Filing Requirements (Form EL42B)* to registered Third Party Advertisers in advance of the filing deadline.
- c) The Clerk's review is administrative in nature and does not constitute an audit.

9.3 Late Filing

- a) Where a Financial Statement is filed within the statutory grace period, the Clerk shall accept the filing upon payment of the prescribed late filing fee.
- b) Where a Financial Statement is not filed by the end of the grace period and no court extension has been granted, the Clerk shall record the statutory default and apply automatic penalties in accordance with the Act. (*Form EL43B - Notice of Default - Third Party*)

9.4 Filing Reminder Notice

- a) The Clerk may issue a Notice of Filing Requirements (*Form EL42B – Notice of Filing Requirements – Third Party Advertiser*) to registered Third Party Advertisers in advance of the prescribed filing deadline.
- b) The issuance of such notice is administrative in nature and does not relieve any registrant of their statutory obligation to file a Financial Statement in accordance with the Act.

10. EXTENDED CAMPAIGN PERIOD

- a) For the 2026 Municipal Election, the campaign period for a registered Third-Party Advertiser ends on December 31, 2026, unless a Notice of Extension of Campaign Period (*Form 6 – Notice of Extension of Campaign Period*) is filed in accordance with the Act. Where December 31 falls on a non-business day and statutory filing provisions apply, the applicable statutory rollover shall govern.

THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING REGISTRATION & COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE – ME-2026-05

- b) Where a registrant files a Notice of Extension of Campaign Period in accordance with the Act, the Clerk shall record the extension and administer the supplementary filing process.
- c) For greater certainty, the campaign period begins on the date the Clerk certifies the registration.

11. SURPLUS AND DEFICIT ADMINISTRATION

- a) Where a surplus is identified, the Clerk shall confirm remittance in accordance with the Act and issue a receipt.
- b) Where a deficit is declared and an extension has been filed, the Clerk shall record the extended campaign status and monitor the supplementary filing requirement.

12. COMPLIANCE AUDIT ADMINISTRATION

- a) The Clerk may utilize an administrative intake record or prescribed form, where applicable, to document receipt of a compliance audit application. (*EL55 - Application for a Municipal Election Compliance Audit*)
- b) Where a compliance audit application is received, the Clerk shall confirm eligibility and timeliness of the application, record the application and forward the matter to the Compliance Audit Committee in accordance with the Act.
- c) The Clerk does not investigate alleged contraventions but administers the statutory process.

13. COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

- a) All substantive communications respecting Third Party Advertising registration and compliance shall be conducted in writing.
- b) The Clerk shall not provide legal advice and may decline to provide guidance beyond the scope of the Act.
- c) Where clarification of general application is required, the Clerk may issue written guidance applicable to all registrants.

14. RECORDS AND RETENTION

- a) The Clerk shall maintain a Register of Third Party Advertisers in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, documenting registration, certification, spending limits, financial statement filings, compliance status, and any enforcement actions. The Register shall form part of the official election record and shall be available for public inspection in accordance with the Act. (*Form 07A – Log of Third-Party Advertisers*)

THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING REGISTRATION & COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE – ME-2026-05

- b) All records respecting Third Party Advertising registration, financial filings, and related documentation shall be retained and secured in accordance with the Act and the Town's Records Retention By-law.
- c) Records shall be stored in a manner that preserves integrity and maintains appropriate chain of custody.

15. AMENDMENT AUTHORITY

- a) The Clerk may amend this procedure where necessary to reflect legislative changes, operational requirements, or directives authorized under the Act.