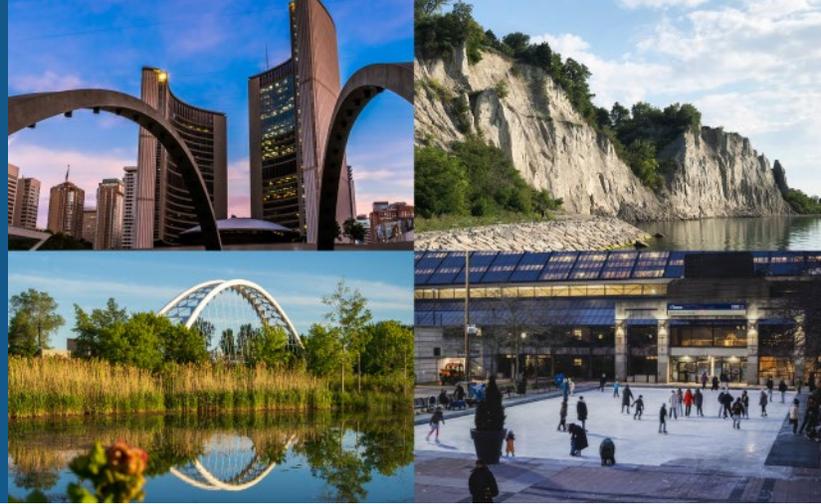


Interpretation Bulletin: Political Activity Rules for Members of Local Boards



Purpose

1. This Interpretation Bulletin reminds members of local boards and members of adjudicative boards for the City of Toronto about the political activity rules in their respective Codes of Conduct, the [Code of Conduct for Members of Local Boards](#) (Restricted Definition) and the [Code of Conduct for Members of Adjudicative Boards](#). These rules apply to political activity at the municipal, provincial or federal level.
2. Any member with questions about being involved in the 2026 municipal elections in the City of Toronto should consult this bulletin and ask the Commissioner for advice. The key election dates are:
 - **May 1 to August 21, 2026:** Nomination period
 - **On August 21, 2026:** the Integrity Commissioner must terminate all open investigations and cannot accept new complaints or applications, and cannot resume investigations until after Voting Day
 - **October 26, 2026:** Voting Day
 - **November 14, 2026:** 2022-2026 Council term ends

Legislative Change Notice: Bill 9 (the *Municipal Accountability Act, 2025*) will apply to the 2026–2030 Council term, but details remain unknown, including whether the new framework will permit the Integrity Commissioner to conduct retroactive investigations after Voting Day.

What do I need to know about political activity?

3. City of Toronto Local Boards must stay politically neutral. This means boards cannot support or appear to support any candidates, political parties or third-party advertisers. For example, Business Improvement Area (BIA) Boards of Management are not allowed to endorse or promote political candidates ([Toronto Municipal Code, § 19-3.2](#)).
4. During an election period, boards must take care to stay neutral. For any events held between August 1, 2026 and October 26, 2026:
 - If a board invites a member of Council in their official capacity, promotional materials should refer to them as “the Councillor for Ward XX” or “the Mayor of Toronto” without naming them.
 - Candidates, including members of Council, should not be invited to board meetings or events to campaign.

- If a board wishes to hold, or permit its premises to be used for, an all-candidates meeting, it must first review the City's policies to confirm the rules.
5. Board members may take part in political activity in their personal lives so long as it does not affect the public perception that their board is politically neutral and impartial. Political activity includes:
- running as a candidate for election;
 - seeking the nomination of a political party to run at the provincial or federal level;
 - being a member or officer of a political party, constituency association, third party advertiser, or any campaign; or,
 - campaigning or publicly showing support for or opposition to a political party, candidate, campaign or referendum question.
6. Members must avoid any political activity that could reasonably appear to be connected to their board role. The Codes of Conduct require members to:
- follow all laws governing conduct (Article 2 Local Boards / 3 Adjudicative Boards);
 - not use City resources for political activity (Article 7 Local Boards / 8 Adjudicative Boards);
 - not use the influence of their office for political purposes (Article 8 Local Boards / 10 Adjudicative Boards);
 - not pressure City or board staff to participate in political or election activities (Article 12 Local Boards / 14 Adjudicative Boards);
 - not accept a campaign contribution from a lobbyist if it is effectively lobbying on an issue before the board (Article 13 Local Boards / 15 Adjudicative Boards); and,
 - follow City and board policies and procedures (Article 15 Local Boards / 18 Adjudicative Boards).

What do I need to know if I am thinking about running in an election?

7. Members of City of Toronto Local Boards have some limits placed on their political activities. The most significant restrictions are placed on someone who runs as a candidate in an election.
8. A member who plans to run must take a leave of absence from their board starting on the day they are officially nominated. This requirement is in the [City of Toronto Public Appointments Policy](#) which members agree to follow when they are appointed. While on leave, their Code of Conduct still applies to them. The Public Appointments Policy also says City Council retains the right to remove any appointed member at any time and for any reason, unless legislation provides otherwise.

9. Members must not use city or board resources for political purposes. This includes board facilities, equipment, supplies and services. Members must not pressure City or board staff to help with campaign work. This means a member must not use City or board resources to:

- create or distribute campaign materials;
- make donations or fundraise;
- canvass or put up signs; or,
- carry out any other political activity.

A member who is a candidate may fundraise and receive election contributions as allowed under election law. Contributions from lobbyists are permitted unless the lobbyist is effectively lobbying on an issue before the board. Members should consult the [Lobbying By-law](#) and the [Lobbyist Registrar](#) if they have questions.

10. To comply with the Code of Conduct, members who are running must:

- Keep all campaign activity separate from their work on the board and avoid any situation where they could appear to be using their position on their board to obtain support;
- Use only personal resources for their campaign;
- Avoid offering or appearing to offer preferential treatment when asking for support or volunteers for their campaign;
- Refer to their board role only as part of their personal credentials and state they are on a leave from their board. They must not use City or board logos in their materials or suggest that their candidacy is supported or endorsed by the City or their board;
- Not hold campaign meetings, plan campaign activities or communicate about their campaign from City or board premises;
- Not canvas or distribute campaign materials on City or board premises, meetings or events; and,
- Not post lawn signs on City or board premises and must follow the sign by-law.

11. If a member, who is a candidate, has a question about a political activity or situation not described above, they should seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner before engaging in that activity.

What do I need to know if I want to be politically active?

12. The limits placed on a member's general political activities are less stringent than the rules that apply to a member who becomes a candidate.

13. The Codes of Conduct do not prohibit members from being involved in political parties, constituency associations, third party advertisers, campaigns, leadership contests, nomination contests or referendum campaigns. However, their political activity must be consistent with their obligations under their Code of Conduct and the Public Appointments Policy.

14. If members are unsure whether an activity is consistent with their obligations as a member of a Local board, they should consult the Integrity Commissioner for advice before proceeding.
15. To comply with their Code of Conduct, a member who is politically active must:
- Avoid giving public endorsements that could create the impression that their board role is linked to the campaign. Any campaign material should not use their board title or refer to their board role;
 - Make any campaign contribution using only private resources;
 - Consider whether putting up a lawn sign could create a perception impression that their board role is linked to the campaign. If unsure, they should seek advice;
 - Avoid working for a campaign in any way that could be seen as associating their work with their board position; and,
 - Avoid canvassing or asking others for campaign contributions in a manner that could be seen as offering preferential treatment connected with board role.
16. If a member has a question about a political activity or situation not described above, they should seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner before engaging in that activity.

Interpretation

17. This bulletin provides guidance with respect to political activity. In the event of any inconsistency, the requirements in legislation, bylaws, policies and Codes of Conduct govern.

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