

REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: August 11, 2025

FROM: Clerk's Department

DATE: July 29, 2025

SUBJECT: 2026 Municipal Election Contribution Rebate Program By-law

WARD: Town-wide .

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. That a Campaign Contribution Rebate Program be implemented for the 2026 Municipal Election.
2. That By-law 2025-050, being a by-law to authorize the payment of rebates to eligible individuals who made contributions to candidates for office on the municipal council for the 2026 Municipal Election (Contribution Rebate By-law), be passed.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The next municipal election is scheduled for Monday, October 26, 2026.
- The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* authorizes, but does not require, municipalities to establish rebate programs through by-law.
- Rebate programs aim to boost candidate participation, support diversity, and increase individual contributor engagement.
- Oakville has offered a rebate program in every municipal election since 2003.
- In June 2025, Council directed staff to draft a by-law authorizing rebates for eligible contributions to 2026 municipal council candidates, aligned with previous program terms.
- The proposed rebate is 50% of eligible contributions, with a \$100 minimum contribution and a \$600 maximum rebate.
- Estimated program costs of \$100,000 will be covered through the election reserve and budget process.

BACKGROUND:

At the Council meeting of June 23, 2025, Council directed staff to report back in Q3 2025 with a draft by-law to authorize the payment of rebates to eligible individuals who made contributions to candidates for office on the municipal council for the

2026 Municipal Election (Contribution Rebate By-law), and that the rebate program's terms, including eligibility criteria, calculation formula, and contribution limits, align with the previous Rebate program.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

The implementation of a Contribution Rebate Program for the 2026 Oakville municipal election would establish a mechanism for providing partial rebates to eligible individuals who contribute to candidates running for office on municipal council. Municipally funded rebate programs are designed to encourage greater engagement in the electoral process and promote equity among candidates by helping to offset the financial pressures associated with campaigning. Continuing to offer such a program may provide opportunities to enhance the election process, encourage candidate participation, increase the proportion of candidate contributions from individual electors, and generate more interest in municipal elections.

Participation in the contribution rebate program by candidates is voluntary. The program requires candidates to issue receipts to donors who would then apply for a rebate from the town. Rebates would only be processed after the election, and after candidates file their financial statements in compliance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA)*.

Staff recommend the passing of By-law 2025-050, a by-law to authorize the payment of rebates to eligible individuals who made contributions to candidates for office on the municipal council for the 2026 Municipal Election (Contribution Rebate By-law). This by-law, attached as **Appendix A**, outlines program eligibility, the calculation formula for issuing rebates, and sets out the minimum and maximum contributions eligible for rebates. Program terms in proposed By-law 2025-050, including eligibility criteria, calculation formula, and contribution limits, align with the program offered for the 2022 municipal election.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

Effective communication strategies are essential for public outreach and education in the electoral process. Educating both eligible contributors and candidates about program rules and legal limitations is crucial for the success of the rebate program.

(B) FINANCIAL

Rebate program costs for the 2026 municipal election are estimated at approximately \$100,000, and will be covered through the election reserve and the budget process, as applicable.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Information Technology Solutions and Finance have been consulted. These departments and additional impacted departments would be involved in the implementation and administration of a rebate program.

(D) COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report addresses Council's strategic priority of Accountable Government.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

This report does not impact climate change.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Contribution Rebate By-law 2025-050

Prepared, Recommended and Submitted by:

Andrea Coyne, Manager, Elections, Policy, Print Services