

Election Bylaw and Sign Amendment Bylaw

Recommendation:

- 1) THAT *Maple Ridge Sign Amendment Bylaw No. 8101-2026* be given first, second and third reading.
- 2) THAT *Maple Ridge Election Bylaw No. 8096-2026* be given first, second and third reading.

Report Purpose and Summary Statement:

To present a modernized Election Bylaw that consolidates two existing election bylaws and introduces regulations for election signage, with a recommendation to amend the sign bylaw to remove election signage regulations

Previous Council Action:

July 2014 – council adopted the Election Bylaw.

Financial Impact:

Nil

Funding Source:

Nil

Strategic Alignment:

Governance & Corporate Excellence

Applicable Legislation/ Bylaw/Policy:

Local Government Act and Community Charter

To: Mayor and Council

File number: [3900.20]

Election Bylaw and Sign Amendment Bylaw

BACKGROUND:

The City's election framework is currently set out across multiple bylaws, including separate bylaws governing election procedures and automated voting. While both bylaws support the administration of local elections, the split structure can create duplication, interpretive overlap, and operational inefficiencies, particularly when amendments are required to reflect legislative changes or evolving election delivery models.

In preparation for the 2026 General Local Election, and to support continuity of service and voter accessibility, staff have identified the need to incorporate mail ballot administration into the City's election bylaw framework, with clear operational requirements, integrity safeguards, and consistent terminology. Consolidating the election rules into a single bylaw also provides an opportunity to modernize language, improve internal alignment, and ensure the bylaw is structured in a way that is easier to administer, easier to explain publicly, and easier to update in future election cycles.

Additionally, election sign regulations have been included in the election bylaw and a proposed Sign Amendment bylaw is proposed to repeal this section.

ANALYSIS:

Discussion:

The proposed consolidated Election Bylaw is intended to improve clarity, legal coherence, and operational delivery for the 2026 General Local Election by placing all key election procedures into a single, modernized bylaw, including explicit mail ballot rules, which were not previously included in existing bylaws. The discussion below outlines the principal considerations and the rationale for the recommended approach.

Maintaining separate bylaws for election procedures and automated voting can create practical challenges, including duplicated provisions (e.g., definitions, voting procedures, and authority) and the need to cross-reference multiple documents for one operational decision. A consolidated bylaw supports:

- One bylaw becomes the authoritative instrument for election administration, reducing interpretive risk and improving transparency for candidates and the public.
- Legislative or operational changes can be addressed through one amending bylaw instead of multiple concurrent amendments.
- Staff training, public communications, and procedural documentation are simplified when the legal framework is consolidated and standardized.

Mail ballots can improve access for voters who face barriers attending voting places (mobility, caregiving responsibilities, travel, or other constraints). At the same time, mail ballots introduce risks that should be addressed through clear rules and controls set out in the bylaw rather than relying on informal procedures. The bylaw's mail ballot provisions are intended to ensure:

- Clear criteria and deadlines reduce disputes and administrative ambiguity.
- Procedures for marking issuance of a mail ballot and restricting in-person voting unless properly resolved are central integrity safeguards.
- Defined controls for issuing, storing, transporting, and receiving mail ballots improve auditability and public confidence.
- Clear criteria for what constitutes a valid mail ballot package, and the deadline by which ballots must be received, support consistency and defensibility in the event of a challenge.
- A defined process for lost/damaged ballot packages protects both voter access and election integrity by preventing multiple active ballots for the same elector.

From an operational standpoint, mail ballots also requires early planning on service standards (e.g., application cutoffs, mailing timelines, and return options). Codifying the core rules in the bylaw reduces last-minute changes and supports consistent messaging.

Removing election signage provisions from the Sign Bylaw and addressing them through the Election Bylaw supports a single, election-specific regulatory framework. This approach also aligns election signage compliance expectations directly with election administration and candidate guidance materials. Changes to election signage include no limit on the number of signs, larger signs are only permitted on private property and smaller signs (18"x24") are permitted on municipal boulevards.

Project Description:

The project consists of three coordinated bylaw actions designed to improve clarity, legislative alignment, and administrative efficiency for the 2026 election.

- 1) The proposed Election Bylaw is intended to replace and amalgamate the two existing bylaws (Election Procedures and Automated Voting) into one consolidated bylaw.
- 2) The proposed Election Bylaw includes detailed mail ballot provisions to ensure a consistent, defensible, and transparent process.
- 3) The report recommends an amendment to the Sign Bylaw to remove election signage provisions, with election sign rules to be addressed exclusively through the consolidated Election Bylaw.

Strategic Alignment:

Governance & Corporate Excellence

Applicable Legislation/Bylaw/Policy:

Local Government Act and Community Charter

OPTIONS & IMPLICATIONS:

- 1) Adopt the consolidated election bylaw including mail ballots and election signage.
(Recommended)
- 2) Maintain current bylaws and rely on administrative procedures only. This would create avoidable governance and defensibility risk where key rules are not clearly codified, less transparency for candidates and the public, and potential for increased operational risk.

CONCLUSION:

A consolidated and modernized Election Bylaw that includes mail ballot provisions for the 2026 General Local Election will improve administrative clarity, reduce duplication, strengthen integrity controls, and support voter accessibility. Amalgamating the existing election procedures and automated voting bylaws into one bylaw will provide a single, coherent legal framework for election administration. In parallel, removing election signage provisions from the Sign Bylaw and addressing election signage within the Election Bylaw will simplify compliance and enforcement by establishing a single authoritative source for election-related regulations.

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Director of Legislative Services

Attachments:

- (A) Election Bylaw No. 8096-2026
- (B) Sign Amendment Bylaw No. 8101-2026
- (C) Existing Election Bylaws (Election, Automated Voting and Excerpt of Sign Bylaw)

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Election Bylaw and Sign Amendment Bylaw.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Election Bylaw No. 8096-2026.docx- Sign Amendment Bylaw No. 8101-2026.docx- Existing Election Bylaws.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Mar 30, 2026

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Scott Hartman, Chief Administrative Officer