



100 John West Way
Aurora, Ontario
L4G 6J1
(905) 727-3123
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora

Committee of the Whole Report

No. CS26-009

Subject: Election Sign By-law Update

Prepared by: Alexander Wray, Manager Bylaw Services

Department: Corporate Services

Date: April 14, 2026

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CS26-009 be received; and
2. That a by-law to amend the election sign provisions in the Sign By-law be brought forward to a Council meeting; and
3. That a by-law to amend the penalty amounts in the Administrative Monetary Penalty System By-law be brought forward to a Council meeting.

Executive Summary

Recent updates to the Region's Election Sign By-law, along with the age of certain provisions within the Town's current Sign By-law, prompted staff to undertake a comprehensive review of the Town's election sign regulations. Through this review, staff have identified necessary amendments intended to better align the Town's bylaw with regional standards and current legislative requirements.

- The proposed amendments would update the permitted locations for the placement of election signs across the Town, reflecting areas that have experienced growth as well as the implementation of the ward system.
- Modernizing the Town's election sign regulations to enhance consistency with York Region's updated sign bylaw framework and established municipal best practices.
- Introducing an election sign application process while eliminating sign retrieval fees to improve administrative efficiency and fairness for candidates.

Background

The Town's Sign By-law regulates the placement, size, and location of signage, including provisions governing the installation of election signs during municipal, provincial, and federal election periods. These provisions are intended to balance the ability of candidates and third-party advertisers to communicate with electors while ensuring that signage does not create safety concerns, interfere with municipal infrastructure, or contribute to visual clutter within the community.

In recent years, York Region and several neighbouring municipalities have updated their election sign regulations to improve consistency, address traffic safety considerations, and modernize administrative processes. Through the administration and enforcement of the Town's current bylaw, staff have also identified opportunities to clarify certain provisions and align elements of the Town's framework with regional approaches and municipal best practices.

Analysis

The proposed amendments would update the permitted locations for the placement of election signs across the Town, reflecting areas that have experienced growth as well as the implementation of the ward system.

At present, the Town's Sign By-law does not establish consistent parameters governing the placement of election signs across all wards. This has resulted in varying practices and an uneven distribution of signage throughout the municipality.

To improve clarity, fairness, and consistency in election sign placement, the proposed amendment maintains the existing framework permitting up to two election signs at each approved municipal intersection identified within the Town. The amendment clarifies and standardizes how these locations are applied, establishing a uniform set of expectations for all candidates and ensuring equitable opportunities for sign placement across all wards while helping to manage potential impacts on traffic safety and visual clutter.

While this approach differs slightly from the model adopted by York Region, it reflects local considerations and operational realities within the Town. Similar to York Region's framework, the proposed amendment relies on designated intersections as appropriate locations for election signage to minimize potential impacts on sightlines, transit operations, and municipal utilities.

The proposed designated intersections are identified in Table 1 of this report.

Table 1: Approved Election Sign Intersections by Ward

Ward	Intersection
1	Yonge Street and Dunning Avenue
1	Yonge Street and Catherine Avenue
1	Yonge Street and Orchard Heights Boulevard / Batson Drive
1	Edward Street and Engelhard Drive
2	Yonge Street and Aurora Heights Drive
2	Yonge Street and Orchard Heights Boulevard
2	Yonge Street and Irwin Avenue
2	Murray Drive and Kennedy Street West
3	Yonge Street and Golf Links Drive
3	Yonge Street and Brookland Avenue
3	Yonge Street and Henderson Drive
3	Murray Drive and Kennedy Street West
4	Goulding Avenue and Don Hillock Drive
4	Vandorf Sideroad and Engelhard Drive
4	Industrial Parkway South and Engelhard Drive
4	Industrial Parkway South and Industry Street
5	Earl Stewart Drive and Pedersen Drive
5	Earl Stewart Drive and McMaster Avenue
5	Industrial Parkway North and Centre Street

5	John West Way and Hollandview Trail
6	First Commerce Drive and Desjardins Way
6	William Graham Drive and Hartwell Way
6	Hartwell Way and Joseph Hartman Crescent
6	Alex Brodie Drive and Degraaf Crescent

Further, an amendment is proposed to prohibit candidates from placing election signs outside of the ward where the candidate is running. This would not apply to candidates running for an office to be elected at large (for example, the Mayor or School Board Trustees). Signage outside of a ward may confuse residents about which candidates are running in their ward. In addition, this amendment would minimize visual clutter within the intersections.

Modernizing the Town's election sign regulations to enhance consistency with York Region's updated sign bylaw framework and established municipal best practices.

As part of the review of the Town's Sign By-law, several updates are proposed to improve clarity, ensure consistency with York Region's updated framework, and incorporate municipal best practices observed across neighbouring jurisdictions. Many of these updates are administrative in nature and are intended to clarify existing requirements, modernize provisions where necessary, and address emerging safety and operational considerations associated with election signage.

The proposed changes are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Proposed Sign By-law Amendments – Election Signs

Area of Update	Current Approach	Proposed Clarification/Amendment	Purpose/Rationale
Definitions	Some election-related definitions are limited or may be interpreted inconsistently.	Definitions would be refined and standardized to better align with York Region's updated framework and terminology.	Improves clarity and consistency for candidates, election officials, and enforcement staff.

Area of Update	Current Approach	Proposed Clarification/Amendment	Purpose/Rationale
Timing – Municipal Elections	Timing provisions exist but would benefit from clearer articulation	Election signs permitted 28 days prior to Voting Day.	Provides clear expectations while balancing campaign visibility and community aesthetics.
Timing – Provincial and Federal	Not clearly distinguished within the current by-law	Election signs permitted upon the issuance of the writ for provincial and federal elections.	Aligns with established election timelines.
Removal of Election Signs	Signs must be removed within 72 hours after election day.	No change. Requirement remains 72 hours following the closing of the polls.	Maintains the current standard while reinforcing expectations for timely removal.
Digital or Illuminated Signs	Not explicitly addressed.	Election signs cannot be digital or illuminated.	Ensures election signs remain temporary in nature and reduces potential for driver distractions.
Vehicles as Signs	Not clearly addressed.	Vehicles displaying campaign messaging (e.g. vehicle wraps or decals) will be considered election signs.	Clarifies treatment of common practices and case law decisions.
Maximum Height	Height requirements clarified	Election signs shall not exceed four feet in height from the ground when installed.	Addresses potential sightline and road safety concerns, particularly near intersections.

Area of Update	Current Approach	Proposed Clarification/Amendment	Purpose/Rationale
Sign Size	Maximum sign size currently regulated	No change. Sign size remains consistent with existing standards and York Region's new framework.	Maintains consistency with current and Regional standards.
Sign Installation Materials	Various installation methods currently used, including metal step frames.	Election signs must be installed using wooden stakes or posts only at Designated Intersections. Metal, rebar, rods, or wire step-frame signs would not be permitted.	Improves environmental outcomes through easier recycling and addresses safety concerns related to wire frames becoming entangled in lawn equipment and creating potential projectiles during mowing operations.

Collectively, these updates are intended to modernize the Town's election sign regulations while maintaining consistency with regional approaches and municipal best practices. The amendments focus primarily on improving clarity, addressing safety considerations related to sign placement and installation, and ensuring that candidates are operating under a clear and consistent set of expectations.

Many of the proposed changes are administrative in nature and do not significantly alter the existing regulatory framework but rather provide greater certainty for candidates and staff responsible for administering and enforcing the by-law.

Introducing an election sign application process while eliminating sign retrieval fees to improve administrative efficiency and fairness for candidates.

To support improved administration and oversight of election signage within the municipality, the proposed amendment introduces a requirement for Candidates and Third-Party Advertisers to register their election signage with the Town prior to placing Election Signs for a fee. This process will require the submission of an application form in a manner determined by the Director and will include key information such as the name and contact information of the registrant, any authorized campaign agent,

confirmation that the Election Sign may be placed pursuant to applicable election legislation, and a description of the sign or signs proposed to be installed. The Director may also require additional information where appropriate to support administration and enforcement of the by-law.

The introduction of a registration process will assist the Town in maintaining accurate records of election signage during campaign periods and provide enforcement staff with a clear point of contact should issues arise related to sign placement, compliance, or removal. The registration framework also supports improved communication with candidates and campaign teams regarding the Town's election sign requirements and expectations.

A registration fee of \$310.00 is proposed as part of the application process. This fee is intended to support the administrative costs associated with processing applications, providing guidance to candidates, and undertaking enforcement activities related to election signage throughout the campaign period. This approach is consistent with the framework used by York Region, where a registration-based system is utilized in place of individual sign retrieval fees. This fee is not considered a deposit and is non-refundable.

Currently, the Town's Sign By-law includes a sign retrieval fee of \$20.00 per sign for Election Signs removed by the Town when they are placed in contravention of the by-law. Under the existing framework, candidates are not permitted to retrieve removed signs until the conclusion of the election period, which can result in administrative challenges and additional costs for candidates where multiple signs have been removed.

The proposed amendment would eliminate the existing \$20.00 per sign retrieval fee and instead rely on the registration fee as a more efficient and predictable administrative model. This approach reduces the need to track and invoice individual sign retrievals while ensuring that the Town can recover costs associated with administering and enforcing the election sign regulations.

Where the Town removes an Election Sign that has been placed in contravention of the by-law, the Town will continue to retain the sign for a Redemption Period of 30 days following the date of the election. During this period, the person registered in association with the Election Sign may retrieve the sign at no cost, once the election period has concluded.

Lastly, the Administrative Monetary Penalty System By-law will require amendments so that any offences and resulting penalties may be resolved through the AMPs process.

Collectively, these changes are intended to streamline the administration of election signage, improve communication with candidates and campaign teams, and provide a more consistent and transparent framework for managing election signage during campaign periods.

Advisory Committee Review

Not applicable

Legal Considerations

Placement and display of election signs in Aurora is subject to the Town's Sign By-law. Under the Sign By-law, election signs are subject to exemptions that allow them to be placed on public and private properties in Aurora during the election period, as defined in the Sign By-law. Election signs are permitted to be placed and displayed if they abide with the requirements set out in the Sign By-law. The amendments proposed pursuant to this report provide for some adjustments to the provisions governing election signage and would provide for a registration and permitting requirement that would apply to election signs.

Financial Implications

The registration fee for election signs is considered a campaign expense and would be paid for using campaign funds. The necessary supporting amendments to the Administrative Penalty Bylaws will be brought to a future Council meeting for review and approval.

Communications Considerations

This report will be posted to the Town's website. In addition, Communications will work with Legislative Services to ensure candidates are provided with this updated bylaw and information on the topic will be posted on the Town's election website.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations from this report does not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Election Sign By-law Updates report supports the Strategic Plan goal of promoting service accountability, excellence, and innovation by working with community partners to define, redefine, and meet community expectations.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. That Council maintain the existing provisions of the Town's Sign By-law respecting election signage for the 2026 Municipal Election; and

That no amendments be brought forward at this time to the Sign By-law, or the Administrative Monetary Penalty By-law in relation to election signage.

Conclusions

The proposed amendments to the Town's Sign By-law represent a balanced and necessary update to the regulation of election signage within the municipality. The changes improve clarity, establish greater consistency across wards, and enhance alignment with York Region's framework and municipal best practices. In addition, the amendments address key considerations related to traffic safety, visibility, and environmental impacts, while introducing a more efficient and transparent administrative model through the implementation of an election sign registration process and the elimination of sign retrieval fees.

Collectively, these updates provide a clear, consistent, and enforceable framework that supports candidates in communicating with electors while ensuring the orderly and safe management of election signage throughout the Town.

Attachments

None.

Previous Reports

Not Applicable

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on March 26, 2026

Approvals

Approved by Patricia De Sario, Director, Corporate Services/Town Solicitor

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer