

Report

Date January 21, 2026

File: 4200-20

Subject 2026 Election - Appointment of Election Officials and Coordination of Cost-Sharing Agreements

PURPOSE

To seek Council's approval to appoint the Chief Election Officer and Deputy Chief Election Officers for the 2026 General Local Election and to authorize staff to pursue election cost-sharing agreements.

BACKGROUND

Per section 52 of the *Local Government Act (LGA)*, elections for a mayor and all councillors from each municipality in British Columbia, and elections for electoral area directors from each regional district in British Columbia, collectively known as a General Local Election, must be held every four years. The next General Local Election will be held on Saturday, October 17, 2026.

Appointment of Chief Election Officer and Deputy Chief Election Officer

As required by section 58 of the *LGA*, Council must, by resolution at an open meeting, appoint a Chief Election Officer (CEO) and at least one Deputy Chief Election Officer (DCEO) to conduct an election, by-election, or assent vote. While the legislation refers to appointing "a deputy chief election officer," under section 28 of the *Interpretation Act* (which treats the singular as including the plural), this establishes a minimum of one deputy and does not restrict Council from appointing more than one.

For the 2025 By-Election and the 2022 General Local Election, the Corporate Officer and Deputy Corporate Officer were appointed as the CEO and DCEO, respectively. Prior to 2022, these roles were assigned to various staff members, including the Clerk, the Director of Administration, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, the Information Management Officer, and the Records and Information Management Assistant.

Election Cost Sharing Agreements

As authorized by section 57(2) of the *LGA*, the costs of an election may be shared under an agreement between the local government and another local government, or a board of education for the conduct of the election by one party for the other, or in conjunction with the other party's election.

Under section 170 of the *LGA*, when assent voting is required or authorized (including referendums on regional district services) municipalities must administer the vote within their boundaries in the same manner as a local election, following the procedures in Part 3 (Electors and Elections) of the *LGA*.

Section 37(3) of the *School Act* requires the School District to conduct the School Trustee Elections as the School District is comprised of a single trustee electoral area that encompasses the entire School District and includes more than one municipality. However, sections 38(4) of the *School Act* and 57 of the *LGA* allow the School District and North Cowichan to enter into an agreement under which North Cowichan conducts, for the School District, some of its election proceedings in accordance with the terms of the agreement.

In 2022, North Cowichan had cost-sharing agreements with:

- (1) Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) - to coordinate an assent voting question for CVRD regarding regional recreation funding services, with North Cowichan conducting the vote within its boundaries on behalf of CVRD, and,
- (2) School District 79 - to administer some of the School Trustee election proceedings on behalf of the School District.

DISCUSSION

Appointment of Chief Election Officer and Deputy Chief Election Officer

The duties and powers of the CEO are outlined in [Sections 58 and 59](#) of the *LGA* and further defined in North Cowichan's [Election and Assent Voting Bylaw No. 3837, 2022](#). The Chief Election Officer is responsible for:

- Appointing other election officials,
- Designating voting places,
- Establishing special voting opportunities,
- Ensuring the procedures set out in the Election and Assent Voting Bylaw are followed, and,
- Ensuring the election complies with all legislative requirements set out in Part 3 [Electors and Elections] of the *LGA*.

The Legislative Services Department, which has successfully administered past municipal elections, possesses the expertise and experience required to organize and administer the 2026 General Local Election. Appointing election officials now will allow staff to secure voting locations, draft election cost-sharing agreements, hire and train election staff, and review bylaws and procedures for compliance.

It is recommended that Council appoint:

- Tricia Mayea as Chief Election Officer, and,
- Andrea Hainrich and Kayla Reid-Starck as Deputy Chief Election Officers.

The practice of appointing staff to these positions or contracting out the services generally depends on the local government and the available staff resources, as these roles demand significant time and effort. Having two Deputy Chief Election Officers will help share the workload and support succession planning within the organization. If Council agrees to appoint two deputies, this will be Kayla Reid-Starck's first time serving in this capacity, providing her with an opportunity to gain practical experience in the role. Working alongside experienced counterparts will help her build confidence, learn the processes, and develop the skills needed for future leadership opportunities. The responsibilities of the Deputy Chief Election Officers will be clearly defined in the election workplan to avoid confusion, and Andrea Hainrich will act in the absence of the Chief Election Officer.

Election Cost Sharing Agreements

Staff have confirmed with the CVRD that no assent vote (referendum) questions are currently proposed; however, this could change. Staff are seeking direction to coordinate any assent voting cost-sharing agreements with the CVRD should they arise.

Staff anticipate that North Cowichan will administer specific election proceedings for the 2026 School Trustee Election on behalf of School District No. 79, consistent with historical practice. Staff are

requesting direction to begin discussions with the CVRD and the School District regarding cost-sharing agreements and will continue to monitor and confirm with the CVRD whether assent voting is planned.

OPTIONS

1. (Recommended Option)

- (1) THAT in accordance with section 58 of the *Local Government Act*, Council appoints the following election officials for the purpose of conducting the 2026 General Local Election:
 1. Tricia Mayea, Corporate Officer, as the Chief Election Officer;
 2. Andrea Hainrich, Deputy Corporate Officer, as the Deputy Chief Election Officer, to act in the absence of the Chief Election Officer; and,
 3. Kayla Reid-Starck, Legislative Coordinator, as the Deputy Chief Election Officer.
- (2) THAT Council directs staff to prepare a draft Election Cost-sharing Agreement with the Cowichan Valley Regional District [if required] and School District 79 for Council's consideration, outlining proposed terms for sharing election-related costs and responsibilities.
 - This option ensures early preparation for the election and provides sufficient time to negotiate cost-sharing agreements.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial: An allocation of \$131,000, representing the total estimated cost to administer the 2026 General Local Election, has been included in the draft budget. In the 2022 Election, costs were shared one-third each with the CVRD and School District 79, as North Cowichan conducted an assent vote on behalf of the CVRD and the School Trustee Election on behalf of School District 79.

For 2026, staff will work with both the CVRD and the School District to finalize cost-sharing agreements, where appropriate, to confirm responsibilities and ensure an equitable distribution of expenses. Any proposed agreements will be brought back to Council for endorsement.

Operational: Election administration requires substantial staff time beyond regular hours; therefore, early appointments and the addition of two Deputy Chief Election Officers support effective planning and help minimize excessive overtime.

Next Steps: Recent legislative changes to the *Local Government Act* affect North Cowichan's Election and Assent Voting Bylaw. Staff will review this bylaw, along with other election-related bylaws, agreements, and guidelines, and will report back to Council before the end of the first quarter with any recommended updates.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) THAT in accordance with section 58 of the *Local Government Act*, Council appoints the following election officials for the purpose of conducting the 2026 General Local Election:
 1. Tricia Mayea, Corporate Officer, as the Chief Election Officer;
 2. Andrea Hainrich, Deputy Corporate Officer, as the Deputy Chief Election Officer, to act in the absence of the Chief Election Officer; and,
 3. Kayla Reid-Starck, Legislative Coordinator, as the Deputy Chief Election Officer.

(2) THAT Council directs staff to prepare a draft cost-sharing agreement with the Cowichan Valley Regional District [if required] and School District 79 for Council's consideration, outlining proposed terms for sharing election-related costs and responsibilities.

Report prepared by:



Tricia Mayea
Manager, Legislative Services

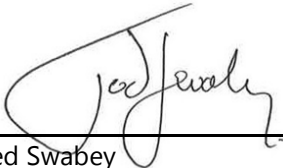
Report reviewed by:



Bill Corsan
General Manager, Corporate Services and

Community Relations

Approved to be forwarded to Council:



Ted Swabey
Chief Administrative Officer