



# Town of Pelham Candidate Guide



**Candidate Guide**

---

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Welcome to the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election.....	3
The Role of the Town Clerk .....	3
The Role of the Mayor.....	4
Enhanced Authority Under the “Strong Mayor” Framework .....	4
The Role of Council Members.....	4
Offices to be Elected .....	5
Candidate Eligibility and Qualifications.....	5
Eligibility and Qualifications .....	5
Disqualifications.....	6
Municipal Employees.....	7
Nomination .....	7
Nomination Period .....	7
Endorsements .....	7
Nomination Forms and Fees .....	7
Election Signage .....	8
Election Sign Deposit Amounts:.....	9
Use of Corporate Resources.....	9
Campaign Inventory and Reuse of Materials .....	9
Campaign Finance Overview .....	9
Candidate Debates and Meetings .....	10
Third Party Advertising .....	10
An Overview .....	10
Eligibility.....	11
Registration Requirement.....	11
Mandatory Information on Advertisements .....	11
Campaigning .....	12
Election Process and Voting.....	12
*New for 2026* Extended Advance In-Person Voting Period .....	13
*New for 2026* Advance Online Voting.....	13
Scrutineers .....	13

Tabulation and Results ..... 13

Appendices ..... 14

2026 Municipal and School Board Election Key Dates ..... 14

## Introduction

### Welcome to the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election

Congratulations on your decision to seek elected office in the Town of Pelham. Public service is both an important responsibility and a unique opportunity to help shape the future of our community.

The Town of Pelham's Candidate Guide, which is supplementary to the Province of Ontario's Candidates' Guide, has been prepared to support candidates throughout the municipal election process. It is intended to complement the provincial guide while providing additional information specific to the Town of Pelham.

Within these pages, you will find guidance on:

- the roles and responsibilities of elected officials;
- expectations for candidate and campaign team conduct; and
- key rules and requirements under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (the Act), including nomination eligibility, campaign financing, and compliance obligations.

Candidates are responsible for ensuring they meet all legislative requirements and deadlines outlined in the Act.

For further assistance, candidates may contact the Clerk's Department during regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). Candidates are also encouraged to seek independent legal advice on any specific election-related matters.

All official election notices and updates will be shared through local media and on the Town's election webpage: <https://www.pelham.ca/pelham-government/municipal-election/>.

## The Role of the Town Clerk

Under Section 12(1) of the Act:

A Clerk responsible for conducting an election may establish any matter or procedure that:

- is not otherwise provided for in the Act or regulations; and
- in the Clerk's opinion, is necessary or desirable for the proper conduct of the election.

In keeping with this authority, the Clerk has established specific procedures to guide the fair and efficient administration of the election. These procedures will be shared with all registered candidates.

Throughout the election period and within this guide, the Clerk may be referred to interchangeably as the "Returning Officer."

## The Role of the Mayor

The Mayor serves as the Head of Council, as defined under the *Municipal Act, 2001*, Section 225. Key responsibilities include:

- acting as the Chief Executive Officer of the Municipality;
- presiding over meeting of Council;
- providing leadership to Council;
- representing the municipality at official and civic events; and
- carrying out the duties of the Head of Council under the *Municipal Act, 2001*, or any other Act.

The Mayor also serves as a Councillor on Niagara Regional Council. In this role, the Mayor participates in regional decision-making, addressing issues that affect Pelham and the broader Niagara Region.

### Enhanced Authority Under the “Strong Mayor” Framework

Effective May 1, 2025, the Town of Pelham, along with 169 other municipalities in Ontario, was granted enhanced "strong mayor" powers under the *Municipal Act, 2001*. These powers are designed to streamline local governance and advance provincial priorities.

The expanded authorities include:

1. **Budgetary Control:** The Mayor must propose the municipal budget and has veto power over amendments. Council can override this veto with a two-thirds majority vote.
2. **Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Oversight:** The Mayor assumes the powers of the CAO, including the authority to hire and dismiss municipal staff, except for statutory roles.
3. **By-law Authority:** The Mayor can propose by-laws related to provincial priorities and require Council to consider them. Council can pass such by-laws with more than one-third support, including the Mayor's vote.
4. **Veto Power:** The Mayor can veto by-laws that may interfere with provincial priorities. Council can override this veto with a two-thirds majority vote, including the Mayor's vote.

The Municipality or its Council cannot refuse to implement these enhanced powers. However, the Mayor has discretion over how extensively to exercise them, except for mandatory responsibilities, such as proposing the municipal budget.

## The Role of Council Members

The Town of Pelham Council consists of seven elected members: the Mayor and six Councillors, with two Councillors representing each of the three wards. While each

Councillor represents the interests of their specific ward, they are also responsible for considering issues that affect the entire municipality.

Under Section 224 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, Council's key responsibilities include:

- represent the public while considering the well-being, priorities, and long-term interests of the municipality and its residents;
- develop, review, and evaluate municipal policies and programs;
- determine and oversee the range of services the municipality provides;
- ensure that administrative practices, procedures, and systems are in place to implement Council's decisions and directives;
- maintain the financial health of the municipality through responsible budgeting and oversight of public funds; and
- fulfill all statutory duties and responsibilities assigned to Council under the *Municipal Act, 2001*, and any other applicable legislation.

## Offices to be Elected

**Mayor:** One to be elected at large within the Town of Pelham. The Mayor also serves as a Regional Councillor.

**Ward Councillors:** Six to be elected, two from each of three wards: Ward One, Ward Two and Ward Three.

**English Language Public School Board Trustee:** One to be elected at large, shared between Pelham and Thorold. Nominations are filed with City of Thorold.

**English Language Catholic District School Board Trustee:** One to be elected at large, shared between Grimsby, Lincoln, West Lincoln and Pelham. Nominations are filed with Town of Grimsby.

**French Public School Board Trustee:** One to be elected at large, shared between Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Welland, Thorold and Wainfleet. Nominations are filed with City of Welland.

**French Separate School Board Trustee:** One to be elected at large, shared between Fort Erie, Pelham, Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Welland. Nominations filed with City of Welland.

## Candidate Eligibility and Qualifications

### Eligibility and Qualifications

To run for Mayor, Ward Councillor, or School Board Trustee, a candidate must:

- be at least 18 years of age;

- be a Canadian citizen;
- be eligible to vote in the Town of Pelham as either a resident elector or non-resident elector (i.e., a resident of the Town of Pelham, an owner or tenant of land in the Town, or the spouse of such an owner or tenant); and
- file a completed and legible Form 1 – Nomination Paper with the Clerk, together with the required number of valid endorsements from eligible voters on Form 2 – Endorsement of Nomination, and the applicable nomination fee.

*See disqualifications below.*

To run as a School Board Trustee, a candidate must:

- be at least 18 years of age;
- be a Canadian citizen;
- be eligible to vote as an elector for the school board for which they are seeking election; and
- submit a legible Form 1 Nomination Paper, along with the applicable nomination fee.

*See disqualifications below.*

### **Disqualifications**

The following individuals are not eligible to hold office:

- under 18 years of age;
- not a Canadian citizen;
- not a resident of the Town of Pelham, an owner/tenant of land in the Town of Pelham, or the spouse of such an owner or tenant;
- Town employees, unless a leave of absence is granted (see below);
- a judge of any court;
- Crown employees in senior or designated positions under the Public Service Act;
- inmates of a penal or correctional institution;
- persons prohibited from voting under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, *Municipal Act, 2001*, or *Education Act*;
- individuals who have failed to meet financial filing requirements; or
- Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), and Senators may be nominated without resigning, but must resign by 2 p.m. on Nomination Day to continue their municipal candidacy. A nomination will be rejected if they fail to resign.

## Municipal Employees

Employees of a municipality who wish to run for municipal council must comply with the leave requirements set out in the Act:

1. An employee of the Town of Pelham who wishes to run for an office on Pelham Council must take an unpaid leave of absence beginning when their nomination is filed and ending on voting day.
2. Employees of other municipalities or local boards may also be required to take a leave of absence depending on the office they are seeking.
3. Candidates who are employed by Niagara Region, another municipality, or a municipal local board are encouraged to consult their employer to confirm whether leave requirements apply to their candidacy.

For more detailed information on employment-related eligibility and leave requirements, candidates should review the Act and the Province of Ontario's Candidates' Guide.

## Nomination

### Nomination Period

The nomination period for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election begins on Friday, May 1, 2026, and continues until Friday, August 21, 2026 (Nomination Day). Nomination papers must be filed with the Clerk or designate during regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) by appointment. On Nomination Day, nominations can be submitted only between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

### Endorsements

Twenty-five (25) endorsements must accompany the nomination, in the prescribed form, "Nomination Paper – Form 1" and "Endorsement of Nomination – Form 2". Copies are available through the Clerk's Office and online.

Endorsements are not required for school board trustee candidates.

Candidates are encouraged to collect and submit additional endorsements in the event that one or more endorsements are deemed invalid, such as where an endorser is later determined not to be an eligible elector. While collecting additional endorsements is recommended, it remains at the discretion of the candidate.

### Nomination Forms and Fees

Nominations must be submitted on the prescribed **Nomination Paper – Form 1** to the Clerk, along with the applicable nomination fee: \$200 for Head of Council and \$100 for all other offices. Payments may be made by cash, debit, certified cheque, or money order; credit cards are not accepted. Filing fees will be refunded if all required documents are submitted by 2:00 p.m. on March 30, 2027.

Nomination papers must be filed in person by the candidate or their authorized agent. Candidates must provide proof of identity and a qualifying address within the Town of Pelham when submitting their nomination.

The Clerk will certify or reject nominations on or before 4:00 p.m. on August 24, 2026 (Certification Day).

Candidates wishing to withdraw their nomination must notify the Clerk in writing by 2:00 p.m. on August 21, 2026. The withdrawal must be submitted in writing with the candidate's original signature. Faxed, scanned, or electronic copies are not accepted. Candidates who withdraw must also submit a financial statement covering all transactions up to the time of withdrawal.

A Declaration of Qualification must be taken before a Commissioner of Oaths. The Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Legislative Coordinator and Committee Coordinator can administer this oath. If an agent is filing on a candidate's behalf, the declaration must be completed before the agent submits the nomination.

## **Election Signage**

Candidates and registered third party advertisers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with Election Sign By-law No. 02-2026 if they intend to display election signage.

Election signage is not a requirement of candidacy. However, prior to displaying any election signs, candidates and third party advertisers must submit the required election sign deposit, which varies by office as outlined below. Once the deposit has been paid, election signs may be erected beginning at 4:00 p.m. on Certification Day (Monday, August 24, 2026).

Candidates may only display election signage within the geographic area in which they are seeking office. Ward Councillor candidates may display signage only within their respective wards. Candidates for Mayor and School Board Trustee may display signage throughout the Town.

Election signage is not permitted on public property and is subject to additional restrictions related to placement, appearance, and size. These requirements are detailed in Election Sign By-law No. 02-2026, which candidates and third party advertisers are responsible for reviewing and complying with.

Where an election sign is found to be in contravention of the By-law and is removed by a Town official, a \$25.00 deduction will be made from the applicable sign deposit. Candidates and third party advertisers remain responsible for their signs at all times, including signs placed on private property that they do not own, and may be penalized for improper placement.

All election signage must be removed within three calendar days following Voting Day.

**Election Sign Deposit Amounts:**

- Mayor: \$250.00
- Third Party Advertisers: \$250.00
- Ward Councillor: \$200.00
- School Board Trustees: \$200.00

**Use of Corporate Resources**

To ensure fairness and prevent any real or perceived advantage for incumbent candidates, the use of municipal corporate resources for election-related purposes is strictly prohibited.

Candidates may not use municipal property, equipment, facilities, supplies, or staff time to support or further their election campaign. This prohibition applies equally to all candidates, including incumbents.

This restriction does not prevent incumbent candidates from running a campaign; however, they must conduct their campaigns separately from their official duties and in full compliance with applicable policies and legislation.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to review the Town's Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy to ensure full understanding and compliance.

**Campaign Inventory and Reuse of Materials**

Candidates may reuse certain campaign materials or inventory from previous elections, such as signs or promotional items.

Any reused materials must be accurately recorded in the candidate's financial statement at their current market value as a campaign expense and contribution, where applicable.

Candidates must ensure that all reused materials comply with current election rules, including any municipal sign by-laws and campaign advertising requirements.

**Campaign Finance Overview**

Candidates are responsible for complying with the campaign finance rules set out in the Act.

Key campaign finance rules include:

- candidates must open a campaign bank account if they accept contributions or incur expenses;
- all contributions must come from eligible contributors as defined by the Act;

- contributions from corporations and trade unions are prohibited;
- candidates are subject to campaign contribution and spending limits; and
- all financial activity must be recorded and reported in a financial statement filed with the Clerk by the legislated deadline following the election.

Candidates are encouraged to review the Province of Ontario's Municipal Candidates' Guide for detailed information on campaign finance rules.

## Candidate Debates and Meetings

Candidate debates and meetings are typically organized by community groups, media organizations, or other third parties.

The Town of Pelham does not organize or regulate candidate debates.

Candidates participating in debates or campaign events must ensure that any associated campaign expenses are recorded as part of their campaign finances in accordance with the Act.

Organizations hosting candidate events are encouraged to provide equal opportunity for all certified candidates to participate.

## Third Party Advertising

### An Overview

The Act introduced a framework for third party advertising on April 1, 2018. These regulations were created to provide transparency and accountability in election campaigns, particularly in response to the growing use of unregulated third party advertising in past elections.

A **third party advertisement** is any paid message in any medium (for example: billboards, newspapers, radio, television, or social media) that supports or opposes:

- a candidate on the election ballot, or
- a Yes/No referendum question on the ballot.

It is an offence for any individual, corporation, or trade union to incur expenses on third party advertising during the election period without first registering as a third party advertiser with the Clerk of the municipality (or municipalities, if the advertising appears in more than one jurisdiction).

It is important to note that not all advertising is considered third party advertising:

- advocacy or issues-based advertising that does not specifically support or oppose a candidate or referendum question is permitted;

- regular public outreach activities by groups or organizations may continue throughout the election period; and
- advertising that does not involve a cost to post or broadcast, such as personal opinions expressed on social media, does not qualify as third party advertising.

For the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election, all registered third party advertisers will be required to comply with the rules set out in the Act, including restrictions on financing and reporting.

### **Eligibility**

Only individuals, corporations, and trade unions may register as third party advertisers and, if they choose, contribute to third party advertisers, since contributions directly to candidates are not permitted. All third party advertising must be conducted independently of candidates. A candidate cannot direct, coordinate, or control a third party advertiser.

Eligible to Register as a Third Party Advertiser:

- an individual who is normally a resident of Ontario;
- a corporation that conducts business in Ontario; or
- a trade union that holds bargaining rights for employees in Ontario.

Ineligible to Register as a Third Party Advertiser:

- a registered candidate in the municipal election;
- a federal political party, constituency association, or registered candidate;
- a provincial political party, constituency association, or registered candidate;
- the Crown in right of Canada or Ontario; or
- a municipality or local board.

### **Registration Requirement**

Third party advertisers must register with each municipality where they intend to advertise, should there be multiple municipalities.

- third party advertisers must submit a Notice of Registration to the Clerk, either in person or through an authorized agent. Registration forms are available online and at Town Hall. All sections of the form must be completed in full;
- third party advertisers must sign a declaration of qualification; and
- third party advertisers must register on or between May 1, 2026, to October 23, 2026.

### **Mandatory Information on Advertisements**

Under Section 88.5 of the Act, third party advertisements must include the following information:

- the name of the registered third party advertiser;
- the municipality where the third party advertiser is registered;
- a telephone number, mailing address or email address at which the registered third party may be contacted regarding the advertisement; and
- for radio advertisements: A statement indicating who paid for the advertisement.

Information to be provided to broadcasters/publishers:

Third party advertisers must provide broadcasters/publishers with the following information in writing:

- the name of the registered third party advertiser;
- the name of the municipality where the third party advertiser is registered; and
- the name, address, and phone number of the agent/person interacting with the broadcaster/publisher on behalf of the third party advertiser.

Note: Broadcasters and publishers of third party advertisements are required to retain records for four years after the date the advertisement appears. Third party advertisers must be aware of this requirement, as well as their other obligations under the Act. Compliance with these responsibilities is the responsibility of the third party advertiser.

### **Campaigning**

Candidates and registered third party advertisers are permitted to canvass or campaign in apartment buildings, condominiums, non-profit housing co-operatives, and gated communities between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. during the election period.

Landlords and condominium corporations cannot prohibit tenants or owners from displaying campaign signs in their windows. However, they may regulate the size, number, and placement of such signs in common areas, provided these regulations are consistent with municipal by-laws and do not infringe upon the rights of tenants or owners.

All campaign advertisements, whether print, broadcast, or digital, must clearly identify the individual or entity responsible for the advertisement.

For example: "This ad is brought to you by 'John Doe,' 'Corporation Name,' or 'Union Name.'"

### **Election Process and Voting**

Advance voting opportunities are available for electors who are unable to vote on Voting Day.

A full-day in-person advance poll will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 17, 2026, at the Meridian Community Centre, serving all wards and all polls.

### **\*New for 2026\* Extended Advance In-Person Voting Period**

A five-day advance voting period will be held at Pelham Town Hall from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. from October 19, 2026, to October 23, 2026. Electors may drop in to cast a paper ballot or receive assistance with online voting.

### **\*New for 2026\* Advance Online Voting**

Online voting has been introduced as an alternative voting method for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election. A 10-day online voting period, beginning October 15, 2026, at 9:00 a.m., will be available to eligible electors 24 hours per day throughout the voting period.

Any eligible elector with internet access on a device such as a computer, tablet, or smartphone will be able to cast their vote online.

To enhance election security, *geofencing*, which restricts voting access from certain geographic regions around the world, may be implemented. Should geofencing be applied, details regarding the restrictions will be communicated in advance of the voting period.

Additional information regarding online voting will be published in advance and included on all Voter Information Letters.

On Voting Day, four in-person polling stations will be open, with at least one polling location serving each ward.

Candidates are encouraged to refer to the list of polling stations and advance voting dates for the most up-to-date information.

### **Scrutineers**

Candidates may appoint one (1) scrutineer per vote tabulating machine at each voting place. A scrutineer acts in place of the candidate and is appointed to observe the voting and vote-counting process.

Scrutineers must be formally appointed by the candidate and must comply with all rules governing their conduct at voting places.

Additional information, including scrutineer rights and responsibilities and the required appointment forms, is available in the Scrutineer Guide and Clerk's Procedure CLK MEP-06.

### **Tabulation and Results**

Results tapes for advance polls will be processed on Voting Day by an election official following the close of polls.

One vote tabulation machine will be used for the five consecutive advance voting days held at Pelham Town Hall; accordingly, a single results tape will be produced. Results from this machine will not be separated by individual advance voting day. In the event of

a mechanical or system failure, the Returning Officer may authorize the use of a back-up tabulation machine, which may result in more than one results tape being produced. In such cases, results will still not be separated by individual advance voting day.

The election services provider will provide an encrypted results file to the Returning Officer following the close of online voting. The results will be reviewed and officially recorded by the Returning Officer upon the close of voting on Voting Day.

Results tapes for Voting Day polls will be generated at each voting place and transmitted to the Returning Officer immediately for calculation and publication purposes.

The Returning Officer will publish unofficial election results in real time on the Town's website. Results will be reported by the advance voting date, online voting, and voting place location, where applicable.

The Town is also offering a communal viewing room at the Meridian Community Centre (Kinsmen Room), where election results will be broadcast live. This event is open to candidates, their families, and members of the public.

Further questions regarding vote tabulation or the reporting of results may be directed to the Returning Officer.

## **Appendices**

### **2026 Municipal and School Board Election Key Dates**

**2026 Municipal and School Board Election: Key Dates**

<b>Current until August 12, 2026</b>	<b>Revisions to the Voter Information</b> Individuals may confirm, update, or add their information to the municipal and provincial voters lists online at: <a href="https://www.registertovoteon.ca/">https://www.registertovoteon.ca/</a>
<b>Friday, May 1, 2026</b>	<b>Nomination Period Begins</b> Candidates may begin filing nomination forms starting Friday, May 1, 2026, and may continue to file on any business day thereafter until Nomination Day (Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). On Nomination Day, Friday, August 21, 2026, nomination forms may be submitted between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. s.33(4)(b)  <b>Third Party Advertiser Registration Period Begins</b> Individuals, corporations, or trade unions may file the prescribed form with the Clerk to become a registered third-party advertiser. Restrictions apply regarding who is eligible to register. s.88.6(7)
<b>Friday, May 1, 2026, to Friday, August 21, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Campaign Period Begins</b> The campaign period begins when a candidate files their nomination form and ends on December 31, 2026. Alternative time periods apply if the candidate withdraws their nomination, the Clerk rejects the nomination, or the candidate extends their campaign to eliminate a deficit. s.88.24(1),(2)
<b>August 2026</b>	<b>Elections Ontario to deliver the Preliminary List of Electors</b>
<b>Friday, August 21, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Nomination Day *Nomination Period Ends</b> The last day to file a nomination. On this date, nomination forms may only be submitted between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. s.33(4)(b)  The last day for a candidate to withdraw their nomination is by filing a written notice with the Clerk no later than 2:00 p.m. s.36
<b>Monday, August 24, 2026</b>	<b>Certification Day</b> The Clerk shall examine all filed nomination forms prior to 4:00 p.m. and, if satisfied, certify the nominations s.35(1),(2)  By 4:00 p.m., the Clerk shall also declare any candidate(s) elected by acclamation. s.37(1)
<b>Friday, October 23, 2026</b>	<b>Close of Third Party Advertiser Registration Period</b> Last day for a third party advertiser to file a notice of registration, or withdraw their registration, during office hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) s.88.6(7), s.88.6(15)
<b>Tuesday, September 1, 2026</b>	<b>Voters' List</b> The Clerk shall make the voters' list available to eligible individuals upon written request. S.23(2),(3),(4)  <b>Revisions to the Voters' List</b> Individuals may apply to the Clerk's Office until close of voting on October 26, 2026, to have their name added to or removed from the voters' list, or to update their information. Requests may also be made to remove the name of a deceased person. s.24, 25
<b>Monday, October 26, 2026</b>	<b>Voting Day</b> Voting opportunities will be available between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Voting locations will be published in advance, and voter notification packages will be provided.
<b>Tuesday, October 27, 2026</b>	<b>Declaration of Results</b> As soon as possible, the Clerk shall declare the results and advise the public. s.(4),(4.1)
<b>Sunday, November 15, 2026</b>	<b>New Term of Office Commences</b> Elected members must take the oath of office before assuming their seat. The inaugural meeting of Council will be held on November 18, 2026, at the MCC. The time will be confirmed at a later date.
<b>Thursday, December 31, 2026</b>	<b>Campaign Period Ends</b> Last day for candidates and registered third party advertisers to provide written notice of a deficit and the continuation of their campaign period. s.88.24(2), s.88.28
<b>Tuesday, March 30, 2027</b>	<b>Filing Date</b> By 2:00 p.m., last day for candidates and registered third party advertisers to file initial financial statements and auditors reports. s.88.30(1)