



The Corporation of the District of Central Saanich

REGULAR COUNCIL REPORT

For the Regular Council meeting on Monday, April 13, 2026

Re: Election 2026 – Appointment of Elections Officer

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That for the Local General Election 2026, the following be appointed as Elections Officer:

- Chief Election Officer – Emilie Gorman
- Deputy Chief Election Officer – Pamela Martin

PURPOSE:

As required by legislation, to appoint the District's Elections Officer for the 2026 Local General Election and provide a general overview of the current plan for the election.

BACKGROUND:

Local General Elections, where eligible electors vote for the Mayor and up to 6 members of Council, are held every 4 years in BC. This year's election is set by statute for Saturday, October 17, 2026.

By long standing agreement, the District also generally provides elections support to the election of up to two School District 63 trustees. In many past years, these have been acclaimed.

The District of Central Saanich has historically offered multiple locations on general voting day, one in each of the three cores – Saanichton, Keating and Brentwood.

DISCUSSION:

Within the legislated framework and the District's own bylaw, there exist many options or ways to conduct the election. The following is a summary of the proposed elections workplan for the 2026 election.

Types of Election Activities	Date	Comments
<i>Required</i> General Voting Day	Saturday, October 17	8 am – 8 pm
<i>Required</i> Advance Election Opportunities	Wednesdays – October 7 & 14 th	8 am – 8 pm Municipal Hall (MH) (as per previous years)
<i>By Bylaw</i> Mail Ballots	From approx. October 2	Administratively highly resource intensive, ballots are generally not available under a few days prior to the first advance opportunity – intended for those unable to attend, not necessarily those away for extended periods of time around the election. Greatly increases accessibility of voting.

<i>Optional</i> Special Voting opportunities	In Progress	Engagement with First Nations (on reserve) to determine viability and space for Special Voting opportunities
<i>Optional</i> Special Voting opportunities	TBD	Depending on the availability of staff, some potential combination of all or none of: Long Term Care voting opportunities, and outreach (educational) school-based voting opportunities (for fun!)
<i>Optional</i> Still under discussion	TBD	- Candidate Info Night (with other Peninsula local governments) - Multi-jurisdictional (joint) advertising

Related Activities

In addition to conducting the election, staff in Legislative Services (and across the organization) will also shortly begin planning for the inaugural Council meeting and the onboarding of the new Council. This period, from end of October-end of January (approximately), takes significant efforts to be available, complete, and well organized.

IMPLICATIONS:

Legislative/Policy

Significant legislation governs the conduct of local general elections, as does the District’s Elections Bylaw (attached).

The CEO and D/CEO act independently, and are distinct from the Administration and operations of the District.

Campaign Financing, including setting spending limits, is the only component that is not the responsibility of the local government, and is run through Elections BC who administer and enforce the [Local Government Campaign Finance Act](#).

Some minor legislative changes have occurred for the 2026 election, such as removing the requirement for a paper copy of nomination documents and broader permissible ID. These will all be incorporated into the District’s election procedures.

Financial/ Resource

Overall Costs

The election costs are based on the following main expenses:

- Voting machines, including ballot printing (for 3 locations)
- Elections staffing (for 3 locations), at Living Wage and following *Employment Standards Act*
- Statutory and Optional Advertising/printing/materials

Reducing the number of locations, to as few as 1 per required voting day, would reduce a portion of the costs by approximately 25% (including voting location rentals, staff costs, and number of voting machines). Staff numbers would increase somewhat at the one location to account for additional voters. Historically, Town of Sidney, District of North Saanich, Township of Esquimalt, and Colwood have one location only. Recruitment for the 40-50 required election workers will begin in late Spring.

The following is the voter turnout, by location, from the 2022 local general election (with 6 election positions on the ballot):

- Advance #1 – MH – 457

- Advance #2 – MH – 792
- Mail ballots - 140
- General – MH – 964
- General – Keating – 846
- General – Cultural Center - 931

Total voter turnout in 2022 was 4102 (out of a possible 16,449 eligible registered voters) for a turnout of approximately 25%.

Appointments

Elections Officers (CEO/DCEO)

Council is required to appoint a Chief Election Officer (CEO) to administer local government elections in accordance with Part 3 (Electors and Elections) of the *Local Government Act*, which assigns responsibility for the conduct of elections to an appointed election official.

The District has qualified staff to fulfill these roles and there may be challenges in this market to contract out the role and administration of the election. Administration has ensured that accommodation of these responsibilities can be undertaken within the current service level. Therefore, contracting out would have an increased cost, and availability of these specialities is uncertain, especially in a region with 13 municipalities.

School Board Trustee Costs

If the District completes the election of a School Board representative on behalf of SD63, up to 1/3 of most election costs are generally covered through an understanding with the School District. However, historically that position is often acclaimed and therefore the District is unable to rely on this as a source of funding as the status of that election is not known until the end of nominations in mid/late September.

First Nations

Residents (including band members) of Tsawout and Tsartlip First Nations are eligible electors for the District's local general election. In 2022, special voting opportunities (on-site, short hour election opportunities) were offered to both bands. One was hosted at Tsartlip Band Office, with 2 ballots cast. First Nations members from either band or reserve can vote at any of the other voting opportunities offered to other CS residents. As the district is unique in that the First Nations Band members and residents are voting members, it is a good opportunity for public education and relationship building.

Communications

Communications for the election are a combination of required (statutory) advertising and optional advertising.

All statutory advertising will follow the legislation and the District's Public Notice Bylaw. While not a requirement due to the bylaw, the District will be placing many of the main ads in local publications – likely in coordination and sharing ads with the Town of Sidney and District of Central Saanich. For optional advertising, all local governments benefit from a shared date which raises awareness. Staff/the administration must not be perceived to be promoting or encouraging anything other than voting, and therefore all additional communications are focused on awareness of the date and requirements.

Elections Deadlines

A large portion of the election legislation sets up statutory deadlines, although not all. Some dates are simply practical, such as the availability of nomination packages (typically available late July, for filing between September 1 and 11th) or the availability of mail ballot packages (which rely on the actual printing of specific ballots, generally available only a couple days prior to the first advance opportunity).

Election planning is already underway in earnest, and all Council decisions or input on the election should be received at this time for proper planning.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (recommended):

That for the Local General Election 2026, the following be appointed as Elections Officer:

- Chief Election Officer – Emilie Gorman
- Deputy Chief Election Officer – Pamela Martin

Option 2:

In addition to the appointment of the Elections Officers in Option 1:

That to reduce overall election costs, the District reduce the number of special voting locations and advance/general voting day opportunities to one each in the community as follows:

- Advance Voting Opportunity #1 – Keating Area (location TBD)
- Advance Voting Opportunity #2 – Saanichton (Municipal Hall)
- General Voting Day – Brentwood Bay (location TBD)

Option 3:

That staff seek a third-party contractor to be hired to run the 2026 local general election and once selected that individual names be brought forward to be appointed by Council as the Chief Elections Officer.

CONCLUSION:

The District Council must appoint Elections Officer to conduct the 2026 General Local Election.

Report written and submitted by:	Christine Culham, Chief Administrative Officer
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ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: [District of Central Saanich Elections Bylaw](#)