

## **Whitby Chamber of Commerce Election Campaign Protocol**

In effect for federal, provincial and municipal elections (general and byelections)

### **Overview:**

The Whitby Chamber of Commerce always takes a non-partisan approach to elections and broader political activities, preferring instead to focus its efforts on sharing information with Chamber members and fostering deep discussion about topics of importance so members can make informed choices and decisions.

In an effort to ensure fairness to all candidates in an election, the following protocol has been developed by the Chamber for use in federal, provincial and municipal election periods. An election period is defined as the day of a writ being issued provincially or federally, and municipally/regionally from the time candidates can begin registering in a given year.

Along with draft guidelines for candidates, this protocol also shares the Chamber's definition of a candidate and sets out potential tactics for allowing candidates to have access to members.

### **Candidate definitions:**

To be included in Chamber events and activities for federal and provincial elections, a candidate must be:

- An individual officially recognized by a political party as their candidate for an election.
- An individual belonging to a political party that has secured at least five per cent of the valid ballots cast in the most recent general election (not a by-election). The five per cent total can be confirmed through Elections Ontario or Elections Canada.
- An individual belonging to a political party that has secured a seat in either the House of Commons or the Ontario Legislature.

To be included in appropriate Chamber events and activities for municipal elections, a candidate must have:

- Officially been confirmed as a candidate by the town or regional office.

Please note that given time constraints and at times the sheer number of total candidates in a municipal election, it may not be possible to provide equal access to members for all positions. In such cases, the Chamber will prioritize opportunities in the following order, as appropriate:

- Candidates for Regional Chair
- Candidates for Mayor

- Candidates for regional seats
- Candidates for ward seats

### **General principles for election periods:**

The Chamber will make best efforts to do the following:

- Provide members with general information about federal and provincial elections and plan one or two events that will provide Chamber members with equal access to all candidates, as identified above.
- Provide members with general information about municipal elections and typically look at two or three events to generate election awareness and provide Chamber members with access to recognized candidates for as many different positions as possible. Voter turnout is typically lowest in municipal elections and the Chamber believes it has a role to play in advocating for broad member participation.
- Use its communication channels to advise members of officially-sanctioned Chamber opportunities to meet with candidates (e.g. tactics outlined below, and others that present non-partisan opportunities for members to hear from candidates).
- From time to time, request all recognized candidates answer a list of Chamber-issued questions and then share all responses publicly on its website and otherwise.
- Post to its website its election protocol and make it available to anyone who asks.
- Support returning officers, if appropriate, in dispensing information during an election campaign.
- Be willing to host a campaign stop by the leader of a recognized political party (as defined above), provided there is a clear understanding that Chamber members have an opportunity to attend and ask questions about the election and that there are to be no campaigning activities. In these cases, the Chamber will take the lead on the event and its execution, including appointing an emcee from its executive or broader membership and limiting speaking roles to the leader.

The Chamber will not:

- Host any of its mayor, regional chair, MP or MPP lunches or events at a time after the candidate registration period opens. In those cases, the events would be deferred until after the election. This would also provide an opportunity to hear from a newly elected member in the case where an incumbent is defeated.
- Share information about or include in an election activity, an individual who has not officially registered for an election or been approved as a candidate by a recognized party.
- Allow any direct canvassing or distribution of campaign materials at Chamber events, activities or through communication materials.
- Allow candidates to use Chamber offices for campaign activities.
- Endorse or appear to endorse any candidate for election.

### **Potential activities that may be used by the Chamber:**

The Chamber will consider any activity or event that would provide members with equal access to recognized candidates (as defined above) in an election and still be aligned with Chamber priorities, the following tactics will most often be used in planning Chamber election activities. These events primarily

serve to educate and inform members, while also showcasing the Chamber and its services in general and how it brings the business community together.

**Tactic 1:** Host an all-candidates meeting (generally for provincial or federal elections, but some specific municipal races as well, such as mayoral or regional chair):

- All efforts would be made to find an experienced, impartial moderator from the community.
- Invitations would be sent to candidates well in advance, followed by marketing of the event to members.
- The meeting would allow for brief opening and closing remarks from each candidate, followed by a Q&A session, with opportunities for Chamber members to ask questions.
- Using this tactic effectively will depend on the number of candidates who would need to be invited.
- Invitations would be extended to all recognized candidates (as defined above).

**Tactic 2:** Host an all-candidates reception/candidate fair (generally for municipal elections, where there are large numbers of candidates across multiple positions):

- To be held at a location that is able to accommodate larger crowds and space for candidates to set up materials.
- Clearly marketed to candidates as an opportunity to campaign directly to members. This would include encouraging them to bring campaign literature to be displayed on tables provided by the host site.
- Invitations would be sent to candidates well in advance, followed by marketing of the event to members.
- Opportunity for each candidate (as defined above) to bring short remarks to the group. This tactic is ideal, however only practical if a small number of candidates have RSVP'd to attend.