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2026 Municipal Election Communications Plan

Town of Stouffville

Overview

The 2026 Municipal Election introduces a hybrid voting model featuring internet voting, paper ballots, and optical scan vote tabulators. Council's approval of this model supports:

- Transparency
- Accessibility
- Good governance
- Fairness and neutrality
- Strong democratic participation

This Communications Plan is led by the Clerk's Department in partnership with Corporate Communications, focusing on awareness, confidence-building, inclusive participation, and voter turnout.

Opportunities and Objectives

Primary Objectives

- Educate residents on how, when, and where to vote
- Educate residents on how to run for office and encourage a diverse candidate pool
- Build public confidence in the hybrid model with emphasis on online voting security and accessibility
- Reach residents who may face barriers to voting
- Increase awareness around advance voting
- Support voter list accuracy
- Provide timely, accurate, and engaging information
- Position the Town as the trusted, neutral source of election information
- Clarify election processes for candidates and residents.

Focus Areas for Awareness

1. Distinguishing the importance of participating in local democracy.
2. Providing accessible educational resources, including:
 1. A dedicated education section on the Elections webpage (stouffvillevotes.ca).
 2. Tools, guides, and videos explaining voting methods and the voting process.

Offering information and supports for candidates, including candidate information sessions.

Voting Model for 2026

Hybrid Voting Model

Includes:

- Internet voting (*NEW!*)
- Paper ballots
- Optical scan vote tabulators

Internet voting will:

- Be available during advance voting and voting day (final schedule TBD)
- Work on smartphones, tablets, and computers
- Require secure authentication
- Prevent duplicate voting
- Offer voter assistance centres

What's New?

Enhanced Digital Campaign

- Organic social advertising
- Short-form videos and educational reels
- Targeted messaging for youth and newcomers
- Online voting demonstrations and myth-busting content

Expanded Community Outreach

- Presence at community events
 - Festivals, events, and public facilities
 - Senior-focused outreach
 - High school engagement for youth voters
 - Some multilingual materials
 - Themed public information sessions
 - Candidate Information Sessions, Joint Regional Sessions and education on additional resources
-

Key Audiences

Eligible Voters

There are 3 ways that you can qualify to vote in a municipality:

As a **resident elector** if you live in the municipality. You may own, rent, live in shared accommodation where you do not pay rent or live in the municipality but do not have a fixed address. Being a resident elector is the most common type of eligibility.

As a **non-resident elector** if you own or rent property in a municipality, but it's not the one where you live. You can only be a resident elector in 1 municipality. However, you can be a non-resident elector in any other municipality (or municipalities) where you own or rent property.

Resources, plans and promotional materials may also support:

- Youth & first-time voters
- Multilingual households
- Seniors
- Residents with accessibility concerns

As the **spouse of a non-resident elector** if your spouse owns or rents property in the municipality or municipalities other than the one where you live.

Eligible Candidates

To run for a position on council you must be eligible to vote in that municipality. On the day you file your nomination, you must be a Canadian citizen aged 18 or older, and qualify as a resident or non-resident elector.

Eligible Workers

In order to be eligible to work in a temporary election position, you must meet the following criteria:

- 16 years of age or older on the voting day you are working
- Legally entitled to work in Canada
- Applicants cannot be a candidate or a direct relative to a candidate running in the 2026 Municipal Election
- Applicants cannot volunteer for a candidate running in the 2026 Municipal Election

Additional criteria may also apply.

Key Messages

- “Vote – your voice matters.”
- “Online voting is secure, easy, and accessible.”
- “Municipal government shapes your everyday services.”
- “If you want to be in the heart of decision-making, you can run.”
- “Check early to ensure you are on the voters’ list at stouffvillevotes.ca.”

(All messaging remains neutral and informational.)

Communications Strategy by Phase

Phase 1: Candidate Outreach & Diversity Strategy (Jan–May 2026)

Objectives: Raise awareness, encourage diverse candidate participation.

Tactics:

Tactic	Timing	Notes
Candidate Information Sessions	March 26 & April 9	Ringwood Room / Nineteen on the Park
Joint Regional Information Session	April 20	Offered virtually
Social media recruitment campaign	Feb–May	Increased March–April
Candidate information on stouffvillevotes.ca	January	Updated during nomination period
Outreach to community	March–May	Councillor networks where appropriate
On The Road magazine	Spring issue	Submission deadlines apply
Candidate one-pager	March	Print + digital
Podcast & E-news features	March–May	Awareness + education

Phase 2: Voter Education (June–July 2026)

Objectives: Improve list accuracy, and differentiate election levels.

Tactics:

Tactic	Timing	Notes
Voter lookup campaign	June–July	Supports list accuracy
Social media voter education	June–July	Weekly cadence
Community event booths	June–July	Stouffville Market, Strawberry Festival etc.
Tax/water bill buck-slips	June & July	Direct household reach
On The Road magazine	Summer issue	Voter education
Podcast & E-news	June–July	Municipal election basics
Radio ads	July	York Region cost-share

Phase 3: Online Voting Education Campaign (Aug–Oct 2026)

Objectives: Build confidence, address concerns, demonstrate process.

Tactics:

Tactic	Timing	Notes
Video demonstrations	August	Social + website distribution
FAQ + myth-busting	Aug–Sept	Released in batches
Printed fact sheet	August	Step-by-step instructions
Social media series	Aug–Oct	Increased Sept–Oct
Community demos	Aug–Sept	Supported by summer students
<i>On The Road</i> magazine	Fall issue	Online voting focus
Podcast & E-news	Aug–Oct	How-to themes

Phase 4: Be Heard: Vote. (Sept–Oct 2026)

Objectives: Promote advance/online voting and Election Day awareness.

Tactics:

Tactic	Timing	Notes
BHV countdown campaign	Sept–Oct	Daily/weekly reminders
Mobile signs	Sept–Oct	All six wards
Shareable “I Voted” graphics	Mid-Sept	Supports advance voting
Posters at Town facilities	Sept–Oct	Library, LC, arenas
Voter notification reminders	Sept–Oct	Digital + social
Election Day social push	Oct 26	High-frequency updates

Phase 5: Results & Wrap-Up (Post–Oct 26, 2026)

- Unofficial & Official results release
- Website + social updates
- Thank-you messages
- Post-election evaluation report

See built-out plans in alternate document.

Communication Channels

External	Internal	Media Relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ StouffvilleVotes.ca ✓ Spotify & Radio Ads ✓ <i>On The Road</i> magazine ✓ Townofws.ca Website ✓ “X” ✓ Facebook ✓ Instagram ✓ Information Sheets ✓ Tax Insert ✓ Posters and Postcards ✓ Mobile Sign ✓ Digital Signs ✓ Online Newspaper Ad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Poster ✓ Email ✓ The Loop ✓ Town Hall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Media Release ✓ Fact Sheet

Community Presence

Staffed booths at:

- Strawberry Festival
- Stouffville Market
- 55+ Club
- Leisure Centre & Library

Information provided at booths and events:

- Voter lookup
 - Online voting demos
 - FAQs
 - Online voting privacy/security
 - Step-by-step voting instructions
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Budget Summary

Item	Description	Estimated Cost
Content creation	Production costs of video, photo and digital marketing assets.	\$1,500
Printed materials	Postcards, A-Frames, mailers, signage	\$3,000
Mobile signs	\$150+HST per ward per campaign phase	\$3,000
Miscellaneous	Any additional costs not captured in previous buckets	\$1,000
Total		\$8,500

All election costs are funded through the Town's Election Reserve.

Evaluation & Metrics

Measured by:

- Voter turnout (goal: exceed 34.19% from 2022)
- Advance + online participation rates
- Website traffic + lookup engagement
- Social engagement
- Session attendance
- Media coverage + public feedback

A post-election evaluation report will be completed.

Roles & Responsibilities

Town Clerk

- Oversees election administration
- Leads candidate sessions
- Ensures legislative compliance
- Oversees election execution

Corporate Communications

- Leads communications strategy
- Manages branding, messaging, media, and materials

Conclusion

The 2026 Municipal Election modernizes civic engagement in Stouffville through secure online voting and traditional in-person options. This plan ensures residents understand how to vote and run for office, understands their voting options, and receive clear and neutral information.

For full details and updates: **stouffvillevotes.ca**