

October 8 2025

Hi Karlee,

Re: Submitting a Question to Voters

I just spent a bit of time on the phone tracking down the information about adding a (referendum) question to the ballot for next fall

- The procedure is outlined in the Municipal Elections Act
- Council needs to decide on the wording for a question to be included on the ballot
- This needs to be submitted by Dec 31 (?) 2025
- I spoke to Paul Prosperi, Municipal Advisor for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing,
- (705) 280-5436 (I think he's in Sudbury) -

The Ontario Municipal Elections Act ([Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 32, Sched. I ontario.ca](#)) contains section 8 re: submitting a question. It would appear the deadline is March 1 2026. The voters need to be given at least 10 days notice of the intention to pass the bylaw concerning the question and one public meeting needs to be held. I'll put this on the agenda for the next LSEC meeting to see whether they want to make this request to Council and come up with a proposed wording.

-Jennifer

Conditions re: submitting a question

8.1 (1) A by-law to submit a question to the electors under clause 8 (1) (b) or (c),

(a) shall be passed on or before March 1 in the year of a regular election at which it is intended to submit the question to the electors;

(b) cannot be amended after the last date referred to in clause (a); and

(c) despite clause (b), can be revoked on or before nomination day and, if the election does not include an election for an office, on or before the 31st day before voting day. 2000, c. 5, s. 28; 2016, c. 15, s. 8.

Rules

(2) A question authorized by by-law under clause 8 (1) (b) shall comply with the following rules:

1. It shall concern a matter within the jurisdiction of the municipality.
2. Despite rule 1, it shall not concern a matter which has been prescribed by the Minister as a matter of provincial interest.
3. It shall be clear, concise and neutral.
4. It shall be capable of being answered in the affirmative or the negative and the only permitted answers to the question are “yes” or “no”. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Notice of intent

(3) Before passing a by-law under clause 8 (1) (b) or (c), the clerk shall give at least 10 days notice of the intention to pass the by-law to the public and the Minister and hold at least one public meeting to consider the matter. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Notice of by-law

(4) Within 15 days after a municipality passes a by-law under clause 8 (1) (b) or (c), the clerk shall give notice of the passage of the by-law to the public and the Minister. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Contents

(5) A notice under subsections (3) and (4) shall include,

(a) the wording of the question;

(b) in the case of a by-law under clause 8 (1) (b), a clear, concise and neutral description of the consequences of the question if it is approved and the consequences if it is rejected with the special majority under section 8.2, including an estimate of the costs, if any, that the municipality may incur in implementing the results of the question; and

(c) in the case of a by-law under clause 8 (1) (b), a description of the right to appeal under subsection (6) including, in the case of a notice under subsection (4), the last day for filing a notice of appeal. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Appeal

(6) Within 20 days after the clerk gives notice of the passage of a by-law under clause 8 (1) (b), the Minister or any other person or entity may appeal to the Chief Electoral Officer of the Province of Ontario on the grounds the question does not comply with paragraph 3 or 4 of subsection (2) by filing with the clerk a notice of appeal setting out the objections and the reasons in support of the objections. 2000, c. 5, s. 28; 2007, c. 15, s. 40 (1).

Notices to be forwarded

(7) The clerk shall, within 15 days after the last day for filing a notice of appeal under subsection (6), forward any notices of appeal received to the Chief Electoral Officer. 2000, c. 5, s. 28; 2007, c. 15, s. 40 (1).

Other information

(8) The clerk shall provide any other information or material to the Chief Electoral Officer that the Chief Electoral Officer requires in connection with the appeal. 2000, c. 5, s. 28; 2007, c. 15, s. 40 (1).

Hearing

(9) The Chief Electoral Officer or his or her designate shall, within 60 days of receiving notices under subsection (7), hold a hearing and dismiss the appeal or allow the appeal in whole or in part. 2000, c. 5, s. 28; 2007, c. 15, s. 40 (1).

Order

(10) If the Chief Electoral Officer allows the appeal in whole or in part, the Chief Electoral Officer may make an order amending the by-law or directing the municipality to amend the by-law in the manner ordered. 2000, c. 5, s. 28; 2007, c. 15, s. 40 (1).

Non-application

(11) Subsections (1) and (3) to (9) do not apply to anything done pursuant to an order under subsection (10). 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Section Amendments with date in force (d/m/y)

Results

8.2 (1) The results of a question authorized by a by-law under clause 8 (1) (b) are binding on the municipality which passed the by-law if,

- (a) at least 50 per cent of the eligible electors in the municipality vote on the question; and
- (b) more than 50 per cent of the votes on the question are in favour of those results. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Determination of number of votes

(2) For the purpose of clause (1) (a), the number of eligible electors shall be determined from the voters' lists as they exist at the close of voting. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Section Amendments with date in force (d/m/y)

Implementation

8.3 (1) If the results of a question authorized by a by-law under clause 8 (1) (b) are binding on a municipality,

(a) if an affirmative answer received the majority of the votes, the municipality shall do everything in its power to implement the results of the question in a timely manner; and

(b) if a negative answer received the majority of the votes, the municipality shall not do anything within its jurisdiction to implement the matter which was the subject of the question for a period of four years following voting day. 2000, c. 5, s. 28; 2006, c. 9, Sched. H, s. 3 (1).

Same

(2) Without limiting subsection (1), the municipality shall, between 14 and 180 days after voting day,

(a) if a by-law or resolution is required to implement the results of the question, ensure that it is prepared and placed before council or, if a series of by-laws are required to implement the results, ensure that the first of the series is prepared and placed before council;

(b) despite clause (a), if passage of a by-law or resolution required to implement the results of the question is subject to a condition precedent under a regulation or statute (such as giving notice or holding a public hearing), ensure the initial steps have been taken to comply with the condition;

(c) if administrative action to change a policy or practice is required to implement the results of the question, instruct municipal staff to take that action. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Limitation

(3) For the purpose of clause (1) (a), it is not within the jurisdiction of the municipality to eliminate or override any substantive or procedural legal right of any person or entity who is or may be affected by the implementation of the results of the question as illustrated by the following examples:

1. If a zoning change under the *Planning Act* is necessary to implement the results, the binding effect of the question is subject to the *Planning Act* and the discretion of the municipality under that Act is not constrained. If the zoning change is approved, the municipality is bound to implement the results; if it is not approved, the municipality is not bound.

2. If the results of the question require the passage of a by-law which requires notice to be given and at least one public meeting to be held to consider the matter before the by-law is passed, the binding effect of the question is subject to these procedural requirements and

the discretion of the municipality to proceed following the public meeting is not constrained. If, after the public meeting, the municipality decides not to implement the results of the question, it is not required to do so. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Order

(4) A court presiding over a proceeding in respect of a recount, an offence under this Act or a proceeding under section 83 (controverted elections) may make an order temporarily staying the requirement of a municipality to implement the results of a question under this Act if satisfied that the requirement may be directly or indirectly affected by the proceeding. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Time restriction

(5) A municipality that has passed a by-law or resolution or taken any other action to implement the results of the question shall not do anything within its jurisdiction to reverse or substantially change the action for a period of four years following the day the action took effect. 2000, c. 5, s. 28; 2006, c. 9, Sched. H, s. 3 (2).

Exception

(6) Nothing in this section requires a municipality to do anything or prevents a municipality from doing anything if,

(a) a subsequent binding question authorizes such action or inaction; or

(b) the council is of the opinion, reasonably held, that there has been a material change in circumstances since the time it passed the by-law under clause 8 (1) (b) to put the binding question to the electors. 2000, c. 5, s. 28.

Section Amendments with date in force (d/m/y)