

Staff Report

Presented By: Morgan McCulloch, Deputy Clerk
Meeting Date: February 23, 2026
Subject: Joint Bruce County 2026 Election Compliance Audit Committee
Attachment(s): None

Recommendation

That Council receive the Joint Bruce County 2026 Election Compliance Audit Committee report for information.

Report Summary

Under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (MEA), every Ontario municipality is required to establish a Compliance Audit Committee (CAC) to review applications for audits of candidates' or third-party advertisers' campaign finances. Joint Compliance Audit Committees (JCACs) are permitted with other local lower tiers that can serve several councils simultaneously, Bruce County Municipal Clerks have decided to create a Joint Bruce County 2026 Election Compliance Audit Committee (JCAC).

Background/Analysis

The MEA requires each Municipality to establish a Compliance Audit Committee and appoint its members by October 1 of an election year. The term for this Committee aligns with Council and runs from November 15, 2026, to November 14, 2030. The MEA requires the Clerk of the municipality to establish administrative practices and procedures for the Committee.

The Compliance Audit Committee is tasked with reviewing applications for audits of candidates' and third-party advertisers' campaign finances. If necessary, they will appoint an independent auditor who will examine all financial records related to the candidates' or third-party advertisers' campaign. Once an audit is complete, the Committee reviews and considers the findings and if there is a contravention of the MEA, the Committee must decide whether to initiate legal proceedings.

The Bruce County JCAC will consist of the following municipalities:

- Municipality of Arran-Elderslie
- Municipality of Brockton
- Municipality of Kincardine
- Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula
- Municipality of South Bruce
- Town of Saugeen Shores
- Township of Huron-Kinloss

All member municipalities will jointly appoint a pool of no more than seven members. When a compliance audit application has been filed under the requirements of the MEA, the Clerk of the member municipality who received the application will select three (3) of the seven (7) members to sit at the CAC to review that application. The Clerk from the applicable member municipality, or their delegate, shall act as Secretary to the Committee and carry out any other duties required under the MEA to implement the CAC decision.

If a member cannot fulfill their duties, the Clerk may appoint a replacement member from the four (4) remaining members in the pool. Replacement members may be called upon to replace a voting member that is unavailable, declares a conflict of interest under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, or has resigned from the Committee.

A JCAC was chosen as it will allow for:

- cost savings in joint recruitment and training of members;
- a larger pool of members to limit the impacts of conflicts of interest;
- adherence to strict timelines for compliance audit applications, audit appointments, and report considerations with members chosen from the pool who are able to accommodate required timelines for the application;
- increase in public trust as the members are not chosen by a single municipality but instead by a group of municipalities who all follow standardized procedures.

In order to get the specific skills required for compliance audit committee members the Clerks of the members municipalities will start recruitment in March 2026 with public advertising and contacting current members of the various committees. Due to the specific skills, many municipalities utilize the same pool of members currently. In order to get the skills required, the membership will be drawn from:

- a) accountants or auditors with experience in preparing or auditing the financial statements;
- b) legal professionals with experience in municipal or administrative law;
- c) professionals who in the course of their duties are required to adhere to codes or standards of their profession which may be enforced by disciplinary tribunals; and/or
- d) other individuals with knowledge of the campaign financing rules of the Municipal Elections Act.

Pursuant to section 88.37 of the Act, the following are not eligible to be appointed to the Committee:

- a) members of Council or local board;
- b) employees or officers of the municipality or local board;
- c) any Candidates or any persons who are Registered Third Parties in the 2026 election or in any by-election during the term of Council for any member municipality;
- d) any persons who are registered third parties in the municipality in the election for which the Committee is established;
- e) any person who prepares the financial statements of any candidate running for office on Council or Third-Party Advertiser during the term for which the Committee has been established would not be eligible for appointment to the Committee.

A Selection Committee, chosen from Clerks of member municipalities will promote, advertise and make recommendations for appointment to the Joint Bruce County 2026 Election Compliance Audit Committee. Recommended candidates will be submitted to the Council of each Member Municipality for consideration.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 3: Building Valued Relationships
- Business Plan Alignment: Corporate Services Business as Usual

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

Prepared By: Morgan McCulloch, Deputy Clerk

Reviewed By: Jim Bundschuh, Director, Corporate Services

Approved By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Officer