

Corporate donations out in 2018 municipal election

By Graeme Frisque
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Corporate and small business owners in Ontario will no longer be able to make direct campaign contributions to their preferred candidates in municipal elections.

Campaign finance rules are just one of many changes coming through the Municipal Election Modernization Act passed by the province in June.

The new rules, in place for the 2018 municipal elections, were presented to Halton Hills council at last week's Dec. 12 regular meeting.

Unions and corporations cannot donate directly to a candidate, said Halton Hills clerk and director of legislative services, Suzanne Jones. They can register as third-party advertisers. So they can advertise in favour or in opposition of a candidate, or in favour or in opposition of a question on the ballot, they can still advocate (in that way).

Much like donation limits under the old system, third-party advertisers will also be subject to spending limits and most of the same campaign finance rules as other do-

nors. They will also be required to register beforehand.

Any third-party advertisers supporting/opposing a candidate must register as third-party advertisers with the municipality for which they wish to advertise, said Jones in her presentation to council.

Jones added that while some larger municipalities already have similar restrictions in place, the rules will now be uniformly applied across the province.

Other amendments to the Municipal Elections Act include changes to election signs and advertising, the nomination period and process, clerk's authority and the opportunity for individual municipalities to choose between first-past-the-post and ranked-ballot voting.

Jones pointed out some of the more notable changes coming including reducing the nomination period from 37 weeks to 13 weeks. Council candidates must also now be endorsed by at least 25 eligible voters before being nominated to the ballot.

Election signs and advertising must now include a message of endorsement, clarifying who is responsible for the advertising.

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