

2020 December 03

**To:** Council  
**From:** Duncan Hamilton  
Manager, Labour Relations

**Re: Administrative Inquiry—City employee participation in the democratic process**

This memo is in response to the Administrative Inquiry that was put forward by Councillor Woolley during the meeting of Council on Wednesday November 4, 2020:

**With a General election coming in 2021, I am wondering if/how City of Calgary employees are engaged around the rules and expectations on becoming involved in the wide range of opportunities to participate in the democratic process?**

**I have been made aware that City of Calgary staff have been discouraged from volunteering on political campaigns or donating to political campaigns and would like some clarity from the City Manager and Administration on employee participation in the democratic process.**

The answer to this is outlined in the City of Calgary Conflict of Interest Policy under Section 3.6, Political Activity. That section of the policy states the following:

3.6.1 Political activity by employees is permitted, but must be conducted during non-work time and outside the workplace. An employee who is a candidate for elected office shall not identify themselves as an employee of The City of Calgary in their campaign materials.

3.6.2 Employees are expected to be politically neutral in the performance of their City duties.

3.6.3 Subject to the provisions referenced in Section 3.1 Outside Interests\*, any employee may:

- a. Join a provincial or federal political party or other political organization
- b. Participate actively in the internal affairs of a provincial or federal political party or organization
- c. Hold an office in a provincial or federal party or organization
- d. Solicit financial or other contributions for provincial or federal election or campaigns

\*Outside Interests—the City encourages its employees to undertake the responsibilities of service and citizenship in their communities, but not to make use of City time or resources for such activities without the prior agreement of their immediate Exempt supervisor. The City also requires that employees govern their Outside Interests to ensure that they are capable of providing full commitment to the Corporation, without providing an opportunity for a Conflict of Interest.

With specific reference to Municipal Elections, the Conflict of Interest Policy (Section 3.6.4) states the following:

- a. The Local Authorities Election Act requires employees to take a leave of absence without pay in order to run as a candidate in municipal elections.
- b. An employee running as a candidate in a City of Calgary municipal election may request this unpaid leave of absence to commence on or before July 1 of the year in which the election will occur. The employee must commence their unpaid leave of absence no later than the last working day prior to nomination day.
- c. Upon election, the employee is deemed to have resigned their employment as of the day they assume their elected office.
- d. If the employee is not elected, they may return to work to the position they held before the leave of absence commenced. They shall return to work on the fifth day after the election (or on the first working day after the fifth day).
- e. There is no legislative restriction for civic employees wishing to work as volunteers and campaigners, or wishing to endorse candidates in a municipal election.
- f. Employees wishing to participate in municipal elections should be sensitive to the corporate intent of maintaining a civic service which is non-partisan and impartial in its relationship with citizens and Members of Council.

With specific reference to School Trustee elections, the Conflict of Interest Policy (Section 3.6.6) states basically the same criteria as that outlined above for the Municipal Elections.

Should you have any further questions on this topic, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Duncan Hamilton  
Manager, Labour Relations