



Municipality of Central Elgin 2026 Municipal Election Candidate Information Session

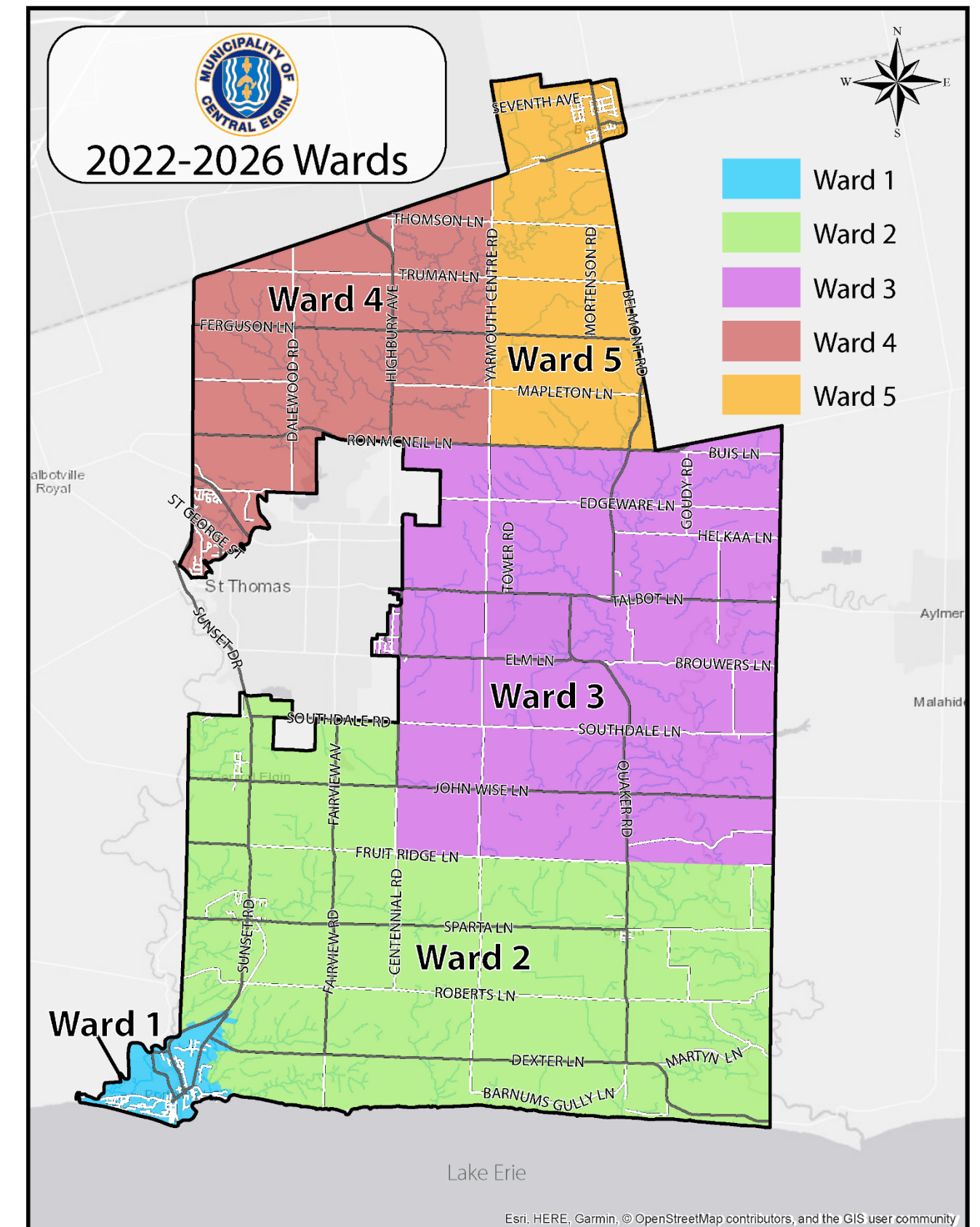
April 20, 2026

Delany Leitch, Clerk

Don MacLeod, Chief Administrative Officer

Welcome and Introductions

- Nearly 15,000 residents
- Sectioned into five wards and governed by a Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and one Councillor per ward
- Two-tier structure, with Mayor and Deputy Mayor sitting as part of Elgin County Council



Municipal Government

Services provided by Central Elgin include:

- ✓ Solid waste collection
- ✓ Road and bridge maintenance
- ✓ Parks and facilities (arenas, beach, municipally owned property)
- ✓ By-law enforcement
- ✓ Issuance of building permits
- ✓ Land use planning
- ✓ Water, wastewater and stormwater
- ✓ Engineering and infrastructure
- ✓ Fire prevention and rescue services

Role of Council

- Collective responsibility

Role of Head of Council

- ✓ Preside over meetings
- ✓ Provide leadership
- ✓ Represent the Municipality
- ✓ Work with the Chief Administrative Officer to ensure that Council decisions are implemented

Role of Councillors

- Represent the entire community

Role of Municipal Staff

- Manage day-to-day operations

Council Meetings

- Council makes decisions through by-laws and resolutions passed at its meetings
- Meetings must be open to the public, except for specific legislative limitations
- Council must adopt a procedure by-law governing all meetings
- The head of council chairs meetings and maintains order
- A majority of council members is required to be in attendance at meetings in order to be able to conduct business
- Improperly closed meetings may be investigated by the Ontario Ombudsman

Strong Mayor Legislation

Impacts on the role and responsibility of Heads of Council:

- Can appoint a CAO, hire certain division heads, and reorganize administration (except statutory officers)
- Can create council committees and appoint chairs and vice chairs
- Can propose by-laws and initiatives that advance provincial priorities
- Holds veto power over certain by-laws and prepares the annual budget (with council able to amend or override)
- Must publicly disclose decisions made using strong mayor powers
- Can delegate specific powers to Council or the CAO

Committees and Local Boards

Central Elgin Committees and Local Boards include:

- Heritage Central Elgin
- Central Elgin Non-Profit Housing Corporation
- Port Stanley BIA
- Finance Committee
- Governance Committee
- Committee of Adjustment
- Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

Other Council Appointments

- Kettle Creek Conservation Authority*
- Catfish Creek Conservation Authority*
- St. Thomas Cemetery Board
- Elgin-St. Thomas Primary Water Board
- St. Thomas Secondary Water System Board
- Port Burwell Secondary Water System Board
- Elgin County OPP Detachment Board

What to Expect

- Campaign realities
- Time commitments if elected - meeting attendance and preparation for both Council and committees; community events and initiatives; meeting and connecting with residents about the issues that matter most to them; attending annual conferences and training opportunities
- Operating in a public environment within the context of a small community
- All balanced with regular family, personal, professional obligations

What to Expect

03

MARCH 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5 Elgin Area Water Board	6	7
8	9 REGULAR	10 County Council	11 KCCA Board Kettle Creek Villa Board	12 CCCA Board	13	14
15	16 March Break	17 March Break	18 March Break	19 March Break	20 March Break	21
22	23 COMMITTEE/ WORKSHOP	24 County Council	25 Heritage CE Land Division Committee	26	27	28
29 OGRA Conference	30 OGRA Conference	31 OGRA Conference	1 OGRA Conference			

2026 Election Key Dates

- **Monday, October 26 – VOTING DAY**
- Friday, May 1 – Nomination Period opens
- Friday, August 21 – Nomination Period closes at 2:00 p.m. (last day to file and withdraw)
- Tuesday, September 1 – Voter’s List available to candidates
- Wednesday, September 30 – final spending limits to Candidates and Third Party Advertisers
- Friday, October 23 – last day to register and withdraw as a Third Party Advertiser

Eligibility

Section 29 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996

- ✓ At least 18 years of age
- ✓ A Canadian citizen
- ✓ An owner or tenant of land located within the Municipality of Central Elgin, or the spouse of the owner or tenant

A candidate does not have to live in a particular ward to be that ward councillor. However, if a candidate runs in a ward where they do not live, they will not be able to vote for themselves.

Eligibility – Municipal Employees

Section 30 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996

- If an individual is an employee of a municipality and they wish to run for office on that municipality's council, they must take a leave of absence before they file their nomination form. If they are elected, they must resign from their job. They cannot work for a municipality and be on its council at the same time.
- This does not apply to volunteer firefighters

Ineligibility – Municipal Council

The following individuals are not eligible to be elected as a member of council:

- Any person who is not eligible to vote in the municipality
- An employee of a municipality who has not taken an unpaid leave of absence and resigned
- A judge of any court
- An MP, MPP, or senator
- An inmate serving a sentence in a penal or correctional institution

Qualified at Time of Nomination

Section 29 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

A person must be eligible to hold office on the day they file their nomination. For example, a person who is 17 years old, but will turn 18 before Voting Day, must wait until they have turned 18 to file.

A person may be nominated for an office only if, as of the day the person is nominated,

- they are qualified to hold that office under the *Act* that creates it; and
- they are not ineligible under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* or any other Act or otherwise prohibited by law to be nominated for or to hold the office.

Filing your Nomination

Section 33 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

- A nomination may be filed:
- between **Friday, May 1, 2026**, and any day in the year of the regular election that is before nomination day, at a time when the Municipal Office is open; or
- on nomination day, **Friday, August 21, 2026**, between **9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.** at the Municipal Office

If the number of nominations filed for an office and certified under section 35 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* is less than the number of persons to be elected to the office, additional nominations may be filed between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on the Wednesday following nomination day (**August 26, 2026**).

Nomination – What to Bring

- ✓ The fee to file a nomination - **\$200 to run for mayor**, and **\$100 for all other positions**. This fee must be paid in the Municipal Office at the time the candidate hands in their nomination form. The nomination filing fee will be refunded to the candidate if they file their campaign financial statement by the filing deadline.
- ✓ Identification (i.e. driver's licence) that will provide proof of identity and qualifying address.
- ✓ A signed nomination paper
- ✓ A form showing that 25 electors endorse your candidacy

Endorsement of Nomination for Council

Sections 33(1.1) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

- Anyone wishing to run for office must submit the signatures of 25 voters supporting the nomination. Eligible voters may endorse more than one nomination. The individuals providing the signatures will each have to sign a declaration stating that they were eligible to vote in the municipality on the day that they signed the endorsement.
- If a candidate files a nomination and then changes their mind and decides to run for a different office on the same council, they are not required to submit new signatures.
- Personal information on Form 2 is collected under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (ss. 33, 95) and is a public record under s. 88, available for inspection at the Clerk's Office.

Nomination Withdrawal

Section 36 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

- If a candidate decides to withdraw their nomination, they must notify the Clerk in writing by the close of nominations. If a candidate withdraws their nomination, they must still file a campaign financial statement covering all the financial transactions they made during their campaign. The withdrawn candidate is entitled to have the nomination fee refunded by the Clerk if they file their campaign financial statement by the filing deadline.
- Withdrawn candidates must file a financial statement even if they do not accept any contributions or incur any expenses.

Examination of Nominations

Section 35 of the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996

The nomination shall,

- be in the prescribed form;
- in the case of a nomination for an office on a council, be endorsed by 25 signatures of voters and be accompanied by a prescribed declaration by each of the persons endorsing the nomination;
- be accompanied by a declaration of qualification in the prescribed form, signed by the person being nominated; and
- be accompanied by the prescribed nomination filing fee.

By **4:00 p.m.** on Monday **August 24, 2026**, the Clerk shall examine each nomination that has been filed in accordance with the *Act*.

Rejection of Nomination

Section 35(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*

The Clerk is required to reject or certify nominations of candidates. The Clerk may consider the following criteria in the decision to reject or certify individual nominations:

- the candidate has refused or declined to provide proof of qualification or identification suitable to the Clerk;
- the candidate does not satisfy subsection 29(1) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*;
- the nomination form is not complete in its entirety, or the prescribed filing fee has not been paid; or
- Otherwise disqualified from holding office under the *Act*.

There may be other circumstances in which a candidate is disqualified from being nominated or elected other than those identified above. **It is the responsibility of each candidate to ensure they are not disqualified from being nominated for the office.**

Campaign Finance

- Campaign Contributions
- Campaign Expenses
- Financial Statement(s)
- Compliance Audits and Reviews of Contributions
- Offences, Penalties and Enforcement

Campaign Contributions

- Campaign contributions are any money, goods or services that are given to you for use in your campaign, including money and goods that you contribute to yourself.
- You can only collect campaign contributions during your campaign period.

What you Need to Know

- You can only accept contributions after you file your nomination papers with the Clerk
- A bank account **MUST** be opened if you accept any contributions
- There are contribution limits
- There are rules on who can and cannot make contributions
- You must issue contribution receipts

Campaign Contributions

Who **can** make contributions?

- Individuals who are normally a resident in Ontario
- The candidate or their spouse

Who **cannot** make a contribution?

- Clubs, associations or ratepayer's groups
- Corporations
- Trade Unions
- An individual who is not normally a resident in Ontario
- Federal/provincial political party, constituency association, or a registered candidate in a federal/provincial election
- Federal or provincial government, a municipality or a school board

Limit and Maximum

\$1,200

This limit applies to each person who contributes to your campaign

\$5,000

This is the maximum TOTAL amount that a contributor can give to candidates in the same jurisdiction (ie running for the same Council or the same school board)

Contribution Receipts

- You must issue a receipt for every contribution you receive showing who made the contribution, the date, and the value.
- You are required to list names and addresses of every contributor who gives more than \$100 total to your campaign in your financial statement.
- NOTE: contribution receipts are NOT tax receipts.

Campaign Expenses

- These are the costs that you incur (or that a person such as your campaign manager incurs under your direction) during your campaign.
- The nomination fee is a personal expense. It is not considered to be a campaign expense and should not be reported on your campaign financial statement.
- Expenses must be paid from your campaign bank account. If you use a credit card to pay for purchases, you should make sure that you keep clear records showing that the expense on the credit card was reimbursed from the campaign account.

Campaign Expenses

- Any taxes such as HST paid on purchases should be included in the amount of the expense.
- You can incur expenses only during your campaign period, except for expenses related to the preparation of an auditor's report. If you are required to include an auditor's report with your financial statement, you may incur these expenses after the campaign period has ended. These expenses must also be reported on your financial statement.
- Goods or services that are contributed to your campaign are also expenses. They should be treated as if the contributor gave you money and you went out and purchased the goods and services – you must record both the contribution and the expense.

Spending Limits

- Candidates are subject to two spending limits: a general limit and a separate limit for expenses relating to parties and expressions of appreciation after voting day.
- The general spending limit for your campaign is calculated based on the number of electors who are eligible to vote for the office that you are running for.

Spending Limits

- When you file your nomination the Clerk will give you an estimate of your general spending limit. This estimate will be based on the number of electors in the previous election.
- On or by October 1, 2026, the Clerk must give you a final general spending limit which is based on the number of electors on the voters' list for the current election.
- If the spending limit estimate that you received when you filed your nomination is higher than the final spending limit you receive in September, the estimate becomes your official spending limit.
- The spending limit for expenses related to holding parties and other expressions of appreciation after the close of voting is calculated as 10% of the amount of your general spending limit.

Spending Limits

The following expenses **are not** subject to the spending limit:

- expenses related to holding a fundraising event or activity
- expenses relating to a recount
- expenses relating to a court action for a controverted election
- expenses relating to a compliance audit
- expenses incurred by a candidate with a disability that are directly related to the candidate's disability and would not have been incurred if not for the election
- audit and accounting fees

Financial Statements

- It is your responsibility as a candidate to file a complete and accurate financial statement on time.
- The filing deadline is 2:00 p.m. on the last Friday in March following the election.

Financial Statements

- If you filed a nomination form, you must file a financial statement. This includes candidates who withdrew their nomination, candidates who were not certified and did not appear on the ballot, and candidates who were acclaimed.
- If you did not receive any contributions (including contributions from yourself) or incur any expenses, you are only required to fill out the first page of the financial statement and sign it.
- If you received contributions or incurred any expenses, you must complete the relevant parts of the financial statement.
- If your campaign contributions (including contributions from yourself) or campaign expenses are greater than \$10,000 you must have your financial statement audited and include the auditor's report when you submit your financial statement to the Clerk.
- If you think that you will be unable to file your financial statement by the deadline, you may apply before March 25, 2027, to the Superior Court of Justice for an extension. If the court grants the extension, you will receive the refund of your nomination fee if you file by the deadline given to you by the court.

Financial Statements

- If you have not filed your financial statement by the deadline, you may file your financial statement within 30 days after the deadline if you pay the municipality a \$500 late filing fee. This grace period ends at 2:00 PM on Thursday, April 29, 2027. You will not receive a refund of your nomination fee if you file during the 30-day grace period.
- If you have not filed your financial statement by the end of the 30-day grace period and you did not apply to the court for an extension prior to the deadline, you will forfeit your elected office (if you won the election) and you will be ineligible to run for office or be appointed to fill a vacancy until after the 2030 election.

Financial Statements

- **The campaign period ends on Thursday, December 31, 2026.**
- However, if your campaign has a deficit, you can extend your campaign in order to do some additional fundraising.
- If you want to extend your campaign, you must notify the City Clerk on or before Monday, December 31, 2026, using the legislated form.

Campaign Extension

- Your campaign may be extended until Wednesday, June 30, 2027.
- If you extend your campaign, you must file two financial statements:
 - ✓ a financial statement reflecting your campaign until December 31 (due March 30, 2027)
 - ✓ a supplementary financial statement that includes the information from your initial statement and adds financial information from your extended campaign
- The supplementary financial statement must be filed with the Clerk by 2:00 PM on Thursday, September 23, 2027.

Surplus

- If your campaign has a surplus after you have refunded contributions made by yourself or your spouse, you must pay the surplus to the Clerk when you file your financial statement.
- The surplus will be held in trust, and you can use it if you incur expenses related to a compliance audit. If the surplus is not needed for these expenses, it becomes the property of the municipality or the school board.
- If your campaign expenses are greater than your campaign income, your campaign will be in deficit. Candidates can no longer carry forward a deficit to their next campaign.
- **Ending your campaign with a deficit may result in questions being raised about how expenses were paid for, and whether you contributed more than your self-funding limit by paying outstanding expenses with personal funds.**

Compliance Audits and Reviews of Contributions

- A compliance audit committee is required to be established by each municipality and school board.
- Central Elgin participates in a Joint Compliance Audit Committee with the other Elgin County municipalities
- An eligible elector who believes you have contravened the election finance rules may apply for a compliance audit of your campaign finances.

Compliance Audits and Reviews of Contributions

- Contributions reported on candidates' financial statements will be reviewed by the Clerk to confirm that they are within the rules.
- If the financial statements show that a contributor gave more than \$1,200 to a candidate, or if they show that a contributor gave more than **\$5,000 total** to candidates running for the same municipality or school board, the Clerk will report this to the compliance audit committee.
- If the financial statements show that a contributor gave more than \$1,200 to a candidate, or if they show that a contributor gave more than **\$5,000 total** to candidates running for the same municipality or school board, the Clerk will report this to the compliance audit committee.
- The compliance audit committee will hold a meeting and determine whether the municipality (or school board) should begin court proceedings against the contributor.

Offences, Penalties, and Enforcement

Penalties may apply if you are convicted of an offence:

- A fine of up to \$25,000
- Ineligibility to vote or run in the next regular election
- Up to six months imprisonment
- Forfeiture of you elected office, if the judge finds that you committed the offence knowingly
- If you are convicted of exceeding the spending limit, you may also be fined the amount by which you exceeded the limit

Offences, Penalties, and Enforcement

There are three contraventions of the Act where penalties apply automatically:

- If you fail to apply to the court for an extension by the filing deadline or file a financial statement by the end of the 30-day grace period
- If your financial statement shows that you exceeded a spending limit
- If you fail to turn over your surplus to the Clerk when you file your financial statement
- **The penalty is that you forfeit your office (if you won the election) and you become ineligible to run OR to be appointed to fill a vacancy until after the 2030 Municipal Election**

Inquiries

- While we are not able to provide advice in campaign finance, the Clerk's Office is here to help point you in the direction of available resources and get your questions answered.
- Individuals are responsible for ensuring compliance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*.
- Please don't hesitate to reach out.

We are Here to Help

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