



## Grimsby Downtown BIA Political Endorsements & Participation in the Electoral Process Elections Policy 002

### **1. Purpose**

The Grimsby Downtown Improvement Area (GDBIA) is committed to fostering a democratic and informed community while maintaining a strictly non-partisan stance. The GDBIA Board of Directors recognizes the importance of public awareness and education on matters relevant to the downtown business district and its members. As a non-partisan organization, the GDBIA will conduct its activities with integrity, transparency, and fairness while ensuring it does not endorse or support any political party or candidate.

As a local board under the Municipal Act, 2001, the GDBIA is required to remain non-partisan and impartial in matters related to political campaigns, endorsements, and election participation. This policy aligns with the legislative framework governing BIAs in Ontario. The GDBIA Board of Directors, staff, and committees will adhere to the following principles to avoid perceived or actual conflicts of interest. The Board Chair is responsible for ensuring that the Executive Director and staff follow this policy in all GDBIA activities. This policy applies to all elections except for the BIA election process itself, which is governed separately under municipal and provincial regulations.

### **2. Political Participation**

#### **Holding Elected Office**

- A Board Member, officer, or committee member may not simultaneously hold a publicly elected office at the municipal, regional, provincial, or federal level while serving on the GDBIA Board or any GDBIA Committee, except for City Councillors appointed to the Board as per municipal regulations.
- Any individual elected to public office while serving on the GDBIA Board or a committee must immediately resign from their GDBIA position upon assuming their public role.

### **3. Political Endorsements: Restrictions on Endorsements**

- i. The GDBIA Board, Committees, staff, or representatives may not publicly endorse, promote, or support any political party or candidate for elected office.
- ii. The GDBIA's name, resources, or branding shall not be used in any way to support, promote, or fundraise for any political candidate, campaign, or party.
- iii. As a publicly funded organization, the GDBIA is prohibited from using any financial resources, staff time, or assets for political purposes, including supporting, opposing, or promoting candidates or political parties. See EP Policy 0001 for use of GDBIA during election periods.

### **4. Participation in Political Campaigns: High-Profile Campaign Roles**

- i. Any Board Member, officer, or committee member who assumes a high-profile public role in an election campaign must take a leave of absence from the Board or committee before engaging in any campaign activities.
- ii. A high-profile role includes, but is not limited to, serving as a campaign manager, official spokesperson, or key fundraiser for a candidate or party.
- iii. The leave of absence remains in effect until the campaign period concludes.

### **5. Separation from GDBIA Operations During a Campaign**

- i. Any individual involved in a campaign must not engage with GDBIA staff or activities in a way that could imply GDBIA's support for a candidate or party.
- ii. Communication between campaign-affiliated individuals and GDBIA staff should be strictly limited to operational matters, such as all-candidates forums.
- iii. The candidate or campaign participant will be encouraged to inform the public of their leave of absence from the GDBIA.

### **6. Public Communication of Leave of Absence: Transparency & Public Notification**

- i. The GDBIA Board may issue a public statement informing members, stakeholders, and the media of any Board Member's leave of absence due to campaign participation.
- ii. The GDBIA Board will ensure fair and equal treatment of all candidates, including hosting unbiased election events, debates, or forums to provide information to business members and the public.
- iii. If the GDBIA organizes an election forum or debate, all registered candidates must be invited and provided with equal opportunities to present their platforms.

**7. Business Member Participation vs. Board Participation:** Clarification on Business Owners' Political Involvement

- i. Individual BIA members (business owners, property owners) are free to engage in political activities in their personal capacity.
- ii. However, business owners must not imply or represent their views as those of the GDBIA.
- iii. No business within the BIA district may suggest or advertise that the GDBIA endorses a political candidate or party.

**8. Enforcement & Amendments:** Policy Compliance & Review

- i. The GDBIA Board of Directors is responsible for enforcing this policy and ensuring compliance.
- ii. Any violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including removal from the Board or committee.
- iii. The Board may revise this policy as needed to align with legislative changes and best practices for non-partisan organizations.

**9. Statutory Provisions / Other Relevant Policies**

This policy operates along with and as a supplement to existing legislation and Town policies governing the use of municipal resources during an election campaign period:

- the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended
- the Finance Election Act, 1990, as amended
- the Canada Elections Act, 2000, as amended
- the Town of Grimsby Procedural By-law
- the Town of Grimsby Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Campaign Policy
- EP001 - Rules for the Use of Municipal Resources During an Election Period

This policy is intended to be read in conjunction with its counterpart (EP001 - Rules for the Use of Municipal Resources During an Election Period), which addresses complementary elements of election-related conduct.

Revision #	Description of Date Changes Created	Date Revised	Reviewed By:	Approved By:
001	Creation of Document	N/A	Executive Team	Pending
002	Approval of Board	N/A	Board of Management	Pending