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Special Municipal Council Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, August 4, 2026 – 9:00 a.m.

MODL Council Chambers – 10 Allée Champlain Drive, Cookville

- 1. Call to Order**
 - 1.1 Mi'kma'ki Territorial Acknowledgement
- 2. Changes/Approval of Agenda (as circulated)**
- 3 Staff Reports**
 - 3.1 Administration**
 - 3.1.1 District 9, Special Election..... 1-5
- 4. Adjournment**

Special Council
Item 3.1.1
August 4, 2026
Authorization: T. MacEwan



The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

Request for Decision

Report to: Mayor and Council

Submitted by: April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk

Date: August 4, 2026

Re: District 9 - Special Election

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council

- 1. Set Saturday, October 17, 2026, as Ordinary Polling Day for the 2026 Special Election.**
- 2. Set Thursday, October 8, 2026, as the Advance Polling Day.**
- 3. Set Tuesday, September 22, 2026, as Nomination Day for the 2026 Special Election.**
- 4. Appoint April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk, as Returning Officer for the 2026 Special Election.**
- 5. Delegate authority to the Chief Administrative Officer to appoint an Assistant Returning Officer, if required.**
- 6. Approve the use of electronic voting for the 2026 Special Election.**

Executive Summary

To provide Council with information regarding the legislative requirements, estimated costs, and administrative considerations associated with conducting a special election to fill the District 9 Council vacancy, and to obtain Council's approval of the required dates and appointments.

The Municipality received the resignation of District 9 Councillor, Ben Brooks, effective July 14, 2026.

Under Section 13 of the **Municipal Elections Act**, Council must set the date of a special election within four weeks after a vacancy occurs. As the vacancy became effective on July 14, 2026, Council must establish the election date no later than August 11, 2026.

This report outlines the legislative requirements, proposed election schedule, administrative considerations, and estimated costs associated with conducting the special election.

Discussion

Legislative Requirements and Proposed Timeline

The Municipal Elections Act establishes the timeline for conducting a special election. Based on these legislative requirements, staff recommend the following schedule:

- **Ordinary Polling Day – Saturday, October 17, 2026**
Section 13(2) – the Special Election Day must be a Saturday not more than eleven (11) weeks after the meeting of Council at which the day was named.
- **Advance Polling Day – Thursday, October 8, 2026**
Section 2(1)a – The Advance Poll must take place during the (9) days preceding Ordinary Polling Day.
- **Nomination Day – Tuesday, September 22, 2026**
Section 13(3) – Nomination Day must be the fourth Tuesday preceding Ordinary Polling Day.

Appointment of Returning Officer

The Municipality's previous Returning Officer has retired. Staff recommend appointing the Municipal Clerk as the Returning Officer for the 2026 Special Election.

Administering a municipal election is a significant statutory responsibility requiring substantial time over approximately two months. As a result, the Clerk's regular operational responsibilities may be temporarily affected during the election period. Depending on operational requirements, temporary redistribution of duties or additional administrative support may be necessary to maintain service levels.

Appointment of Assistant Returning Officer

Staff also recommend delegating authority to the Chief Administrative Officer to appoint an Assistant Returning Officer, if required. This provides flexibility to respond to operational demands and ensures continuity should the Returning Officer become unavailable.

Electronic Voting

Electronic voting was successfully used during the Municipality's previous municipal elections and provides residents with a secure, convenient, and accessible voting option while reducing the administrative requirements associated with traditional paper ballots. Staff recommends continuing this approach for the 2026 Special Election.

Strategic Focus

The recommendations support Council's strategic priority of Communication and Engagement by facilitating an accessible, well-communicated special election process while ensuring compliance with the Municipal Elections Act and maintaining effective local governance.

Budget/Financial Implications

Council annually allocates \$50,000 to the Election Reserve in preparation for municipal election years. Staff estimate the cost of the 2026 Special Election at approximately \$23,000. The election costs will be funded from the Election Reserve, resulting in no impact on the 2026–2027 operating budget.

A preliminary budget breakdown of the costs is as follows:

Category	Amount	Description
Salaries	\$7,000	Returning Officer support, Assistant Returning Officer, Revising Officer, and election staffing
Technology	\$8,000	Electronic voting platform and related technology
Advertising	\$5,000	Newspaper notices, mail-outs, posters, and signage
Miscellaneous	\$3,000	Supplies, equipment rentals, tablets, and contingency

Total \$23,000

Climate Change/Sustainability

The special election is not anticipated to have significant climate change impacts. The recommended use of electronic voting may reduce paper consumption, transportation requirements, and associated election materials compared to a traditional paper ballot process.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA@MODL)

The special election will be administered in a manner that supports the Municipality's commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. Staff will provide accessible election information, accommodate voters and candidates in accordance with legislative requirements, and use an electronic voting system designed to support broad participation.

Strategic Communications

Staff will implement a communications plan to educate residents, candidates, and voters on the special election process. Communications will provide timely information on nomination requirements, key dates, voter eligibility, electronic voting, voter assistance and important deadlines through the Municipality's website, social media, media releases, and other public information channels.

Work plan

Administration of the 2026 Special Election will require significant staff resources over approximately two months. The Municipal Clerk and Communications Officer will experience increased workloads to support election administration, statutory requirements, and public communications. Staff from other departments may also be required to support election-related activities, including voter assistance, administrative tasks, and election logistics. As a result, some departmental work plan priorities may be deferred or adjusted to ensure the successful delivery of the special election while maintaining essential municipal services.

Alternatives

Engage an External Election Administrator

Council could direct staff to retain an external provider to administer the special election, including the roles of Returning Officer and election administration support. While this option would reduce the operational impact on municipal staff, it would result in significantly higher costs and is not recommended, as the Municipality has the capacity to administer the election internally.

Conduct the Election Using Paper Ballots

Council could direct that the special election be conducted using traditional paper ballots rather than electronic voting. While this is permitted under the Municipal Elections Act, it would require additional staffing, polling locations, election supplies, and vote-counting resources, resulting in increased costs and administrative complexity. This option is not recommended, as the Municipality has successfully used electronic voting in recent elections, providing a more efficient and cost-effective process.

Conclusion

To comply with the **Municipal Elections Act**, Council must establish the required dates for the 2026 Special Election, appoint a Returning Officer, delegate authority to appoint an Assistant Returning Officer if required, and approve the use of electronic voting. Appointing the Municipal Clerk as Returning Officer will allow the Municipality to administer the election internally while minimizing the additional costs associated with engaging an external election administrator.

Approval of the recommendations will enable the Municipality to conduct the special election in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act while providing an efficient, accessible, and fiscally responsible process for candidates and voters.

Report Preparation	
Department	Administration
Report Prepared by	April Whynot-Lohnes, Municipal Clerk
Report Approved by	Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO
Date Reviewed by C.A.O.	