

September 2026

Civic Engagement Can Power Nonprofits and Charities

*How Island organisations can engage in
the upcoming municipal elections.*

Sarah Outram
Director of Policy & Research
Community Sector Network of PEI



PEI Municipal Election Day: November 2nd

On November 2nd, PEI will elect our next round of municipal officials. Nonprofits and charities have a role to play. With the municipal election just two months away, this is the time to consider how your organisation can successfully engage.

As a provincial level nonprofit, the Community Sector Network typically focuses more frequently on provincial and federal elections. In 2025, we co-hosted candidate forums across the Island to help residents and organisations hear from prospective candidates. That said, local governments can hold a great deal of power. From housing and parks to community grants, we cannot underestimate the importance of decisions made here, and the value of engaging in our democracy.

Did you know? Roughly 70% of PEI's population lives in a municipality!

Why does this matter?

An election is an opportunity to make the priorities of your clients and your mission known. In larger municipalities, funding for operations and events is possible. Smaller municipalities on the Island have support to offer as well, in the form of rental spaces, smaller grants, partnership opportunities, and often hold the permissions needed to access other community infrastructure such as parks, arenas, or local trails.

Municipal election turnout was down in 2022, and with the trend of lower voter turnout at the provincial level too, this is a great opportunity for your organisation to help get out the vote.



Local Impact

Is the mission of your organisation tied to health? Where parks, trees, and even new housing builds are placed can influence the health and wellbeing of the community. Municipal governments are responsible for these decisions.

Is the mission focused on outdoor recreation? You may want to learn who on the new council could help champion your work and support you in running future events. These newly elected officials will be local leaders, and they will be making decisions that impact your work now and into the future. Here are three actions your organisation can take.

Three Actions for Organisations:

PEI has approximately 1700 nonprofits! Do you know what they all do?

1) Put together a list of goals or asks.

Know what to ask for when the time comes, and know exactly what municipal governments are responsible for. Make a list of changes in the municipality, bylaws, policies or otherwise, that could help your organisation succeed. Share this list with all official candidates or newly elected councillors.

2) Connect with candidates in your region.

Email information on your mandate, mission, and current projects to all candidates. They may not have heard of your organisation before, so take this opportunity to share and highlight some of the great work you do!



Make sure to send any communications to all official candidates in your area. Your team does not have to directly contact candidates either. A representative of your organisation could attend a candidate debate.

Most of the Island's municipalities do not usually host candidate forums, but a few will. Stay tuned to local news outlets this fall for details. If you don't see a forum in your area, consider partnering with other groups to host one, while keeping your capacity and mandate in mind.

3) Stay issue-focused, but not silent.

Nonpartisanship does not mean silence. Acting impartially does not mean standing against the values of your organisation. Nonpartisanship, meaning not tied to or acting in support of a specific political party or associated group, can be a careful line to walk. This does not mean that your organisation cannot speak about the issues or people it serves. Choose your words carefully, and make sure whenever possible that any emails or questions sent to one candidate are sent to all of them.

Learn more about nonpartisanship with the ONN resource linked on page 5!

While there are no political parties at the municipal level in PEI, it is good practice to have a policy in place for how your organisation and staff can engage during election periods.

Note that charities have a finer line to walk here, since special legal rules apply to the activities of charities because of their charitable and tax status. Visit the Canada Revenue Agency website for more information.



Municipalities & Nonprofits: Stronger Together

Municipalities and nonprofits often share similar challenges on PEI, but the potential to work together and achieve great outcomes is there. As this level of government grows in strength on the Island, it is important to plan ahead for election periods, helping to raise awareness and support for your mission.

Resources:

ONN - Nonpartisan advocacy during elections (2026)

The Ontario Nonprofit Network recently released a guiding document for nonprofits to help them navigate their work before, during, and after elections.

<https://theonncan.ca/publication/nonpartisan-election-advocacy/>

Government of PEI - Municipal Elections

There are many great resources for future candidates, voters, and anyone looking for more information on new website from the Government of PEI.

<https://peimunicipalelections.ca/>

Elections PEI - Municipal Elections

Information from Elections PEI regarding municipal elections only applies to the following municipalities: Charlottetown, Cornwall, Stratford, Summerside, and Three Rivers, as they contract Elections PEI to administer their elections.

<https://www.electionspei.ca/municipal-elections-by-elections>