



**TOWN OF CANMORE  
RECORD OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS  
Public Hearing**

Council Chamber at the Canmore Civic Centre, 902 – 7 Avenue  
Tuesday, July 2, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

This document contains the written submissions received in response to the notice of public hearing for the following bylaw:

**2024-05  
Revised Land Use Bylaw Amendment Political Campaign Signs**

Submissions are sorted in alphabetical order. If you are viewing the electronic version, please use the bookmarks feature to scroll through the document.

This record of written submissions was compiled by Ben Stiver, Municipal Clerk, on June 28, 2024 and updated on July 2, 2024.

**Citizen Presentation to Canmore Town Council in respect of proposed  
Political Campaign Sign Bylaw 2024-06 on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024**

Bruce Eidsvik, [REDACTED]

**Good morning, Mayor Krausert and members of Council. Great parade yesterday!**

My family and I moved back to Canada in 2020 after living abroad for 15 years. One reason we returned was to restore our ability to participate in the democratic process, **in which I believe strongly. For example**, while abroad, I helped fund an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada to restore the right to vote for non-resident Canadians, which the Harper government had rescinded. And in which we were successful. **I take voting rights seriously**. I am here to voice my strong opposition to the proposed Bylaw. It's undemocratic, and I can explain why.

This bylaw infringes upon Section 2(b) of the Canadian Charter, which guarantees freedom of expression. Political signs are crucial for candidates to communicate their messages and increase visibility. Limiting their placement restricts this vital form of expression.

In the last municipal election, the difference between many candidates was less than 1.7%, which is the typical lift provided by effective signage (source: "The Efficacy of Lawn Signs as a Campaign Tool: Field Experiments"). **Incumbents typically receive a 5-10% boost in vote share due to their status alone** (source: "Estimating Incumbency Advantage without Bias"). Removing the ability to use signs on public property **extends this advantage significantly**.

**[Arguments in Support of the Bylaw:]**

1. Yes, the restriction is only on public property. But incumbents can quickly address a pre-existing list of property owners to get signs deployed and are already a known entity in the community. The Challengers will be knocking on doors for approvals, significantly slowing their rollout; public signage could be ready on Day 1, **therefore, restricting this visibility is a big advantage for incumbents when campaigns only run for 4 weeks.**
2. Yes, there are other forms of campaigning, but signs still make an important difference. **Public spaces have high visibility and have proven to lift voter turnout.**
3. Some have said the cost of signs is prohibitive. I estimated it costs about \$2,000 to purchase 200+ signs. Candidates can spend up to \$10,000 on a

campaign. Sadly, if you can't raise the \$2K, your chances are going to be very slim, **unless you're an incumbent or already have a well-established brand**. And, if the council believes this will limit participation, they seem to have **no concern in deploying extortionate rates for sign violations!**

4. While concerns about environmental impact and unsightliness are understandable, these can be managed with less restrictive measures. The town could enforce cleanup more strictly or allocate resources to ensure timely removal after elections. **Democracy is worth dealing with temporary visual clutter for 30 days every 4 years!**

**Further, there is an inherent conflict of interest for incumbent councillors voting on this bylaw**, as it directly benefits their re-election efforts. Any sitting councillor planning to run for re-election should therefore abstain or recuse themselves from voting.

There are only three municipalities in Canada; Banff, Surrey BC, and Kingston that do not permit signage on public property. This represents about 0.1% of all 3700+ municipalities. Banff's restriction is unique due to its location within a national park. Surrey's implementation was purely political, and **clearly an attempt to suppress voter turnout**.

In conclusion, this bylaw undermines our local democratic processes and constitutional freedoms. **It favors incumbents and places undue burdens on challengers. I urge the council to reconsider its support.**

According to the Municipal Government Act, the only valid reasons for restricting signage are for the safety, health, and welfare of the people. **This bylaw does not meet this threshold.**

By limiting challengers' ability to run strong campaigns, we are essentially anointing incumbents. As Monty Python would say; 'Strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government.'

**There is undeniable research that clearly demonstrates that signage during elections increases voter turnout.** The reasons for restricting signage to private property are tenuous at best, so why is the council so keen on pushing this bylaw forward?

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have."

## References and Sources:

- 1) "The Efficacy of Lawn Signs as a Campaign Tool: Field Experiments" by Donald P. Green, Jonathan S. Krasno, Alexander Coppock, Benjamin D. Farrer, Brandon Lenoir, and Joshua N. Zingher. The paper examines the impact of lawn signs on voter turnout and candidate vote shares. The researchers conducted field experiments to assess the effects of lawn signs and found that lawn signs can increase vote shares by approximately 1.7 percentage points on average, with some variability depending on the context.
- 2) Janet Brown, Pollster and political commentator: 'One thing that concern me about outlawing signs on municipal property is those signs do inform people about the election', she goes on to say 'anything that might be seen as harming voter turnout, I don't think will go over well with the public...voter turnout is so low so I think any move on a council that could stifle voting even more could be open to criticism that it's anti-democratic.

3) Any person who contravenes any provision of this bylaw is liable to a minimum penalty of \$250.

10 Any person who contravenes any provision of this bylaw is guilty of an offence and upon conviction shall be liable for a minimum penalty in accordance with section 10 of this bylaw, and not exceeding \$10,000.

12 The owner of the Political Campaign Sign is liable for a fee of \$50 per day for the impounding and storage of the sign.

- 4) **Gelman, Andrew, and Gary King. "Estimating Incumbency Advantage without Bias." American Journal of Political Science 34.4 (1990): 1142-1164.** This study provides an in-depth analysis of the incumbency advantage, estimating it to be around 5% to 10%.