

# *FINAL REPORT*

2026 General Elections  
Students' Association of Red Deer Polytechnic  
March 2026

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*With files from: Martin Cruz, Chief Returning Officer; Marian Young, Governance & Student Support Coordinator; and Jessica Walker, Member Engagement Manager.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2026 General Election generated a 23.8% voter turnout, beating last year's record. A total of 10 candidates were on the ballot to represent the students of Red Deer Polytechnic ("RDP") either as a Councillor or as a member of the Executive Council. All positions were subject to a "YES" or "NO" vote. A referenda question was also included in the ballot.

An all hand on deck approach was key to ensuring a successful election which includes Students' Association ("SA") staff, third party Chief Returning Officer, a Deputy Returning Officer, and a student volunteer. The elections was delivered without issuing any sanctions, receiving any complaints, and with minor technological issues that did not have any impact on the results.

This report is divided into multiple parts breaking down the nomination period, voting period, marketing strategies, issues and sanctions, referendum, and recommendations.

## TIMELINE

Nomination Period	January 6 to March 3, 2026
Candidate Meeting	March 3, 2026
Meet the Candidates	March 4, 2026
Voting Days	March 9 to March 12, 2026

## PART 1 – NOMINATION PERIOD

The Nomination Period for the 2026 General Elections opened on **January 6, 2026 at 9:00 AM** and closed on **March 3, 2026 at 4:00 PM**. By the end of the nomination period, a total of **10 nomination** forms were received, verified, and approved.

The breakdown of nominations was as follows:

- **7 nominations** for **Councillor** position
- **1 nomination** for the **Office of the President**
- **1 nomination** for the **Office of Vice President Academic**
- **1 nomination** for the **Office of Vice President External**

The All-Candidates Meeting was held on March 3, 2026 at 5:00 PM, following the close of nominations. One candidate gave proper notice that they or their agent will not be in attendance. A separate meeting was held to ensure this candidate operated with the same knowledge as the rest of the candidates. The Candidates Meeting is an opportunity to go through the Election Policy, campaign guidelines, and expectations from the candidates for and during the campaign and voting periods.

For the Councillor positions, a total of 7 nominations were received for 10 available seats. As the number of candidates did not fill all available positions, all councillor nominees were placed on the ballot and were subject to the approval of the Students' Association members through a "YES" or "NO" vote as per s. 9 of the Elections Policy.

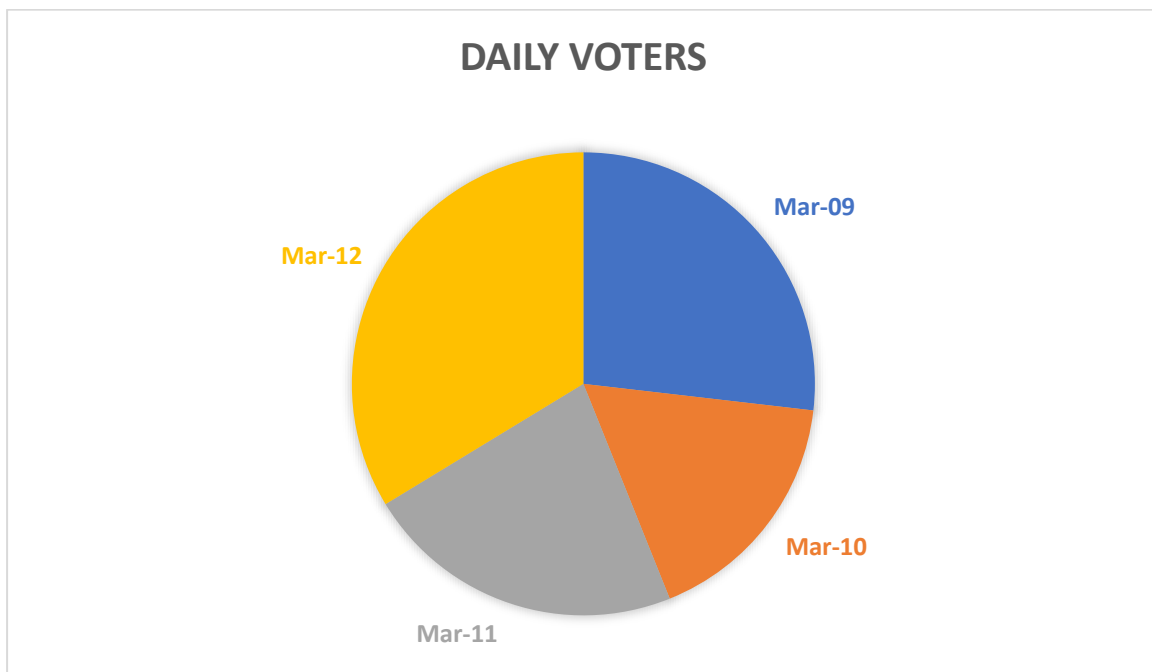
Similarly, the candidates for the Offices of the President, Vice President Academic, and Vice President External were unopposed and were therefore also subject to approval by SA members through a "YES" or "NO" ballot.

## PART 2 – VOTER TURNOUT

The 2026 General Elections demonstrated strong student engagement, achieving a total voter turnout of **1282 out of 5384** eligible electors, which represents a total of **23.8%** participation. This is a slight increase from the previous year's turnout of 23.3%.

A breakdown of voter participation across the voting period provides further insight into voting behaviour. Voting occurred over four days, with participation increasing as the election period progressed. The daily turnout was as follows:

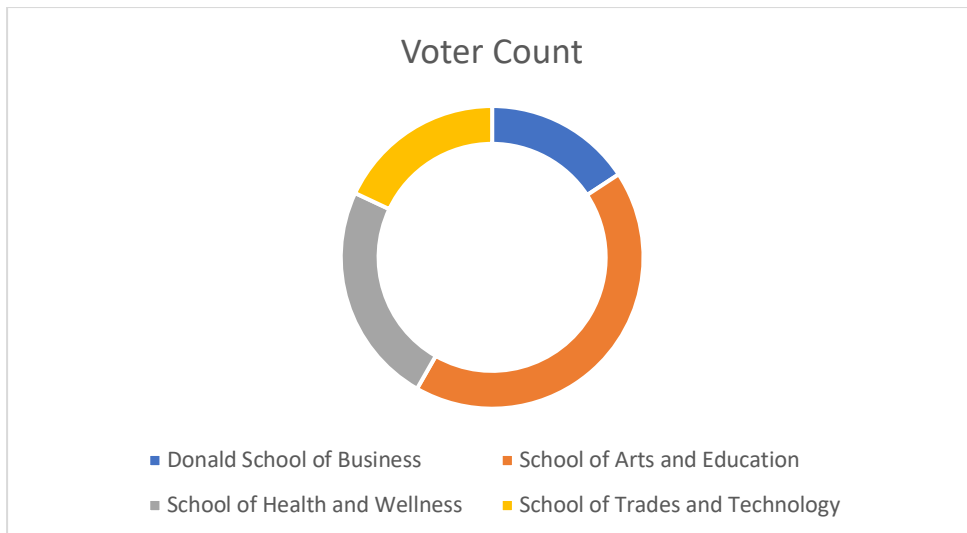
- **March 9:** 344 voters
- **March 10:** 219 voters
- **March 11:** 287 voters
- **March 12:** 432 voters



The highest number of votes was recorded on March 12, the final day of voting, when 432 electors cast their ballots. This pattern suggests that many students chose to vote closer to the closing of the voting period.

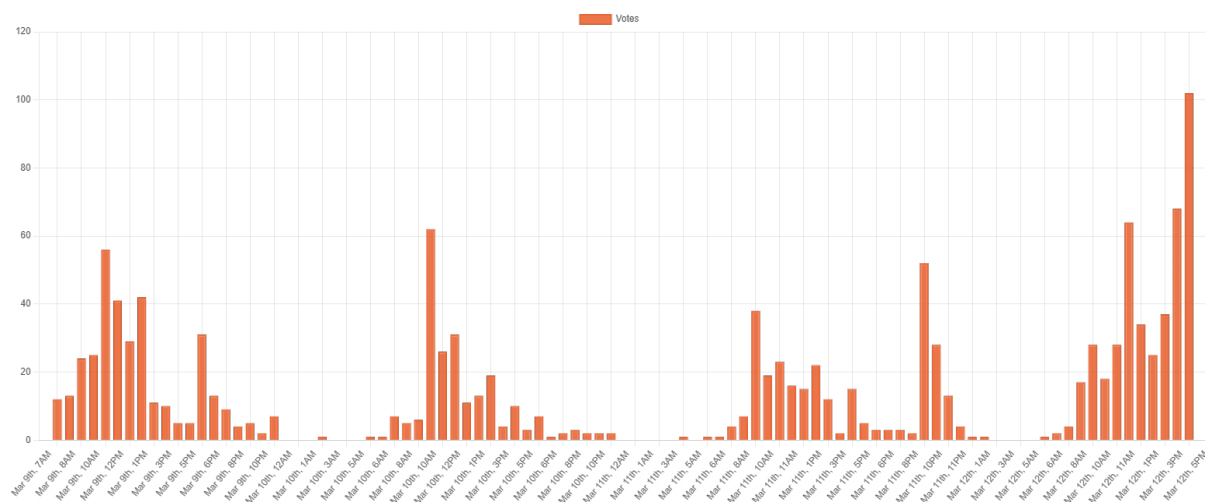
Voter participation was also broken down by School:

- 202 voters from the Donald School of Business;
- 545 voters from the School of Arts and Education;
- 304 from the School of Health and Wellness 304; and
- 231 from the School of Trades and Technology.



Notably, voter turnout from the School of Trades and Technology exceeded last year’s turnout of 41 students; however, this increase was due to RDP changing the School’s internal program makeup rather than an interest in the electoral process from apprenticeship students. Unfortunately, the involvement of apprenticeship Students dropped to 17 voters over last year’s 41. This is likely due to the fact that the trades intake started on the first day of voting.

Data from Simply Voting, the online voting platform used by the Students’ Association, also provides insight into voting patterns throughout the election period. As observed in previous elections, voter participation increased following reminder communications sent to eligible voters.



On the final day of voting, four (4) reminder emails were sent to students at regular intervals, encouraging those who had not yet voted to participate before the voting portal closed. The final reminder was sent ten minutes (10) before the closing of the voting period, which contributed to a noticeable increase in voter activity during the last half of the voting period. Further details regarding these communications and their timing are discussed in Part 3 of this report.

The average turnout per day was **320.5 voters**, indicating steady engagement throughout the voting period.

PART 3 – MARKETING STRATEGIES

A combination of digital marketing, in-person outreach, and interactive engagement initiatives were implemented to promote the 2026 General Elections. Compared to previous years, the election team explored several new strategies to increase student awareness, encourage candidate to student interaction, and ultimately drive voter participation.

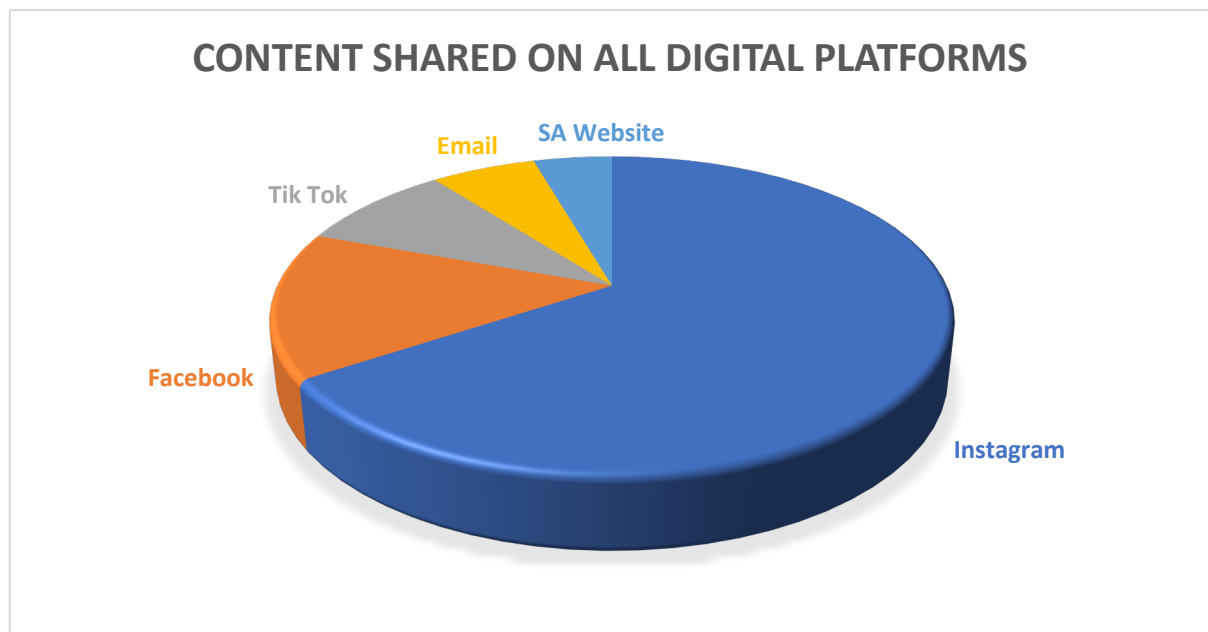
**a. Digital Marketing Campaign**

Digital platforms played an important role in promoting the election timeline, candidate profiles, and voting reminders. Content was shared across multiple platforms including Instagram, Facebook, email, and the SA website. Also, there was an addition and use of a new platform, TikTok

Across all platforms, a total of 67 digital contents were published throughout the election cycle.

**Distribution of Digital Content by Platform**

- Instagram: **44 posts/stories**
- Facebook: **10 posts**
- TikTok: **6 videos**
- Email communications: **4 messages**
- Website announcements: **3 posts**



Overall digital content generated the following metrics, demonstrating strong online visibility for the election campaign.

<b>Views</b>	61,985
<b>Likes</b>	509
<b>Shares</b>	86
<b>Link clicks</b>	155

Instagram accounted for the majority of the activities through the use of stories, image posts, and short-form video content (reels), which helped maintain continuous engagement and visibility throughout the nomination and voting periods.

**b. Email**

Email was used to distribute important election information directly to students. Emails were primarily used to promote:

- The opening of nominations;
- Election information and candidate awareness;
- Rectification of issues occurred during the voting; and
- Voting reminders throughout the voting period.

During the voting period, emails were sent to voters which contained direct links to their ballots, allowing them to easily access their ballot while still requiring authentication through their RDP login credentials.

The list of email blasts during the voting period ONLY:

<b>RECIPIENTS</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>TIME SENT</b>
<b>All electors</b>	2026 General Election - Who is going to represent you?	2026-03-06 12:29:05
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	Voting Issue Corrected - 2026 General Election	2026-03-09 11:27:03
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	Vote Now - 2026 SARDP General Election	2026-03-09 18:22:00
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	Day 2! Students' Association 2026 General Election	2026-03-10 10:19:00
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	Decisions are made by those who show up! – Students' Association's 2026 General Election	2026-03-11 09:36:24
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	2026 General Election	2026-03-11 21:59:00
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	Your voice matters. Make sure it's heard.	2026-03-12 09:09:00
<b>Specific electors (LPN Students that had been mistakenly left off the list)</b>	2026 General Election	2026-03-11 09:36:24
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	Clearing up some confusion re. online students - 2026 SA General Election	2026-03-12 12:09:34
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	LAST HOUR TO VOTE in the 2026 General Election!	2026-03-12 15:55:00
<b>Electors that haven't voted</b>	TEN MINUTES LEFT TO VOTE in the 2026 General Election.	2026-03-12 16:47:00

### **c. On-Campus Events and Student Engagement**

In-person outreach activities played an important role in creating excitement and increasing awareness of the elections across campus. Several events were organized during the election period, combining food giveaways, candidate interaction opportunities, and polling station visibility. The events happened across the campus, majorly by the SA Stairs. Several promotional activities were organised to gain interest and engagement from the Trades wing of the RDP campus.

#### **March 4 – Candidate Engagement Event**

- Cookie giveaway (200 cookies)
- Coffee (6 pots)
- Tea (2 pots)

This event allowed students to meet candidates informally while learning more about the upcoming election.

#### **March 9 – Voting Day Kick-Off**

- Polling station opened
- Popcorn giveaway
- Bubble Tea with the Candidates (12 gallons served)
- Trades Election Information Session

#### **March 10 – Student Engagement Activities**

- Polling station
- Chicken wrap giveaway in Trades (100 wraps)
- Popcorn giveaway
- Candy cart (75 lbs of candy distributed)

#### **March 11 – Campus Engagement Day**

- Polling station
- Coffee and cookies with Alumo, the Health & Dental Plan provider (7 pots of coffee and 100 cookies)
- Coffee giveaway in Trades (7 pots)
- Coffee giveaway at polling station (7 pots)
- Dessert cart (100 cookies and 5 trays of dessert bars)

#### **March 12 – Final Voting Day**

- Polling station
- Popcorn giveaway
- Poutine giveaway (100 portions served)

These activities created visible reminders across campus that voting was taking place.

### **d. Stamp Card Engagement Initiative**

A new engagement initiative introduced during the 2026 General Election was the Stamp Card Program.

Students were provided with stamp cards and encouraged to interact with candidates throughout the campaign period. Each candidate was assigned a unique stamp, and students could collect stamps after having a conversation or meaningful interaction with candidates.

To qualify for the draw, students were required to collect stamps from at least five candidates. Completed cards were entered into a draw for a gift hamper prize.

This initiative served multiple purposes:

- Encourage direct conversations between students and candidates;
- Increase awareness of candidate contesting for the Council; and
- Create an incentive for students to participate in voting.

A total of 21 completed stamp card entries were submitted for the draw.

#### **e. Classroom Outreach and Election Promotion**

The Election Administrator as well as a volunteer, also conducted seven (7) classroom visits to provide information about the election process, candidate positions, and voting procedures.

In addition, approximately 250 hours of combined promotional work were contributed by the election team and Students' Association staff. These efforts included:

- event organization;
- in-person promotion;
- polling station supervision;
- food giveaways; and
- candidates' assistance (approving and stamping candidate's profiles, promotional campaigning material).

#### **Part 4 – ISSUES & SANCTIONS**

Two issues that occurred this General Election, both of which pertain to the voting portal.

Issue 1:

During the first day of voting, a fragment of eligible voters was unable to access their electronic ballot. Changes to both the RDP system and Simply Voting caused this issue. This issue was addressed before lunch time on the first day of voting. This issue did not affect the voter turnout as there was still 3.5 days left to vote.

Issue 2:

About 80 students were discovered to not have had access to their ballot until Wednesday, March 11, the second to the last day before voting ended. This was a result of an administrative error when the list of voters was uploaded into Simply Voting. The issue was resolved within 2 hours of discovering it. A separate email was sent out to 80 students who were affected by this issue.

No sanctions were issued to any candidate during this General Election.

#### **PART 5 - RECOMMENDATIONS**

A comprehensive policy and regulatory framework are currently in place to support the administration of Students' Association elections. While the 2026 General Elections were conducted successfully, there are opportunities to strengthen future election processes and further increase

student engagement. The following recommendations are provided for consideration in future election season.

*Deputy Returning Officer Recommendations:*

**1. Increase classroom outreach during the nomination and voting periods.**

Classroom visits could be an effective method for directly engaging students and raising awareness about the elections. During the 2026 election period, the election team conducted several classroom visits, which provided an opportunity to encourage participation and increase voting.

It is recommended that instructors be encouraged to inform students about the opening of nominations and the voting period, particularly in larger classes. Even short announcements can significantly increase awareness and encourage students to consider running for positions or participating in the voting process.

**2. Review strategies to encourage more candidate nominations.**

During the 2026 General Elections, several positions were uncontested, and the number of nominations received for councillor positions did not fill all available seats. Increasing candidate participation would allow for more competitive elections and greater representation across the student body.

Future election teams may consider additional promotional strategies during the nomination period, such as increased information sessions, targeted outreach, or informational campaigns explaining the benefits and responsibilities of serving on the Students' Association Council.

**3. Encourage active campaigning by candidates.**

Student engagement tends to increase when candidates actively interact with students and promote their notion. During the 2026 election, initiatives such as the Stamp Card Program demonstrated that direct interaction between candidates and students could have helped increase awareness and participation, if there were Candidates campaigning and available to stamp the draw cards. As it was, active campaigning by the candidates themselves was missing around the campus and as a result most of the students were unaware of the candidates running until they were handed the candidate's profiles booklet prepared by the Students' Association.

It may be beneficial to explore ways of encouraging candidates to participate in visible campaign activities or engagement events throughout the campaign period to ensure students have sufficient opportunities to learn about candidates and their platforms. This will also maximise the effect of strategies/efforts made by the Students' Association in order to promote and inform students about the elections.

**4. Continue implementing interactive engagement initiatives.**

The Stamp Card Program, introduced during the 2026 election cycle, proved to be an innovative approach to encouraging student interaction with candidates, as over 300 cards were given out by the Election team. By incentivizing conversations between students and candidates, the initiative helped increase awareness of the election and candidate platforms. It is unfortunate we only received 21 cards back as there were many students that would have liked to participate but could not get stamps from 5 candidates.

Future election teams may consider continuing or expanding similar interactive engagement initiatives that promote direct communication between candidates and students.

## **5. Consider allowing the Deputy Returning Officer to vote after the voting period begins.**

Allowing the Deputy Returning Officer to cast their vote after the voting period has begun could allow the DRO to first observe candidate engagement and campaign activities before participating as a voter.

This approach could maintain fairness while also ensuring that election administrators retain the opportunity to participate in the democratic process as eligible members of the Students' Association.

*Chief Returning Officer Recommendations:*

## **6. Review voter information before it is uploaded into Simply Voting**

This will prevent the issues experienced this year of eligible voters not being able to access their ballot during the voting period.

## **7. Create a list for RDP's IT Department of what specifically needs to happen with both Simply Voting and MyRDP.**

With the continuous changes happening with the internal portal for the institution (MyRDP) and the Simply Voting, a list sent over to RDP's IT Department will ensure necessary steps are taken to avoid any last-minute issues when the voting portal is live. This will also ensure that should there be a change within the IT Department, that information can be easily transferred to another individual whether internally or by the Students' Association.

## **PART 6 – REFERENDUM**

During the 2026 General Elections, Council approved a referendum question to be included on the ballot for students to vote on. The purpose of the referendum was to seek student approval for the implementation of a Mental Health Program for members of the Students' Association.

The referendum was written as follows:

The Students' Association of Red Deer Polytechnic is considering the implementation of a new Comprehensive Mental Health Program for its members, at an annual fee of \$40.00 per year.

You can learn more about this service here: [FAQ \(hyperlinked\)](#).

With the knowledge that you can unconditionally opt-out of the program by the deadline and have the fee waived from your RDP student account, do you agree to the establishment of a Mental Health Program fee of \$40 per student, per year, starting September 1, 2026, to provide students with uncapped access to comprehensive mental health supports at no additional out-of-pocket costs?

This fee could only increase by a maximum of 4% per year, if necessary, in accordance with the Students' Association's policies and procedures.

**YES – I am in favour of establishing a Mental Health Program fee.**

**NO – I am not in favour of establishing a Mental Health Program fee.**

Voting for the referendum took place during the same period as the General Election and in the same online ballot.

The referendum was unsuccessful as per section 12 of the Association Bylaws. While the referendum achieved the required participation threshold, it received 55.7% support, which was below the required 60% approval threshold.

### CONCLUSION

This report outlines fact-based data pertaining to voter turnout, nominations, and the effectiveness of marketing efforts to generate interests. While all positions were uncontested, the voter turnout increased by a small margin from last year due to the efforts of the Election Team, SA Staff and Volunteers.

From the staff to the volunteers, the delivery of the General Election is an all team effort. We want to thank the staff and volunteers who put a lot of effort in making sure students are able to participate in the democratic process.