



# Municipal, Provincial, and Federal Elections Guideline

During election campaigns, it is important that all trustees, committee members, and Board staff members be mindful of their responsibilities as representatives of the Board and to refrain from activities or actions that might appear to favour one candidate or party over another. Likewise, candidates have an obligation to abide by the provisions in the Partisan Activities and Campaigning policy and all other Board policies that relate to the school(s), department(s) and community.

This guideline has been created to supplement the [Partisan Activities and Campaigning policy](#) by outlining consistent practices related to Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections.

While student debates and discussions aimed at increasing political awareness are encouraged, staff members, trustees, candidates and committee members are encouraged to maintain neutrality.

All trustees, committee members, candidates, staff and members of the community should be aware of their responsibilities outlined in legislation and Board policy including, but not limited to: [Education Act](#), [Municipal Elections Act](#), [Elections Act](#), [Canada Elections Act, 2022](#), [Candidates' Guide - Ontario municipal council and school board elections](#), [Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline](#), [Community Involvement Hours policy](#), [Staff Members who are Candidates for, or Elected to, Public Office policy](#), [Trustee Services policy](#) and [Conflict of Interest policy](#).

## Distribution of political information

Political information shall not be distributed through schools, workplaces, committees or school councils. Political information may include, but is not limited to newsletters, information tables, business cards, flyers, speeches/greetings, brochures or bulletin boards about a candidate or campaign. **This includes information about current trustees who are running for any political position.**

Non-partisan information from community partners about the election process, such as, but not limited to [Elections Canada](#), [Elections Ontario](#), and municipalities, may be distributed.

## Trustee use of Board-provisioned resources to disseminate information to school communities during the Municipal Election period

Trustees may not use Board resources to disseminate information to members of the school community on or after May 1 of a Municipal Election year. This includes, but is not limited to, Board-provisioned electronic communication tools, school newsletters, Board and school websites and Board publications. This does not preclude trustees from reasonably carrying out their regular duties such as responding to individual constituent concerns.

## Visits to schools

Individuals who are running for an elected position, are **not** permitted to make presentations to students, school councils or staff members; or take part as official guests at any school or Board function. Incumbent elected officials and individuals running for an elected position **shall not** campaign or conduct themselves in any way that may be perceived as campaigning at any school or Board function or event.

Current trustees may continue to attend and participate in school or Board functions and events but shall not campaign or conduct themselves in any way that may be perceived as campaigning for themselves or any other individual running for an elected position. School and Board functions and events include but are not limited to, school openings, award ceremonies, school barbecues, school council meetings and forums, Board, Advisory and Board Committee meetings and graduation ceremonies.

## School council meetings

As with any other member of the public, candidates may attend school council meetings **as observers**.

School councils may not:

- Endorse any individual running for an elected position.
- Allow any individual to campaign on behalf of themselves or another individual running for an elected position unless part of an all-candidates' meeting.
- Campaign on behalf of a specific candidate or individual running for an elected position.
- Distribute partisan, political/candidate information.

## All candidates' meetings

### Candidate participation requirements

All candidates' meetings may be held in schools or other Board facilities. The meetings must be structured so that all candidates have an equal opportunity to speak and address the issues. Every effort must be made to ensure all candidates have an opportunity to attend; at least two week's advance notice must be given to all candidates. If candidates are unable to attend, a designate may attend on their behalf. **A minimum of two candidates, or designates, for the same position must confirm their attendance at least one week in advance of the meeting in order for the meeting to proceed.** If only one candidate is confirmed to attend, the event must be rescheduled or cancelled.

### Use of Board facilities for all candidate meetings during regular school hours

All candidates' meetings may be organized by student-organized political clubs or student councils during the regular school day or school councils after regular school hours with support by the principal or site manager. Community organizations may also use Board facilities to host all candidate meetings after regular school hours provided, they adhere to all appropriate requirements.

## Use of Board facilities for all candidate meetings after regular school hours

A [permit](#) must be obtained by the group organizing the all-candidate meeting in order for Board facilities to be used during the evening or on the weekend.

The following provisions apply:

- Permit holders for all candidates meetings will be charged to use Board facilities after school hours during the regular school week in accordance with the classification schedule and rates outlined in the [Community Use of Schools Classification, Processing Fees and Rates](#).
- Permit holders for all candidates' meetings during a Municipal Election/By-Election will not be charged to use Board facilities after school hours during the regular school week, if school trustee candidates are participating in the meeting.
- Any permit, including those for all candidates' meetings with trustee candidate participation, scheduled on a weekend will be charged a fee to cover expenses (e.g. caretaking costs) on a cost-recovery basis.
- All permits, including those for all candidates' meetings with trustee candidate participation, require proof of \$2 million liability insurance coverage. If proof of insurance is not provided, a fee for insurance will be charged.
- A letter indicating that all candidates have been invited to participate in an all-candidates' meeting and confirming that at least two candidates or designates have confirmed their participation at the event is required to be submitted to Community Use of Schools Department at least one week prior to the event date. Permits for all candidates' meetings with trustee candidate participation will also require proof of trustee candidates' participation at least one week prior to the event date. If proof that all candidates have been invited is not provided within the timeframe outlined above, the permit will be cancelled and the permit holder will be responsible for covering the cost of the permit.

All requests for a permit must be submitted through [Community Use of Schools](#). Additional information about permitting Board facilities is outlined in the [Community Use of Schools policy and procedure](#).

Requests to use Board resources to [distribute information](#) about all candidates' meetings may be submitted by email to [communications@yrdsb.ca](mailto:communications@yrdsb.ca) for review and consideration in accordance with the [Distribution of Materials: External Organizations policy and procedure](#).

## Partisan literature on school and Board property

Partisan literature is **not** to be placed on Board property, including but not limited to, political (lawn) signs, stickers on cars, buttons, bulletin board notices and posters. Information may not be distributed or posted on vehicles parked on school or Board property.

## **Non-partisan information about elections**

At the discretion of the principal or site manager, non-partisan information from Elections Canada, Elections Ontario, and municipalities, such as voting dates and locations may be distributed.

## **Campaigning on school or Board property**

Campaigning or engaging in partisan activities on school or Board property by any individual or group is not permitted. This includes at school or Board events including but not limited to, classroom activities; curriculum nights; Board, Advisory or Board Committee meetings; school council meetings; other Board meetings or events; or other school or work-related activities. This includes family members, trustees or school council members who may be candidates.

**The only exception to campaigning on school or Board property is all candidates' meetings that comply with the requirements outlined above. Following all candidates' meetings, all campaign materials must be immediately removed otherwise it will be appropriately disposed.**

## **Non-Partisan Conduct while Representing the Board (trustee, staff members, committee members)**

While at work or representing the Board at meetings or events, trustees, staff and committee members shall avoid becoming involved in partisan discussions or activities. This includes, but is not limited to, wearing articles of clothing or other paraphernalia, such as, but not limited to scarves, buttons, caps, pins, signs that support or refer to political parties or candidates or meeting with candidates or their representatives regarding their campaign.

Trustees, student trustees, staff and committee members working in support of a particular candidate may not use Board property or resources such as, but not limited to email, phone, photocopier or Board- provisioned devices or internet/bandwidth for partisan activities at any time.

## **Social media during the election period**

Trustees, student trustees, committee members and staff members shall remain impartial and not campaign or appear to campaign on behalf of any individual running for an elected position or party, while acting in their official capacity on behalf of the Board.

Staff members responsible for managing school, department or Board social media accounts must adhere to the following during the election period:

- candidates (including current incumbents) who are already being followed on social media may continue to be followed;
- candidates, who have not been followed prior to the campaign period, must not be added;
- new accounts that are opened on or after May 1 in a Municipal Election year or during the Writ period should not follow or endorse any registered candidate (including current incumbents); and
- posts from any candidate must not be re-tweeted, marked as a favourite or re-posted,

since this may be seen as an endorsement.

Staff members may follow or engage with candidates on social media, using personal accounts, during their personal time and on their personal devices. Staff members are strongly encouraged to refrain from endorsing or campaigning for any trustee candidate or incumbent trustee running for another elected position outside of work hours to avoid a perceived conflict of interest.

As outlined in the Partisan Activities and Campaigning policy, trustees, student trustees, staff and committee members must not use Board-provisioned technology or school, Board, department, or committee social media accounts to campaign. Incumbent trustees wishing to use social media to campaign must use a personal account that is not associated with the Board and on a device that is not paid for by the Board (in whole or in part).

## **Taking and using pictures**

Trustees, candidates, sitting members of a council, committee members, legislature or parliament are NOT permitted to use video or photographic images of students obtained during any Board-related event including, but not limited to school visits in political or informational materials. Candidates are not to invite media to school events.

All activities related to capturing student images and identifiable information must be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of [the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(MFIPPA\)](#).

## **Use of the Board Logo**

Any unauthorized use of the York Region District School Board logo is not permitted. The Board logo may not be used on any campaign materials or communications including, but not limited to, pictures, flyers, advertisements, social media, and campaign websites.

## **Candidate participation in school council or advisory committees**

Candidates or other individuals running for an elected position (including trustee), who are members of a [school council](#) or advisory committee, may continue to participate in meetings and/or hold and run for elected positions. Partisan activities and campaigning are **not** permitted on school or Board property or during Board, Advisory or Board Committee meetings, school meetings or events.

Trustees cannot be a member of a school council or non-trustee member of an advisory committee. If a school council or advisory committee member is elected to the position of trustee, they must resign from their position on or before December 1. Any vacancy shall be filled in accordance with the school council or advisory committee by-law.

## **Providing information to candidates**

Personal information such as, but not limited to name, address, phone number and e-mail address of students, parents or employees **must NOT be given** to any candidates or their representatives or any other individual running for an elected position.

Requests for information that is in the public domain may be provided in accordance with MFIPPA. Specific requests for information by candidates should be directed to the Manager, Administrative and Legal Service at extension 2394.

## Community involvement hours and political campaigns

Students may choose to work on political campaigns. Activities related to legitimate and recognized political organizations, municipal, provincial and federal political activities, except for candidates running for the position of Trustee for the York Region District School Board will count towards community involvement hours. Any political activity by students must take place outside of school hours and must be completed in accordance with the [Policy and Procedure #620.0 Community Involvement Hours](#).

Board resources will not be used to support the recruitment of student volunteers. Information about opportunities to work with Elections Canada and Elections Ontario or a local municipality to support the election process, including working on Voting Day, may be communicated through the Board's internal communications channels or by the school.

**Note:** Work performed by students who are employed (and paid) by Elections Canada or Elections Ontario or a municipality on Voting Day does not count towards the student's community involvement hours.

## Meetings on Voting Day

Qualified electors must have three consecutive hours to cast their vote on Voting Day.

Staff members whose normal work schedule does not allow for three consecutive hours to vote should speak to their supervisor, in advance, to ensure coverage.

It is recommended that no evening meetings be scheduled on Voting Day. Staff members should consider re-scheduling meetings or events involving trustees, staff, committee members and/or community members, wherever possible and appropriate.

## Voting locations

Board facilities, including schools, must be made available for voting locations for federal, provincial or municipal elections, if requested. The [Community Use of Schools Department](#) will make the necessary arrangements and inform schools that will be used for this purpose.

In accordance with the [Municipal Elections Act](#), once the location of the polling station has been agreed upon by the principal and the returning officer it **may not** be changed.

Election officials, through the Returning Officer, coordinate the use of schools through the Community Use of Schools Department. They then reach out to the principal of each school identified to be used as a voting location to make arrangements for the elections including, but not limited to, the location for the polls and furniture requirements.

Schools should identify a point of contact for election officials to address all matters related to the election, including before and on Voting Day. The point of contact should be the principal or the designate. It is recommended that the point of contact be available for the duration of the election period. If the point of contact leaves the school or is unavailable on Voting Day, a new point of contact should be identified, and any pertinent information should be transferred. Election officials should be made aware of any change to the point of contact as soon as possible, and before Voting Day.

Election officials may also ask for the school's cooperation in identifying appropriate responsible volunteers (including senior students or school council members) to help support the election. Election officials may also pay students or community members to provide additional hallway monitoring that may be required during the voting period. Payment information must be discussed with the returning officer. The school and school board are not responsible for the processing of payment for election employment purposes.

## **Student Safety on Voting Day**

If possible, a Professional Activity Day will be identified on the date of the Municipal Election.

The following should be considered when schools are being used as a voting location on regular school days.

- School Administrators may unlock **one** access door, agreed upon by the principal and returning officer, to facilitate the easiest and safest access to the polling station.
- The door that is unlocked **must be monitored at all times** by an election volunteer, election official, or other appropriate adult in accordance with the Safe Welcome Program.
  - It is important that all hall monitors and volunteers are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding access to the school under the Safe Welcome Program.

It is the responsibility of elections officials (e.g. Elections Ontario, Elections Canada, Municipal Clerk) to hire hall monitors; however, school administrators are encouraged to assist election officials to identify an individual that may have knowledge of the facility and its procedures such as an existing parent, volunteer, or school council member.

An Election Official may conduct a site visit prior to election day to determine whether the school meets accessibility requirements. At that time, the access points and entrance doors will be determined. The principal may be consulted on the access points and entrance as well.

## **Demonstration of the democratic election process to students**

Elections present an opportunity for schools to engage students and community in this critical component of a democracy and may offer unique learning opportunities. School administrators should discuss how the presence of a voting location can be used as an educational opportunity with the Returning Officer. School administrators should also consider registering with [Student Vote](#), which provides learning opportunities to help students develop the habits of active and informed citizenship. Student Vote uses an election as a teachable moment and enables teachers to bring democracy alive in the classroom.

## Other Logistics for Voting Day

- During the regular school day, principals are strongly encouraged to be on-site as much as possible to address any emergent issues. If the school administrator is not able to be present, they must identify a designate and notify the Returning Officer how they might contact this person during the regular school day.
- School staff members and students should be aware that there may be voters in the building on Voting Day. Voters may go to the voting location but must not visit other areas of the school.
- Schools are encouraged to notify their parent community that the building will be used as a polling station on Voting Day. A sample [letter](#) is available for principals on the Board's internal website.
- As a courtesy, the Community Use of Schools Department will provide information to election officials about accessing "guest" Wi-Fi. The Board cannot ensure internet connectivity for election devices. Election officials are encouraged to secure appropriate internet resources for voting purposes. Technical support will not be provided by Board staff on Voting Day or Advance Voting days.

## Other Useful Information

### Building Access

Once polls are closed, election officials are permitted to remain in the school building until all votes are tabulated. Caretaking staff must remain on site until all election officials have vacated the building.

### Parking

In order to ensure all available parking spots are accessible, staff members should assess their school parking lot, and prior to Voting Day, make arrangements with Plant Services for any additional snow removal or other provisions to ensure access to the parking lot.

### Voting Day Supplies/Furniture

Elections staff will work with the Community Use of Schools Department and principals to determine requirements for Voting Day. If required, rented election supplies and furniture may be delivered to the school in advance of Voting Day and picked up after Voting Day. Staff members should arrange to store supplies and furniture in a safe and accessible location.

### Lighting

All lighting inside and outside of the building in areas being used by election officials and members of the public should be in proper working condition.

### Garbage/Recycling

Extra garbage and recycling bins are to be set up in the voting area and other public access routes.



## **Washroom Designation**

Signs directing members of the public to the washroom should be posted. Where possible, adult only washrooms shall be designated and monitored.

## **Communication**

Principals shall ensure election officials are aware of how to contact a school staff member on Voting Day (e.g. the principal/designate or after-hours caretakers).

## **Caretaker Coverage**

At least two caretakers are to be scheduled on afternoon shift at polling locations on Voting Day.

## **Addressing Concerns**

Any concerns by staff on Voting Day should first be raised with the principal or designate.

Afterhours, caretakers may contact their Supervisor of Facility Services or the Assistants Caretaking and Community Access.

## **Accessibility, Customer Service and Public Perception**

Staff members at locations to be used as voting locations should familiarize themselves with the [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#) prior to Voting Day and be mindful of public perception.

Contact the [Manager, Trustee Services](#) at extension 2262 if you have any questions or require clarification.

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