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Ontario Municipal
& School Board
Elections

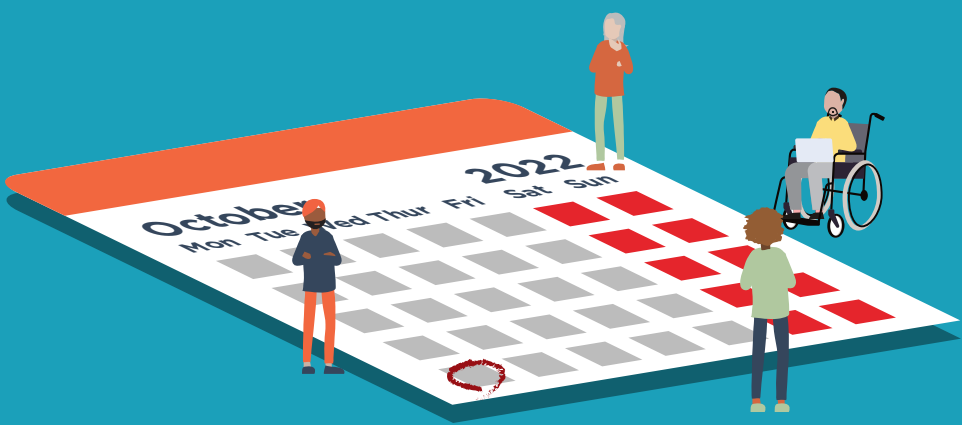
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YOUR GUIDE TO HOSTING A SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEE ALL CANDIDATES MEETING

Election Day:
Monday, October 24, 2022

Ontario municipal and school board elections take place on the fourth Monday in October of an election year. On this day, Ontarians elect municipal council members and school board trustees across the province. One of the best ways to find out where your trustee candidates stand on matters of concern to you and your community is to organize an *All Candidates Meeting*.

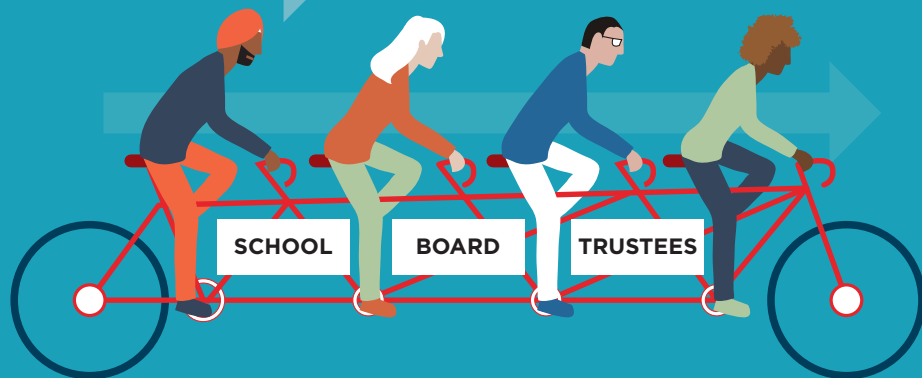


Where do your school board trustee candidates stand on issues affecting public education?



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A Trustee's Role

Ontario's four publicly funded school board systems (English Public, English Catholic, French Public and French Catholic) are governed by their publicly elected board members – school board trustees. Trustees are the community's advocates for public education. They work on behalf of Ontario's children, families and communities to promote student achievement and well-being. Trustees play a key leadership role in setting the strategic direction of their local school board and in making sure there is local accountability for student success and well-being.

As members of a school board, trustees work to put in place programs and policies that reflect the diverse needs of students in their community. Trustees work with the board's Director of Education to provide direction for the achievement of key goals and priorities and to ensure effective operation of the school board.

Trustees work for the public and play a vital role in ensuring that the community has a direct pathway to express its views on the education issues that matter most. Individual trustees bring to the board the concerns of parents, students and supporters of the district. It is through the process of collaborating and engaging in joint decision making as members of the board that trustees work with the values, priorities, and expectations of the community to translate them into policy.

As the election nears, your group or organization can assess each candidate for trustee by hosting an *All Candidates Meeting*. This is a public service you can lead within your community and an opportunity to play an important part in local democracy.



What is an *All Candidates Meeting*?

All Candidates Meetings are an ideal way for voters to discover where local candidates stand on the issues that matter to the electorate. Any local group or organization can organize a meeting. For example, local resident and community associations, not-for-profit agencies, cultural organizations, religious organizations and social advocacy groups may want to host a meeting. Students and youth are also encouraged to host events. These events are nonpartisan and can be held to review candidates and issues at any level of government. The community nature of this type of meeting lends itself perfectly to assessing candidates for the office of local school board trustee.

At an *All Candidates Meeting*, all nominees running for trustee in a particular ward or geographic area gather to share their views on issues affecting education. Interested community members attend and hear from each candidate, and then the audience has the opportunity to ask questions. Local media often cover and sometimes moderate these events. Typically, *All Candidates Meetings* happen in the months leading up to an election and take place in locations like community centres, town halls, school auditoriums and places of worship. The meetings offer the community an on-the-ground, interactive way to learn about the issues and form an opinion about those running for office. This helps voters to make informed choices on Election Day.



Why host an *All Candidates Meeting*?

Education is the second largest item in the provincial budget. The public needs the opportunity to meet and hear from candidates. Hosting an *All Candidates Meeting* provides a public service and offers community members the opportunity to engage with their school board trustee candidates. This is critical to making sure the community is electing the best possible trustee to represent them. *All Candidates Meetings* are the perfect platform to assess who would be the most effective representative and bring the candidates together to talk about the kind of issues that not only make a difference in education at the local level but can also have an impact on public education policy at the provincial level.

Your group or organization can host an *All Candidates Meeting*. Hosting a meeting is a great way to participate in the democratic process in your community. It is an opportunity to increase civic engagement, particularly among young people and marginalized communities who tend to have lower voter turnout rates. Hosting a meeting is also an opportunity to demonstrate the interest and concern that your group has for the quality of public education in the community and in the province.



Planning a Meeting

The 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections will be held on October 24th. All candidates for the office of trustee must submit their nomination by August 19. The best time to host an *All Candidates Meeting* for school board elections is early September through to mid-October. A meeting can be put together quickly or planned over weeks – the key is making sure there is enough time to secure attendance from all candidates and that the meeting is well organized.

You may begin planning alone or perhaps by forming a planning committee or partnership with a community organization. This can be an effective way of engaging more voters from diverse groups to become interested in school board elections and may also be an opportunity to share costs. Also consider engaging students in the planning process – their participation will be vital in ensuring the student voice is addressed at meetings. It is also advisable to contact your municipal clerk to ask about their plans for hosting any *All Candidates Meetings* and offer to work with them to ensure school board candidates are included.

What follows are recommendations and helpful checklists for organizing a successful and engaging *All Candidates Meeting*.



NOTE: Considering the current uncertain COVID-19 environment, you may want to consider hosting a **virtual meeting instead of an in-person meeting**. These may be easier to set up and have more attendees. There are a variety of platforms and consideration should be given to what might be the best and most accessible to your audience. The section below outlines points of consideration for an in-person meeting, following by a separate section that includes virtual meeting considerations.

KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER – IN-PERSON MEETINGS

- ☐ **Find out who is running in your electoral district.** Contact each candidate as soon as possible to establish their willingness to participate and their availability. Candidate information can be found on your local municipality's website.
- ☐ **Decide on a time (early evening works best), and location or option for your meeting.**
- ☐ **Make the meeting accessible to persons with disabilities.** In choosing a location, it is important to ensure that it is physically accessible to all members of the community. Also consider the use of assistive technologies.
- ☐ **Ensure the meeting is accessible to everyone and barrier free.** Considerations include: sign language, multiple languages, family status/child/dependent

care, all-gender language and washrooms, locations, travel and public transit, religious/faith restrictions, holy days, etc.

- ☐ **Establish a set of guidelines and procedures that will govern your meeting.** A sample set of guidelines is included with this guide.
- ☐ **Send each candidate a formal invitation and a copy of the guidelines and procedures that will guide the meeting.** Consider posting your information to the public as well. Ask each candidate for a bio that you can provide to the moderator you have selected. This will help them introduce the candidates. Invite each candidate to bring brochures or posters to the meeting and indicate these will be displayed on tables outside of the meeting room.
- ☐ **Select a strong moderator.** Ideally, you will secure a well-respected and prominent member of the community or media. They will have to maintain order and ensure the meeting is well-run. Given the political nature of the event, the moderator must be seen as non-partisan and capable of running an orderly meeting. Choosing to invite education reporters or other members of the media to act as moderator is a strategy that can contribute to increased media coverage and interest from the public and political parties. In past years, student trustees have also been moderators.

- ☐ **Select a time-keeper who will ensure that the candidates and those asking questions stay within their allotted time limits.**
- ☐ **Plan the meeting's format.** A typical meeting lasts between 1.5 and 2 hours and should allow enough time for each candidate to make an opening and closing statement. The middle of the meeting can be devoted to questions and answers from the audience. You may also choose to devote the first 30 minutes to questions from the moderator. These can be general questions to the panel of candidates or include some questions directed to specific candidates. A sample meeting agenda is included with this guide.
- ☐ **Create a list of questions for the candidates.**
- ☐ **Promote the meeting.** Send invitations to your contacts – ensure your messaging considers the diverse groups in your community; display posters in libraries, schools and community centres. Post meeting details on your website. Be sure to take advantage of social media.
- ☐ **Get the media involved.** Consider sending a note to your local media.

☐ **If the meeting is in-person, confirm the logistics.**

When choosing a location, ensure you will have ample seating, good acoustics and the ability to make refreshments available for the audience. Consider whether or not you will need insurance. Candidates should be seated at tables at the front of the room with name signs and plenty of water. The moderator and candidates will need microphones along with one for audience questions and answers. A podium for the moderator would be helpful. You may also set up a registration desk to gather guest information and ask for written questions.

☐ **After the meeting, you may consider sending thank you notes to each candidate and the moderator.**

You may also send a follow-up media release that highlights key issues and quotes from the meeting.

KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER – VIRTUAL MEETINGS

These suggestions are to help ensure a virtual meeting runs smoothly. Consider:

- ☐ Before the meeting, testing your meeting connection, your video and audio (ensure all participants do this, including the moderator and the candidates.)
- ☐ Screen sharing an opening/welcome slide with the name of the meeting, the participants and start time.
- ☐ Screen sharing the Traditional Territory Acknowledgement for the lands on which the host is running the meeting.
- ☐ Reminding all participants – presenters and listeners – to mute their microphones when not speaking. Some platforms allow the moderator/host to control (mute) microphone and video options. (Be ready to provide advice to participants about their use of their video and audio controls.)
- ☐ Deciding in advance how questions should be posed – directly to the moderator or using a “chat” function. (Consider muting/restricting the chat function.)
- ☐ Deciding in advance if the cameras of listeners should be on throughout the meeting or not. Sometimes internet connections and bandwidth can affect camera functionality.

- Recording the meeting and posting for those that were unable to attend. Inform all participants and candidates if you are doing this so they are aware.

KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER – ACCESSIBILITY

The following was extracted from [The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association \(OMSSA\)'s GUIDE TO Conducting Accessible Meetings](#).

There are two main areas you need to consider when planning a meeting or event.

- Physical access to the meeting space
- Access to the content and proceedings of the meeting

Physical access to the meeting includes accessible spaces for parking, accessible entrances and washrooms, and meeting rooms that are large enough to accommodate participants who use wheelchairs, scooters and service animals. Access to the content and proceedings of the meeting includes making background and presentation materials available in accessible formats. This includes electronic formats as well as alternate formats such as large print and Braille. People with disabilities have different needs.

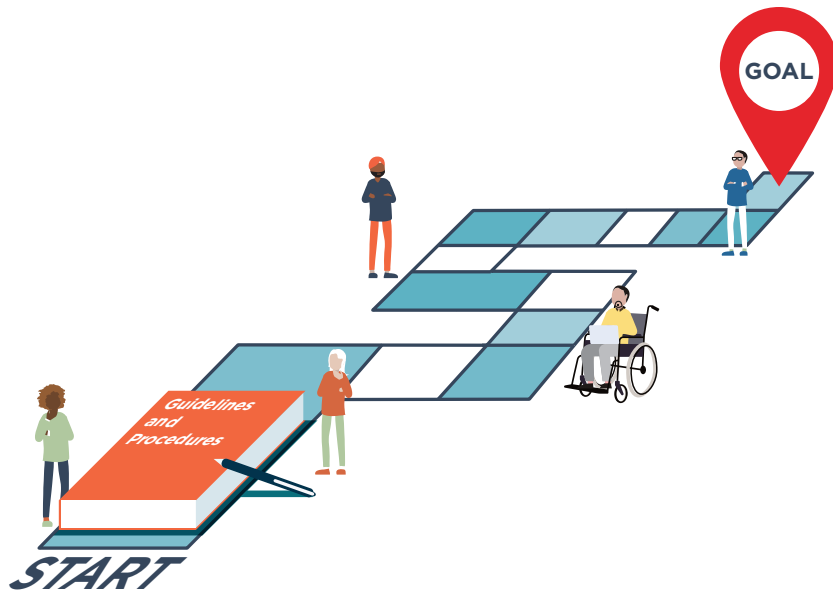
Be Prepared: Even if you receive no advance requests for accommodation, you may receive last-minute or on-the-spot requests for accessibility supports. Know what options are available to you if this happens.



An effective and well-run meeting will follow a set of guidelines. Here is a sample set of guidelines and procedures you can tailor to your meeting. These guidelines offer a good starting point and can be adapted to suit your meeting format.

Ensure that each candidate and the moderator receive a copy of your guidelines in advance of the meeting. Also have the moderator read the guidelines at the meeting itself. This will set the tone and let participants as well as the audience know that the meeting has a planned structure and that the guidelines will be followed.





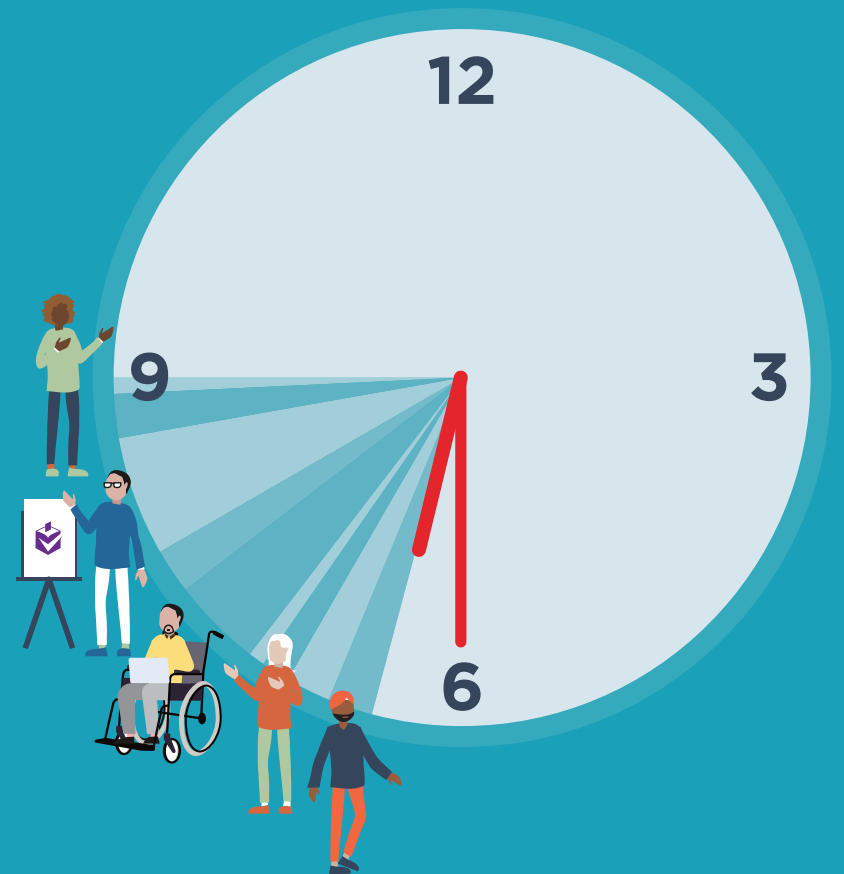
SUGGESTED GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

1. Candidates should present themselves to the moderator 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the meeting. This will allow time for them to draw for order of speaking.
2. Meeting to be called to order promptly. The moderator will explain that the meeting is an inclusive and safe space that allows for respectful discourse and zero tolerance for any harassment based on the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) prohibited grounds.

3. If the meeting is in-person, candidates will be seated alphabetically at the speakers' table and will be introduced in this order.
4. Each candidate will be allotted two to three minutes to make an opening statement. The order of these statements will be determined in advance by draw.
5. Candidates will be asked not to interrupt other candidates' opening or closing statements.
6. During the Question and Answer period, questions will be received from the floor in either written or oral form or submitted via the chat function (if your platform permits) directly to the moderator – not to all participants. Another option is to consider having questions sent to the moderator by email. The moderator will have the responsibility of making sure that questions are directed to the appropriate candidate and that the questions are balanced among candidates.
7. The moderator will rule out of order any questions deemed inappropriate, offensive and derogatory or that would seem to attack the integrity of the candidate.
8. The moderator will rule out of order any person who attempts to use the question period for making a speech rather than asking a question. The moderator will also ensure diverse voices are heard and not allow one or two questioners to dominate.

9. Questions from the floor will be limited to one per individual to ensure the widest possible participation from the audience. If everyone who wishes to ask a question has had the opportunity to do so and there is still time left in the Question and Answer period, a second question from a member of the audience will be entertained.
10. Answers to questions should be limited to one to two minutes to ensure as wide a discussion as possible.
11. Allow two to three minutes for closing statements. The order should be the same as opening statements.

Sample - *All Candidates Meeting agenda*



SAMPLE AGENDA

- 6:30 pm Doors open /virtual link opens for candidates only. This can be an opportunity to test microphones and video quality.
- 6:45 pm Candidates present themselves to the moderator to draw for order of speaking. If virtual, consider candidates presenting in alphabetically order.
- 6:50 pm If virtual, moderator allows guest to enter meeting and posts a screen with meeting protocols.
- 7:00 pm Call to order and deliver a Traditional Territory Acknowledgment. A representative of the group that has organized the meeting welcomes attendees and introduces the moderator. Moderator delivers remarks and reads the guidelines and procedures.
- 7:10 pm Introduction of the candidates in alphabetical order.
- 7:15 pm Each candidate to be given two to three minutes for their opening presentation.

- 7:45 pm Break for refreshments/time for audience to write/submit questions for candidates.
- 8:00 pm Question and Answer period.
- 8:45 pm Two to three minute closing statement by each candidate.
- 8:55 pm Moderator’s concluding remarks.
- 9:00 pm Adjournment.



Sample - All Candidates Meeting questions

After each candidate has addressed the audience, it will be time for a Question and Answer session. The moderator will ask the audience to pose their questions to the candidates. You may also have collected questions from attendees at the registration desk and/or from the flip charts at break time - be sure the moderator asks those questions too.

It is often helpful to have a list of questions prepared in advance to help the Question and Answer session along should the audience be slow to ask questions. Be sure to conduct inclusive outreach to your community prior to the meeting before drafting questions. Do your research to make sure your questions are specific to the current issues important to your school board community's diverse population.

Your meeting could also include a more fun and engaging session such as a "speed round" of fast Yes/No questions or something such as a round of "Hot Seat" questions where candidates answer many questions briefly in a short amount of time. Will these questions help the audience learn about the candidate's personality? Will they all be serious or will some be more lighthearted?

Sample questions to get you started are presented below.

- Why do/did you want to become a school board trustee? What experience do you bring to the role? How will you balance the time and effort you devote to being a trustee with other commitments you may have?
- As schools transition from COVID-19, what do you think needs to be done to address the effects of the pandemic on mental health and well-being, student engagement and learning recovery?
- How can school boards support equity, diversity, inclusion and human rights initiatives?
- What concrete actions do you think need to be taken to promote and facilitate the elimination of systemic racism and oppression within the policy, practices and structures in our public education system?
- What is the single greatest impact you plan to make for students?
- What is the biggest challenge schools in our community currently face? How do you propose to address it?
- What do you see as the role of schools and school boards in being responsive to diverse communities and ensuring equity and inclusion in schools?
- Knowing and acknowledging that many Indigenous students already face significant gaps in learning outcomes and achievement, what would you propose to do to mitigate learning loss specific to

the unique challenges and needs faced by many Indigenous students across many Indigenous communities in the province particularly those in remote areas?

- What sort of relationship do you think a trustee should have with the municipal government?
- Can you comment on what schools need to support students with special needs?
- What should be done to contribute to the overall mental health and well-being of students and staff in schools?
- What are your views on the role of technology in teaching and learning?
- Many child care programs are located in schools. How do you see the role of the trustee in building the positive relationships needed to promote successful programs?



In Closing

Hosting an *All Candidates Meeting* is an ideal way to understand where your local trustee candidates stand on issues that matter to you, your organization and your community. When you host a meeting, you play an important part in local democracy by connecting trustee candidates with voters and talking about the issues that will make a difference in education. When engaging in this public service, one of the most important things to remember is to seek out the voices and interests of your community's diverse members when planning, hosting and communicating about your meeting.

For more information about your local trustee candidates and resources to support your planning, please visit elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org.



This resource was developed by



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Ontario Municipal
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