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Ontario Municipal
& School Board
Elections

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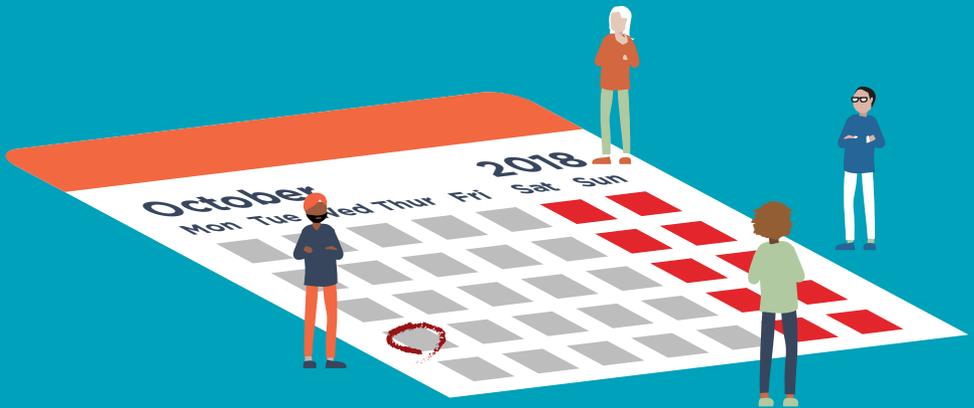


YOUR GUIDE TO HOSTING A SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEE ALL CANDIDATES MEETING

Election Day:

Monday, October 22, 2018

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.

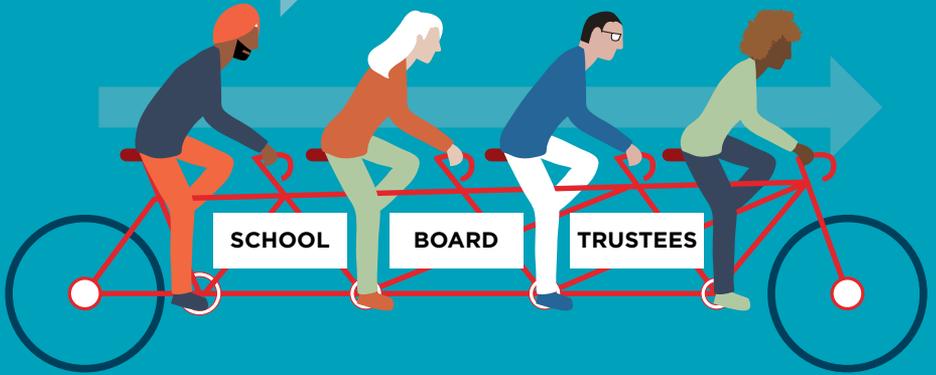


Where do your school board trustee candidates stand?



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A Trustee's role

School boards operate Ontario's publicly funded schools and each school board is governed by its publicly elected board members – school board trustees. Trustees are the community's advocates for publicly funded education. They work on behalf of Ontario's children, families and communities to promote student achievement, well-being and equity. 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 represent the community and play a vital role in ensuring 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 board. Through collaboration, engaging and joint decision making, trustees reflect the values, priorities, and expectations of the community to translate them into policy.

Come election time, your group or organization can learn about each trustee candidate's priorities 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, organization or individual 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 meetings are nonpartisan and can be held to hear from candidates and review 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 are invited to gather and 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. All Candidates Meetings happen in the months leading up to an election and take place in locations like community centres, town halls, schools 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?

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 an ideal 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.

Individuals, groups or organizations 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 publicly funded education in the community and in the province.



Planning a meeting: key things to consider

Municipal and School Board Elections are held on the fourth Monday in October of an election year. The best time to host an All Candidates Meeting for school board elections is early September through to mid-October. All candidates for the office of trustee must submit their nomination by July 27. A meeting can be put together quickly or planned over months – the key is making sure there is enough time to secure attendance from as many candidates as possible and that the meeting is well organized. (The prime vacation period of July through Labour Day may work against attracting a good turnout).

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 municipal 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.



KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Find out who is running in your ward or area.** Check with your municipal clerk’s office, school board or visit www.elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org for a listing of candidates. Contact each candidate to establish their willingness to participate and their availability.
- Decide on a time and venue.** Early evening works best. Choose a location and date for your meeting. You may also consider video conferencing to extend the reach of 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. Community members of all abilities must have the opportunity to attend and participate in the meeting.
- Establish a set of Rules and Procedures.** This will help govern your meeting. A sample set of rules is included on page 15.
- Send each candidate a formal invitation.** Include a copy of the Rules and Procedures that will guide the meeting. Ask each candidate for a bio that you can provide to the moderator to 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. Consider a minimum of two confirmed candidates before proceeding with your meeting.

- **Select a strong moderator.** Ideally, you will select a well-respected and prominent community member. 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.
- **Select a time-keeper & note-taker.** The time-keeper will ensure the candidates and those asking questions stay within their allotted time limits. Also select a note-taker who will take a record of what was discussed at the meeting.
- **Plan the meeting's format.** A typical meeting lasts about 1.5 to 2 hours although you may require more time or less depending on the number of candidates who will be attending. You should allow enough time for each candidate to make an opening and closing statement. The middle of the meeting should be devoted to questions from the audience. You may also choose to devote the first 30 minutes to questions from the moderator with some questions directed at specific candidates. A sample meeting agenda is included on page 18 of this guide.
- **Create a list of questions for the candidates.** This will be useful in case the audience is slow to ask or suggest questions. Be sure to canvass local communities for possible topics and questions.

Conduct research on local issues to inform the questions. To get started, see the sample questions included on pages 19 and 20.

At the meeting, consider displaying flipcharts for guests to write additional questions. Guests can also indicate which questions are important to them by putting a checkmark next to certain questions.

- **Promote the meeting.** Send invitations to your contacts and be sure to include diverse community stakeholders with an interest in publicly funded education. Individuals are eligible to vote in school board elections and even run for the office of trustee at age 18. Be sure to consider students and young people when sending your invitations. Promoting the meeting may require thoughtful and sustained engagement and outreach efforts.

Display posters in libraries, schools, places of worship, community centres, community hubs and other places where people get together (sample posters are available at elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org).

Post meeting details on your website. If possible, take advantage of social media. Create a hashtag for your meeting and post updates on candidates, guests and issues as the meeting approaches.

- **Get the media involved.** Consider sending a communication to your local media (media advisory) encouraging them to attend. Make calls to your local radio and television stations, newspapers and

civic bloggers. Let them know what you are doing, who will be there, when to arrive and the issues up for discussion. Consider inviting an education reporter or some other member of the media to be the moderator. This strategy may contribute to an increase in media coverage and heightened interest in your meeting from the public.

- **Confirm the logistics.** When choosing a location, be sure it is accessible to all members of the community. Ensure there is ample seating, good acoustics and the ability to make refreshments available for the audience. Consider whether or not you will need insurance or if security may be a concern. You may also want to look into translation services so that all participants and guests have the opportunity to engage in the conversation. Offering childcare may also be a good idea.

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 to ask for written questions in advance.

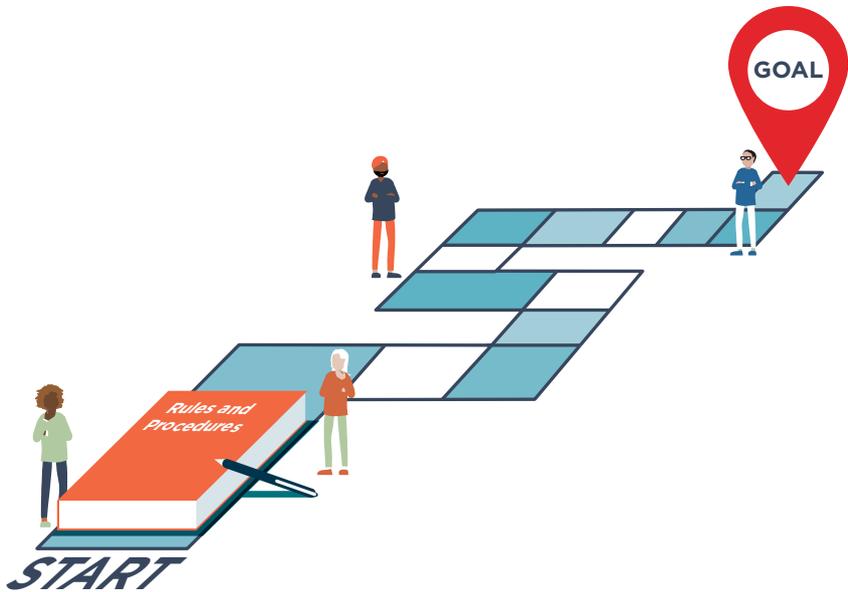
- **After the meeting.** You may consider sending thank you notes to each candidate, any volunteers and the moderator. You may also send a follow-up communication to the media (media release) that highlights key issues and quotes from the meeting.



Rules and procedures

An effective and well-run meeting will follow a set of rules. Here is a sample set of rules and procedures you can tailor to your meeting. These rules 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 rules. Also have the moderator read the rules 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 rules will be reinforced.



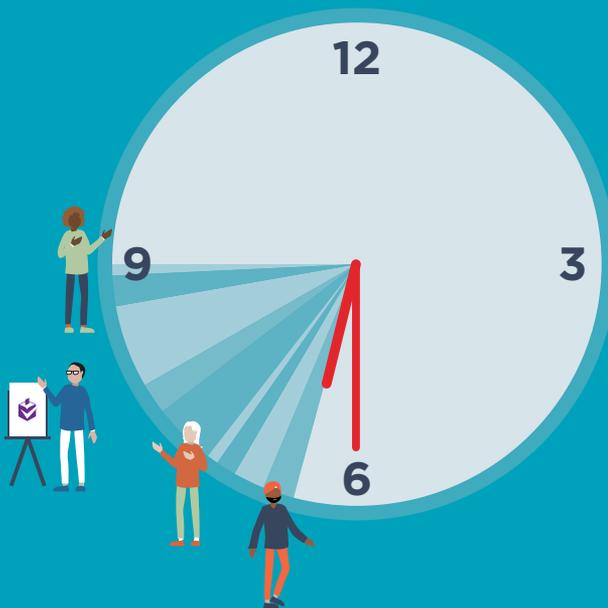


Suggested Rules and Procedures

1. Candidates should present themselves to the moderator 15 minutes prior to the call to order to draw names for order of speaking.
2. Meeting to be called to order promptly.
3. Candidates will be seated alphabetically at the speakers table and will be introduced in this order.
4. Each candidate will be allotted 3 to 5 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 session, questions will be received from the floor in either written or oral form. 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 session for making a speech rather than asking a question.
9. Questions from the floor will be limited to one per individual to ensure as wide a participation from the audience as possible. 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 session, members of the audience may ask a second question.
10. Answers to questions should be limited to 2 to 3 minutes to ensure a wide ranging discussion.
11. Allow 3 to 5 minutes for closing statements. The order should be the same as opening statements.

Sample - All Candidates Meeting agenda



A well-run All Candidates Meeting will follow a defined format. Here is a sample agenda you may choose to follow. The key is to ensure that each candidate has enough time to make a prepared opening and closing statement and, more importantly, to make sure there is plenty of time for a Question and Answer session.

Sample Agenda

- 6:30 pm Doors open
- 6:45 pm Candidates present themselves to the moderator to draw for order of speaking
- 7:00 pm Call to order. A representative of the meeting organizing group welcomes the community and introduces the moderator. Moderator delivers remarks and reads the rules and procedures.
- 7:10 pm Introduction of the candidates in alphabetical order
- 7:15 pm Each candidate to be given 3 to 5 minutes for their opening presentation
- 7:45 pm Break for refreshments and allow time for audience to write questions for candidates
- 8:00 pm Question and Answer session
- 8:40 pm 3 to 5 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 priorities. 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?

- What is the single greatest impact you plan to make for students?
- What are your top three priorities?
- What things must we get right in education over the next decade?
- 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?
- What do you see as the role of schools in making sure that all Canadian students understand Canada's history in terms of First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples? What would you do to support the Calls to Action of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?
- Can you share examples of successful programs at our schools? Where do you see room for improvement?
- What policies/strategies would you propose which could serve to promote the mission of your school board?
- How much access do you think the public should have to their school board trustees?
- What sort of relationship do you think a trustee should have with fellow trustees and student trustees? How do you plan to support a collaborative environment in the board room?

- What sort of relationship do you think a trustee should have with the board's Director of Education? How will this help you in your role of responding to concerns raised by parents and other members of the community?
- What sort of relationship do you think a trustee should have with the municipal government?
- How do you plan to promote accountability and transparency at your board?
- Can you comment on the value of professional development opportunities for trustees and student trustees?
- Can you comment on what schools need to support the full range of student abilities including 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?
- What are your thoughts on the use of social media in the classroom and in schools?
- What are schools doing, or what more should schools be doing to be safe and inclusive places for students, e.g., with regard to anti-bullying?

A photograph of five diverse young children of various ethnicities and ages, including a girl in a pink and white patterned hijab, gathered around a book and looking at it with interest. The children are smiling and appear to be in a classroom or library setting.

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.



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Ontario Municipal & School Board Elections

The Ontario Education Services Corporation represents:



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