

Your Guide to
**Hosting a School
Board Trustee
All Candidates
Meeting**



**Education
that Connects**

Global Achievement
with Local Accountability

**2014 Ontario Municipal and
School Board Elections
Monday, October 27, 2014**

Ontario municipal and school board elections will take place on Monday, October 27, 2014. On this day, Ontarians will 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?

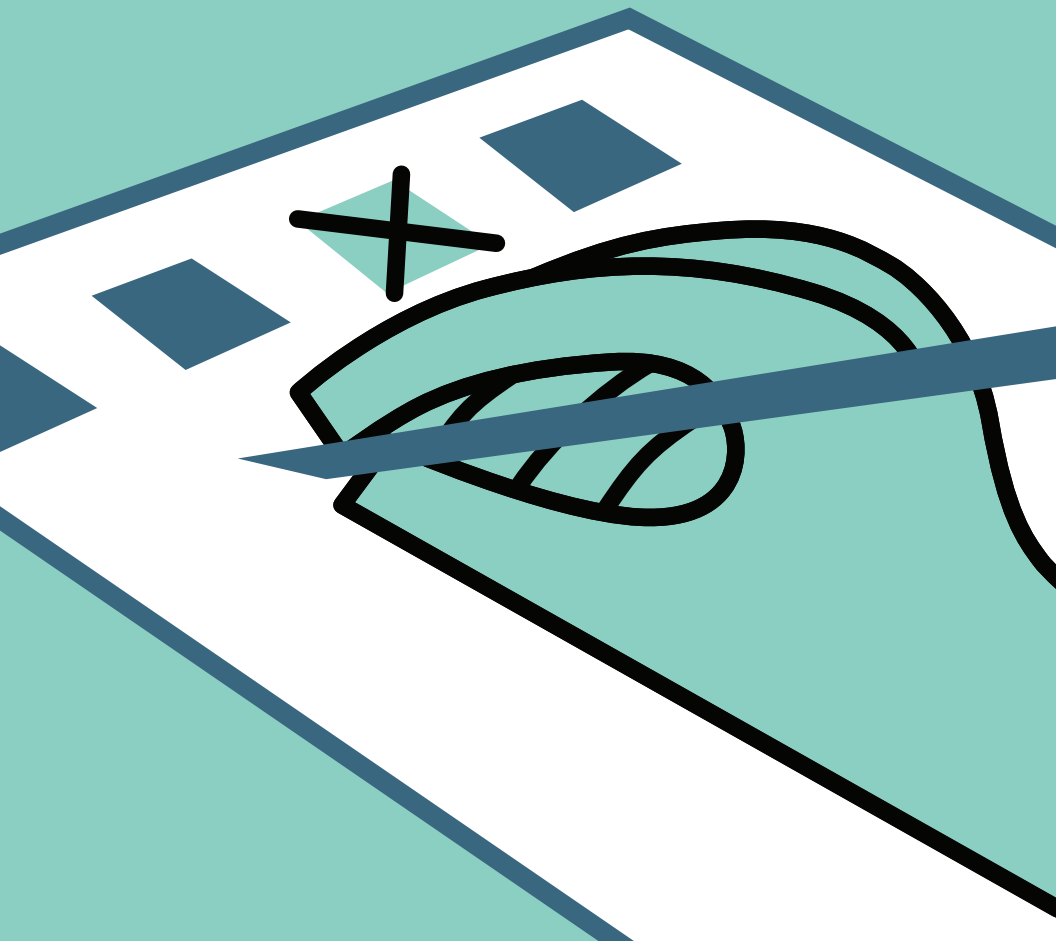


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A Trustee's Role

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 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 needs of students in their community. They 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.

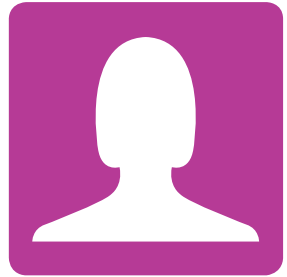
Trustees work for the taxpaying public and play a vital role in ensuring that the community has a direct pathway to express its views on the education issues that matter most. Come election time, your group or organization can assess each candidate for trustee by hosting an All Candidates Meeting. This 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. 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 even mediate 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 Municipal 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 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. Not only is a meeting a chance for your community to listen to and participate in dialogue with the candidates, it is 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: Key Things to Do

The 2014 Municipal Elections will be held on Monday, October 27th. The best time to host an All Candidates Meeting for the municipal elections is late August through to mid-October. (The prime vacation period of July 1 through August 20 may work against attracting a good turnout.) A meeting can be put together quickly or planned over months – 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.

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



Key Things to Do

- ❑ **Find out who is running in your ward.** Check your municipal clerk's office and/or school board for a listing of candidates. Contact each candidate to establish their willingness to participate and their availability.
- ❑ **Decide on a time** (early evening works best), location and date for your meeting. In choosing a location, it is important to ensure that it is physically accessible to all members of the community. Also consider providing translation services.
- ❑ **Establish a set of Rules and Procedures** that will govern your meeting. A sample set of rules is included on page 13.
- ❑ **Send each candidate a formal invitation** and 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 him or her 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'll select a well-respected and prominent community member. He or she 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** 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 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 and answers 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 with this guide.



□ **Create a list of questions for the candidates.**

Sample questions are included on pages 19 and 20.

□ **Promote the meeting.** Send invitations to your contacts; display posters in libraries, schools and community centres. Post meeting details on your website. Be sure to take advantage of social media: use Facebook to create a page about your meeting and communicate via Twitter. Tweet updates on participants, guests and issues as the meeting approaches. Tweet if a candidate declines your invitation!

□ **Get the media involved.** Consider sending a communication to the media (media advisory) encouraging them to attend. Make calls to your local radio and television stations and newspapers. Let them know what you're 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, ensure you'll have ample seating, good acoustics and the ability to make refreshments available for the audience. Consider whether or not you'll 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 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 in advance of the meeting. 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 and doors closed.
3. Candidates will be seated alphabetically at the speakers table and will be introduced in this order.
4. Each candidate will be allotted 3-5 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 period, 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 period 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 period, members of the audience may ask a second question.
10. Answers to questions should be limited to 2-3 minutes to ensure as wide a discussion as possible.
11. Allow 3-5 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 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 period.

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's remarks, reading of the rules and procedures. |
| 7:10 pm | Introduction of the candidates in alphabetical order |
| 7:15 pm | Each candidate to be given 3-5 minutes for their opening presentation |
| 7:45 pm | Break for coffee |
| 8:00 pm | Question and Answer period |
| 8:40 pm | 3-5 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 period. The moderator will ask the audience to pose their questions to the candidates. 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. No doubt many of the questions will be specific to the current issues within the community.

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Sample Questions

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 two things must we get right in education over the next decade?

What is the biggest challenge schools in our community currently face?

What are our schools getting right these days? Where do you see room for improvement?

What is the single greatest impact you plan to make for students?

What are your top three priorities?

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 the board's senior leadership (i.e. the director and superintendent of the board)? 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?

What education issues do you see as problematic now? How will you work to address them?

What is your position on standardized testing in schools?

How will you support student mental health and well-being in schools?

What do you see as some key issues for labour relations in the education environment?

What do you see as the role of schools in being responsive to diverse communities and ensuring equity and inclusion in schools?

With child care programs increasingly integrated into school settings, how do you see the role of the trustee in building the positive relationships needed to promote successful programs?

What are your views on French language education in schools?

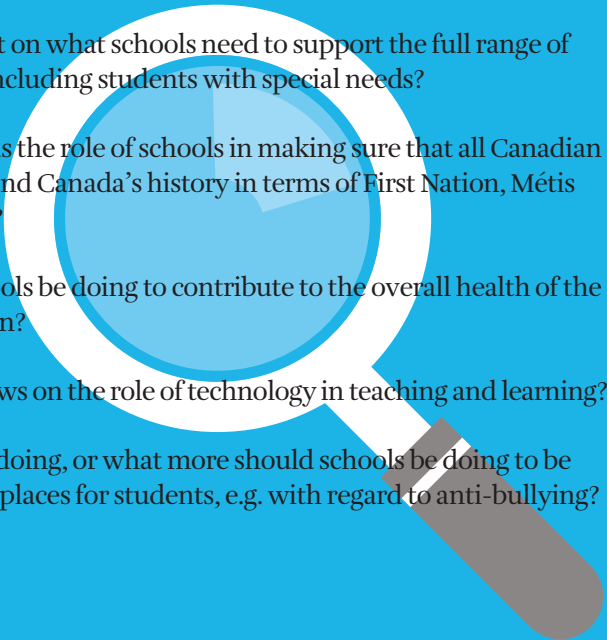
Can you comment on what schools need to support the full range of student abilities including students with special needs?

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 should schools be doing to contribute to the overall health of the student population?

What are your views on the role of technology in teaching and learning?

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?





Education that Connects

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This brochure is a collaborative effort of
the organizations shown below:

Ontario Public School Boards'
Association (OPSBA)



Ontario Catholic School Trustees'
Association (OCSTA)



Association des conseils scolaires
des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)



Association franco-ontarienne
des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)



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