



ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

ELECTION PROTOCOL

Purpose

The purpose of the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board and its schools is to focus on learning and forming our learners as articulated in the Mission Statement. When elections are called, the school system must be seen not only as promoting but acting in an ethical and impartial manner toward all candidates and potential parties seeking office in Federal, Provincial, and Municipal elections.

Comment

It should be noted that the election process, political parties, and election issues are part of the curriculum – particularly at the senior elementary and secondary school level. When a class discusses political parties and party platforms, all parties and platforms must be presented in an unbiased manner. Staff engaging in the teaching of issues and/or political parties must maintain ethical standards and impartiality.

Additionally, staff of the school system and members of School Councils must be seen as acting in an ethical and impartial manner. It is not appropriate for either School Councils or staff to use students to deliver a political message home, either during an election campaign or at any other time of year. Equally, it is not appropriate for politically motivated individuals or groups to directly involve School Councils, school staff, or a school name in the specifics of the election campaign.

Employees' 'democratic rights' as private citizens to participate in an election process are fundamental to our society. Employees do not have the right, however, to support or assist in any capacity, candidates or political parties for public office in their capacity as employees of the Board and when performing their duties as an employee. The same caution is extended to Trustees and School Council members. Trustees and School Council members have specific roles as defined in the Education Act, Regulations and Ministry Memoranda. Neither an employee of the Board, a Trustee, nor a School Council member can use the Board, a school name, or associate their preference for a political party, candidate or party policy with the Board or school operated by the Board when performing their duties as either an employee, Trustee, or School Council member. As private citizens they may exercise their democratic rights.

Procedures

1. Campaign Literature

- 1.1. The distribution of pamphlets, literature and other material in Board facilities and on Board property is not authorized.
- 1.2. The display of posters, signs or other forms of campaign advertising in Board facilities and on Board property is not authorized.

- 1.3. School publications such as bulletins, newspapers, newsletters may not be used to support, favour or publicize the campaign of any candidate, political party, or party/candidate platform.
- 1.4. The provisions of 1.1 and 1.2 do not apply during "All Candidate Meetings" held on school board property for the duration of the meeting only.

2. Candidate/Political Party/Issue Meetings

- 2.1. All Candidate Meetings may be organized with all candidates invited to participate in a given electoral area. The organizers of such meetings on school board property must retain on file a copy of the letter of invitation sent to all candidates in a specific area and a copy of the response indicating whether the candidate will or will not attend the meeting.
- 2.2. Political Party meetings on school sites is prohibited.
- 2.3. Issue meetings may be organized provided that representatives from both sides of the issue under discussion have been invited and attend the meeting. Organizers of issue meetings must retain on file a copy of the letter of invitation sent to representatives in agreement with and in opposition to the issue under discussion and a copy of the response indicating that the representative(s) will attend the meeting. If, at the commencement time of the meeting, a spokesperson for one side of the issue is not present, the issue meeting will not proceed.
- 2.4. Participants of 'All Candidates Meetings' and 'Issue Meetings' must agree to comply with the provisions of these guidelines including the prohibition and distribution of materials

3. Board Resources

- 3.1. The use of Board resources, including but not limited to the e-mail system, the website, office, photocopying, projection or other equipment and materials, lists of parents, staff, students, School Council members, to assist candidates or political parties in the campaign is prohibited.

4. School Council Agenda

- 4.1. The mandate of the School Council is to advise the Principal of the School, not to engage in political action. The School Council Chair and Principal should exercise care that the agenda does not include matters outside the School Council mandate.

5. Schools as Polling Stations

- 5.1 Under Section 45 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, school boards must make schools available to be used as polling stations if requested to do so. Boards must provide the space free of charge. If your school is selected, you will be contacted by the Community Use of Schools Co-ordinator.

6. Review

- 6.1. It is the responsibility of the appropriate Supervisory Officer to review this memorandum with school Principals/Supervisors at the calling of each election.
- 6.2. It is the responsibility of Principals/Supervisors to review this memorandum with all staff and School Councils at the call of each election.
- 6.3. It is the responsibility of the Director of Education to review this memorandum with Trustees and employee group representatives at the system level at the calling of each election.

References: Mission Statement of the Board
OECTA, "Seize the Day", March, 1998
Education Act and Regulations
The Road Ahead, Part II

March 2010