

Protocol for School and Staff Involvement in Election Campaigns

Updated April 25, 2023

protocol

Purpose of the Protocol

This protocol offers guidance to ensure consistent and appropriate management of possible requests from candidates during municipal, provincial or federal elections, including all by-elections.

inform |

chiefsuperintendent@cbe.ab.ca
for any planned or
unscheduled events

Introduction

The Calgary Board of Education and our schools are supportive of involvement in democracy and the election process. The Board of Trustees encourages all staff to exercise their right to vote in any election. Your active participation in becoming informed and engaged in the election process is important and sets a positive example for our students.

As an individual, you have the right to express your views and be involved in elections and election campaigns. As CBE employees, it is important to use judgement and consider the impact on the organization when speaking on behalf of the organization through an official CBE channel. It is also important to consider that the public might perceive you to be speaking or presenting yourself in an official capacity.

The CBE is non-partisan and politically neutral. Our role as a school board is to support student success, not advance or deter individual political campaigns or political party agendas.

When CBE trustees are attending or participating in school/school council events trustees will remain non-partisan and will not use school events/meetings to advocate or advance personal interests (including re-election campaigns) or political parties/groups.

Definitions

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| Elected official | A person who has been elected in a municipal (City Councillor or School Board Trustee), provincial or federal election, in Canada or internationally |
| Election candidate | A person who is running in a municipal, provincial or federal election, in Canada or internationally |

Election period: Election/by-election periods begin when the election is officially called until voting day.

General Guidelines

1 | Campaigning Restrictions

Campaigning in schools or on CBE property is not permitted. CBE employees and elected officials are not permitted to distribute or share campaign literature or political materials and information to students and parents or to fellow staff through CBE channels or in CBE buildings, with the exception of campaigns related to professional associations or unions (e.g., Alberta Teachers' Association elections).

During an election period, it is not appropriate for election candidates, or current elected officials (including elected officials who are candidates in that election) to visit or have discussions with students and staff at the school. Requests for invitations during this period must be declined, and previously scheduled events must be rescheduled. This includes during by-elections held in Calgary.

(Refer to Political Forums for allowable events)

2 | Campaign Literature, Materials, Signs and Social Media

Campaign material for any election is not permitted in CBE schools or buildings, with the exception of union or professional association elections. Materials related to union or professional association elections may only appear in spaces restricted to CBE employees, such as staff rooms.

Campaign signs are not permitted on school property. If these signs “appear” on school property, please call the candidate and request they be removed immediately.

If you are unclear of where the property line for your school is, please contact [CBE Real Estate and Leasing](#) for clarification.

CBE employees are urged to carefully consider their social media use during an election period. Reference CBE Social Media Protocols for expectations and recommendations for social media use.

School, classroom, service unit and other official CBE accounts should not post, “like” or share support for any individual candidates, parties or campaigns.

School councils are an extension of the CBE and should follow the same protocols regarding campaign literature, materials, signs and social media. Expectations and recommendations for social media use for school councils is available in the [social media guidelines for school councils](#).

CBE employees should use sound judgement and careful discretion during an election period when using personal social media accounts that identify themselves as CBE staff members.

3 | Political Forums

There are two types of political forums that are permitted to take place in a school:

- a public forum whereby an external organization such as a community group, school council or Alberta Teachers' Association is responsible for organizing or sponsoring the forum, and the school building is primarily serving as the "venue."
 - Students are not involved in these forums. Any such forum or event that takes place in a school must take place following nomination day and all candidates in the relevant wards must be invited to participate.
 - Use of school space for these events must be booked through the City of Calgary and all fees and restrictions apply.
- a forum that is organized or sponsored by an individual school where the forum provides an integral component of the Alberta Education Program of Study. These forums must relate to the democratic process, support student learning and must not be for the purpose of advancing candidates' individual or party platforms.
- **Ultimately, these events and the conduct of all candidates and attendees are the principal's responsibility.**
 - a. A forum or event must take place following nomination period.
 - b. All candidates in the relevant wards or ridings must be invited to participate.
 - c. All candidates must be supervised by school staff while on school property.
 - d. Candidates may only interact with the classes and students involved in the forum or event.
 - e. Candidates and/or outside parties are not allowed to photograph themselves with CBE students during their visit to the school.
 - f. If you wish to invite media to the event, you must send a request one week in advance to Communication and Engagement Services, as they manage invitations to media. Email your request to mediarelations@cbe.ab.ca. Your request will be reviewed and may be declined. If you are made aware that a candidate wishes or plans to invite media, you must notify Communication and Engagement Services immediately.

4 | Use of Schools as Polling Stations

The *Alberta Election Act* and the *Federal Election Act* make provision for schools to be used as polling stations during elections. Specifically, the *Alberta Election Act* states: A returning officer may utilize as a polling place any public building or any school that is the property of any school district or school division organized under any Act if the building or school is suitable for the purpose.

The polling stations are set up as a rental arrangement.

The CBE works with the Federal, Provincial and Municipal Chief Electoral Officers to minimize the use of schools for advance polls and will request that an alternative location be found when there is a substantive reason why a specific school should not be used for any polling. However, ultimately a Chief Electoral Officer can legislate the use of a school. In general, polling officers work hard to minimize disruption to the school.

The CBE has security measures and protocols regarding the use of schools as polling stations. In preparation for each election, a meeting is held between CBE Corporate Security, CBE Facility Operations and senior electoral officers. The security requirements of the CBE are reviewed and are implemented at each polling site/school. For example, the returning officer must appoint a security monitor, must review and adhere to the school emergency response plan and must not allow voters into areas not stated on the permit. Facility operators are requested to assist with cordoning off areas, extra monitoring of hallways, etc.

Members of the news media may come to the schools as part of their election coverage. They are allowed to do so and generally they will only take photos of voters as they are entering and exiting the polling stations. News media are only to access the spaces where voting or election-related activities are occurring and should not access other parts of the school or building, such as hallways, classrooms and stairwells. The elections security monitor at each site will monitor the news media conduct and deal with issues.

Additional Reference |

[*Protocol for Elected Official, Dignitary and Indigenous Elder Involvement at CBE Events*](#)