

## | protocol |

## Political Activity Protocol

## Inform

[chiefsuperintendent@cbe.ab.ca](mailto:chiefsuperintendent@cbe.ab.ca)

or

[mediarelations@cbe.ab.ca](mailto:mediarelations@cbe.ab.ca)

for any planned or unscheduled events

This protocol offers guidance to ensure the workplace conduct and workplace decisions of Calgary Board of Education (CBE) employees support the political neutrality of the CBE.

## Introduction

The CBE and its schools are supportive of involvement in democracy and the political process. All staff are encouraged to exercise their right to vote in any election. Your active participation in becoming informed and engaged in the political process is important and sets a positive example for students.

As an individual, you have the right to express your views and to be involved in the political process. 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 CBE capacity, even if you are presenting your views as a private citizen.

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

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

The restrictions in this Protocol are not intended to:

- Prevent employees from providing instruction to CBE students based on the Alberta Education and Childcare Program of Study.
- Prevent employees from supporting and students from engaging in school-based clubs or extra-curricular activities that are intended to contribute to a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours.
- Prevent CBE from taking reasonable steps to accommodate students or employees in accordance with the CBE's duties under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.
- Prevent the use of CBE resources or CBE facilities by labour unions in a manner that is consistent with the [Labour Relations Code](#) (Alberta) and any applicable collective agreement(s).

## Definitions

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elected official   | A person who has been elected in a municipal (City Councillor or School Board Trustee), provincial, First Nation, Métis or federal election, in Canada or internationally.                   |
| Election candidate | A person who is running in a municipal, provincial, First Nation, Métis, or federal election, including by-elections in Calgary.                                                             |
| Election period    | Election/by-election periods begin when the election is officially called until voting day.                                                                                                  |
| Political activity | An action or communication that supports or opposes a political party, political candidate, petition, rally, referendum, at any level of government.                                         |
| Nomination period  | The period when a person can be nominated as a candidate for elected office in a municipal (City Councillor or School Board Trustee), provincial, First Nation, Métis, or federal election). |

## General Guidelines

### 1 | Use of CBE Resources

CBE resources such as information technology systems, e-mail accounts, social media accounts, letterhead, funds, and employee time cannot be used for any political activity.

### 2 | Use of CBE Facilities

CBE facilities cannot be used for any political activity, other than in accordance with this Protocol and the [Protocol for Elected Official, Dignitary, Indigenous Elder and Knowledge Keeper Involvement at CBE Events](#).

*(Refer below to Political Forums and Use of Schools as Polling Stations for permitted events)*

### 3 | CBE-Organized Events

To support the political neutrality of the CBE and the provision of a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours, CBE-organized events such as, but not limited to, open houses, celebrations of learning, concerts, dramatic productions, athletic events, graduation ceremonies, or graduation banquets should not be a forum for political activity, regardless of where the event is hosted.

## 4 | Campaigning Restrictions

Campaigning for an election 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 families 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 representing that level of government, to visit or have discussions with students and staff at the school. For example, elected Members of Parliament (MPs) or MP candidates must not visit during federal election periods. 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 below to Political Forums for permitted events)*

## 5 | Campaign Materials and Signs

Campaign material or literature 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.

## 6 | Social Media

CBE employees are urged to carefully consider their social media use during an election period. Reference [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.

## 7 | 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. 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 and Childcare Program of Study. These forums must relate to the democratic process, support student learning, and may be used by candidates to communicate their party's platform to students.
  - **Ultimately, these events and the conduct of all candidates and attendees are the principal's responsibility. If a forum is planned, the principal will notify their education director who will in turn, ensure the chief superintendent is aware.**
  - A forum or event must take place after the nomination period is closed.
  - All candidates in the relevant ward or riding must be invited to participate.
  - All candidates must be supervised by school staff while on school property.
  - Candidates may only interact with the classes and students involved in the forum or event.
  - Candidates and/or outside parties are not allowed to photograph themselves with CBE students during their visit to the school.
  - If you wish to invite news media to the event, you must send a request at least one week in advance to Communication & Engagement Services, as they manage invitations to media. Email your request to [CBE Media Relations](#). 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 & Engagement Services immediately.

## 8 | Use of Schools as Polling Stations

The *Election Act* (Alberta) and the *Canada Elections Act* make provision for schools to be used as polling stations during elections. Specifically, the *Election Act* (Alberta) states:

*52(4) 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, Indigenous Elder and Knowledge Keeper Involvement at CBE Events](#)

[Social Media Protocols \(for employees\)](#) (on employee intranet)

[Social Media Guidelines for School Councils](#)