SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS CANDIDATE GUIDE

A RESOURCE FOR SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES IN THE 2016 ELECTIONS

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS NS.CA
School Board Elections
Candidate Guide

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Are You Thinking of Becoming a School Board Member?

It’s one of the most rewarding ways to contribute to your community.

School boards in Canada have helped build a universally accessible, publicly-funded education system. They are the body through which parents and communities can most directly influence decisions about schools and the education of children and youth.

This guide has been compiled to assist individuals thinking about running for this year’s school board election. Inside you will find material prepared to help you during your campaign including qualifications, campaign tips, FAQs, role of boards and members, and important dates.

The following information is also available at www.SchoolBoardElectionsNS.ca.

You’ll note some information in this document is hyperlinked, however if you have a printed copy, here are the links you’ll need to know:

- Nova Scotia School Boards Association
  www.nssba.ca

- Municipal Affairs
  www.novascotia.ca/dma/

- Local Decisions
  www.localdecisions.ca

- Municipal Elections Act
  http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/muncpel.htm

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
  www.ednet.ns.ca

- Education Act
  www.nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/education.pdf
Becoming a School Board Member

Things to consider:

Individuals who run for school board office have the potential to contribute a unique set of skills, values and experiences to the school board. Critical questions for potential board members to ask themselves include:

- Do I have a sincere interest in public education?
- Do I want to make a difference in the lives of children and young people?
- Do I respect concerns of families and the community?
- Do I appreciate the need for effective communication?
- Am I prepared to commit the significant time required to research issues and prepare for and attend meetings?
- Am I a team player?
- Do I demonstrate an interest in providing leadership?

Qualifications:

Candidates for a school board, including African Nova Scotian members of a regional school board, and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), must:

- Be 18 years of age at the time of nomination;
- Be a Canadian citizen;
- Be a resident in the school region in which you are seeking office for six months prior to the nomination day (by March 13, 2016), and continue to so reside; and
- Not have been disqualified under the Municipal Elections Act.

The “school region” is the area over which a school board exercises jurisdiction. The jurisdiction (school region) of CSAP is the entire province.

An “electoral district” refers to the district from which each board member is elected. For example, in the Strait Regional School Board there are 10 electoral districts. School board electoral districts do not always line up with municipal polling districts. Please check with your municipal office for specific information on your electoral district.

You do not need to reside in the particular electoral district of the school board in which you wish to seek election, as long as you meet the residency requirement of six months in the school region.
Roles and Responsibilities of a School Board Member as Part of a Governing School Board

Key Roles of the Governing School Board:

**Communicator:** School boards maintain consistent communication with community members to address public education issues of local importance.

**Planner:** School boards develop plans to address student needs and to actively participate in local communities.

**Policy Maker:** School boards help to create policies that outline expectations of board administration, teachers and students.

**Supporter:** School boards support parents, students and the community on education issues that affect our system.

**Educator:** School boards make important decisions that determine the direction and quality of public education.
Key Responsibilities:

School board members act in a collective manner to carry out the following responsibilities:

Student Achievement

- Improve student achievement.
- Lead educational reform.
- Serve as an advocate for all students in the school board.
- Respond to local educational concerns.
- Ensure equity in distribution of resources.

Leadership

- Create a vision or mission for education in their area consistent with provincial objectives.
- Empower the administrators, educators and the community to carry out the vision.
- Provide a crucial link between the public values and the professional expertise.
- Represent the community’s interest in the governance of local schools.
- Promote cooperative initiatives with local agencies.
- Act as a communication link between the public and board administration.

Policy-Making and Oversight

- Establish short-term and long-term goals.
- Set school and performance indicators.
- Select and appoint the superintendent and provide direction and support to them.
- Focus on policy versus daily administration.
- Develop policies and procedures.
- Comply with legislation.

Financial Oversight

- Plan and approve budget.
- Ensure budget is balanced.
- Demonstrate financial accountability.
- Allocate funds efficiently.
- Provide oversight of service contracts.
- Work with the Province to ensure education is properly funded.
- Develop partnerships to maximize resources.

Evaluation

- Conduct self-evaluation activities to check for effectiveness.
- Monitor public satisfaction with school board accountability through informal and formal methods.
- Evaluate superintendent performance annually.
Nominations

In order to run for school board elections, you will need nominations:

• The nomination deadline is September 13, 2016.
• A candidate is nominated for one office only, in writing, by at least five qualified voters.
• A nomination fee of $200 maximum is required (unless reduced or eliminated by the local municipality).
• Nomination papers must be filed with the returning officer for the district in which you are running.
• Your deposit will be refunded if you a) remove all campaign signs within seven days of election, b) return all copies of the voters list in your possession and sign an affidavit to that effect, and c) are elected or acclaimed, or receive half as many votes as the successful candidate.

For detailed information on nominations, contributions and obtaining an agent, visit the Candidate's Guide to Municipal and School Board Elections.

African-Nova Scotian Representation

Each regional school board in Nova Scotia has an African-Nova Scotian representative (Education Act s.42A) elected to the board by African-Nova Scotian electors (an African-Nova Scotian or the parent of an African-Nova Scotian) in the candidate’s district.

Francophone Representation

Candidates of the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) must be entitled persons as defined in the Education Act. This includes an individual:

• whose first language learned and still understood is French; or
• who received Canadian primary school instruction in a French first-language program; or
• who is the parent of a child who is receiving or has received Canadian primary or secondary school instruction in a French first language program.

The language of business for the CSAP is French.

Mi’kmaq Representation

The membership of a regional school board may include a Mi’kmaq representative. Representatives are appointed by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development following consultation with the Mi’kmaq community and the school board.
Here are some tips for running your campaign:

- Organize a “team of friends” or supporters who will help you spread the word.
- Speak informally whenever possible to members of your community about why you wish to run for school board and why they should vote for you.
- Book speaking engagements at the local Chamber of Commerce or other business meetings in your area.
- Use social media. Share information on Twitter and start a Facebook group or event specifically for your campaign. Encourage friends and colleagues to share.
- Reach out to the local media and encourage them to interview you. There are many local reporters using social media as well, you can send them a tweet!
- Conduct a telephone campaign – members of your “team of friends” could call with a standard script.
- Place a paid advertisement in your local or community newspaper.
- Develop a brochure or information card that speaks to your strengths and why you are interested in serving on your local school board. Go door to door.
- Place signs around your community.
- Share information with voters about the role of school board members, and the importance of voting in the election. Include information on voter eligibility.

- Attend a School Board Candidate Information Session in your area for valuable information on becoming a school board member and running a successful campaign. Visit www.schoolboardelections.ca for information on these events.

NOTE: When printing election brochures, signage or other print materials, be sure you’re adhering to the guidelines laid out by Municipal Affairs.
Campaign Costs

Through the use of social media, it is possible to conduct a cost-effective campaign, but it is important to remember not everyone is “online”. The most significant costs will be for creating campaign materials and for paid advertisements. You should wait until it’s confirmed that another candidate is running in your school board district before determining what and how much material you will print.

School board candidates are required to pay a deposit of $200 with your nomination papers. If your school board district and/or region spans more than one municipality, you are only required to make one deposit. You can gather donations for your campaign, however candidates must disclose the name of donors who exceed a $50 donation. There are no income tax credits or deductions available to donors contributing to school board elections.

NOTE: Please see the Candidate's Guide to Municipal and School Board Elections for extensive information on financing your campaign. These materials are available from your local municipal office or online at www.localdecisions.ca

School Boards of Nova Scotia

For more information on individual school boards, visit their websites:

- Annapolis Valley Regional School Board
  www.avrsb.ca
- Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board
  www.cbv.ns.ca
- Chignecto-Central Regional School Board
  www.ccrsb.ca
- Conseil scolaire acadien provincial
  www.csap.ednet.ns.ca
- Halifax Regional School Board
  www.hrsb.ca
- Strait Regional School Board
  www.srsb.ca
- South Shore Regional School Board
  www.ssrsb.ca
- Tri-County Regional School Board
  www.tcrsb.ca
School Boards of Nova Scotia

The following map outlines the eight school board zones in Nova Scotia and represents the CSAP which is a province wide board.
Important Dates

The following dates are stipulated by the Municipal Elections Act, and all candidates and official agents should be aware of them:

March 13th 2016: Candidates must have been residents of the school region in which they intend to run as of this day (and continue to be residents).

March 15th 2016: Municipalities have appointed returning officers by this day

September 13th 2016: Deadline for nominations, deposit and appointment of official agent

September 14th 2016: Deadline for candidates to withdraw candidacy

October 6th & 8th 2016: Optional advance poll days (varies by municipality)

October 11th 2016: Mandatory advance poll days

October 15th 2016: Election day

October 22nd 2016: Candidates to return voters lists and remove signs or they will lose their deposit
Q. When are school board elections?
A. School board elections are held every four years together with municipal elections. This year they are on October 15, 2016.

Q. What do school boards do?
A. School boards play a crucial role in shaping our youth through the education system. In partnership with the community, parents, schools, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, school boards are responsible for ensuring that children receive the best education possible. It is their responsibility to ensure that people are aware of the school board's role, its accomplishments and why good public education is crucial to the economic and social health of a community.

Q. Who are school boards accountable to?
A. School boards are accountable to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Q. Who serves as school board members?
A. School board members are people from various backgrounds. They are retirees, homemakers, professionals, trades people, university students – the list goes on. The one thing these people all have in common is an interest in children's education and the desire to serve their communities.

Q. What are the key accountabilities for individual board members?
A. All members of a governing school board must maintain a focus on the achievement of all students enrolled in the board, act in the best interest of the board, and fulfil the duties of the board as outlined in the Education Act.

Q. Who is eligible to vote in school board elections?
A. All members of the community are eligible and encouraged to vote as long as they are at least 18 years of age, are voting in the school board electoral district in which they reside and meet the criteria as outlined in the Candidate's Guide to Municipal and School Board Elections.

Q. Who is eligible to vote for African Nova Scotian school board members?
A. Voters who identify as African Nova Scotians, or Black Nova Scotians, are eligible to vote for the African Nova Scotian School Board Member in their region. Parents or guardians of African Nova Scotian, or Black Nova Scotian students are also eligible. By requesting a ballot for the African Nova Scotian election, voters are declaring their eligibility. If voters select the African Nova Scotian ballot, they cannot vote for the district school board candidate or the CSAP candidate.

Q. Who is eligible to vote for Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) members?
A. “Entitled persons” may vote in the CSAP election. An “Entitled Person” is defined as someone who has French as their first language learned and still understood, or who received their primary school education in
French in Canada following a French-first-language program, or has a child who has received or is receiving primary or secondary education in Canada following a French-first-language program are eligible to vote for CSAP members. By requesting a ballot for the CSAP election, voters are declaring their eligibility. If voters select the CSAP ballot, they cannot vote for the district school board candidate or the regional African Nova Scotian candidate.

Q. What are electoral districts and how are they determined?
A. For the purposes of electing members to the school board, each school board region is divided into electoral districts. The Education Act grants authority to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (URB) to determine the number of electoral districts within a school region and the boundaries of the electoral district. School boards are required to submit an application to the URB every eight years to confirm or change the number and boundaries of the electoral districts in the school region.

Q. When will I know the official results of the election?
A. The election results that are announced on election night are unofficial. The official addition of the votes is conducted by the returning officer, who records the results entered on the written statements of poll from each polling station. The municipal returning officer conducts the official addition for all of the elections in the municipality. The school board returning officer conducts the official addition for the school board election(s) that the returning officer was responsible for.

Q. If elected is there training for school board members?
A. Individual school boards offer training sessions for new board members to familiarize them with policies and procedures. The Nova Scotia School Boards Association will also be hosting an orientation seminar for all board members in the fall of 2016. Check nssba.ca for more information.

Important note: As per the Municipal Elections Act, if fewer than ten persons from any polling station vote, the ballots are not counted at the station to protect the privacy of the voter. Ballots are sealed in an envelope and transported to the central polling station in Dartmouth. This means some results may take longer than others to be confirmed.