



## YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### *Policy and Procedure #275.0, Partisan Activities and Campaigning Procedure #275.1, Elected Official Visits to Schools*

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The Partisan Activities and Campaigning policy and procedure speaks to the Boards belief that all trustees, committee members, candidates for any elected position and staff members, as representatives of the York Region District School Board, are entrusted with the responsibility for appropriately using Board resources at all times including during election campaigning periods.

#### **Who has responsibilities?**

- Board of Trustees
- The Director of Education
- Committee members
- Candidates
- Staff members
- Students

#### **How is this policy and procedure related to Board priorities?**

The Partisan Activities and Campaigning policy and procedure ensures the stewardship of Board resources by demonstrating ethical leadership through professionalism and accountability for high standards of practice in all Board operations and decisions. Thereby, building trust and collaborative relationships with students, families and staff through respectful and responsive communication focused on shared solutions. This supports accountable stewardship of Board resources and contributes to confidence in public education.

#### **Related Documents and/or Legislation**

[Education Act](#)

[Municipal Elections Act](#)

[Elections Act](#)

[Federal Elections Act](#)

[Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline](#)

[Community Involvement Hours](#)

[Staff Members who are Candidates for, or Elected to, Public Office](#)

[Trustee Services](#)

[Conflict of Interest](#)

#### **Department**

Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services

## 1. Policy Statement

The Board believes that all trustees, committee members, candidates for any elected position and staff members, as representatives of the York Region District School Board, are entrusted with the responsibility for appropriately using Board resources at all times including during election campaign periods. This supports accountable stewardship of Board resources and contributes to confidence in public education.

## 2. Application

Board resources provided or available to trustees, committee members and staff members are for the exclusive purpose of carrying out their official duties as either an elected official, committee member or staff member of the York Region District School Board.

This policy applies to trustees, parents, students, committee members, staff members and any other member of the community who works and learns on Board property and who access and/or use Board resources.

The use of Board resources for partisan activities or to campaign for any political office is not permitted.

### 2.1 Campaign Periods

The York Region District School Board has identified the following parameters with regard to campaign periods.

- (a) The municipal election campaign period shall begin on May 1 until Voting Day in a regular municipal election year. This period applies to everyone, regardless of whether nomination papers have been filed.
- (b) For a provincial election, the campaign period begins the day an individual is declared as a candidate and lasts until Voting Day. At a minimum, this period shall last from the date the Writs of Election are signed by the Lieutenant Governor until Voting Day.
- (c) For a federal election, the campaign period begins when an individual is declared as a candidate and lasts until Voting Day. At a minimum, this period shall last from the date the Governor General dissolves Parliament to Voting Day.
- (d) The campaign period for any by-election is determined by the appropriate legislation including the [Municipal Elections Act](#), [Election Act](#) the [Canada Elections Act](#).

## **2.2 Trustee and committee member expectations**

Trustees or committee members who are seeking election to any political office or re-election for the position of trustee may continue to carry out their official duties and represent the interests of their community members. Any activities conducted by trustees outside of their legislative responsibilities identified under the [Education Act](#) or by Board policy, including partisan activities and campaigning, while fulfilling their official duties as trustees, are not permitted and may be deemed to be a breach of the [Trustee Code of Conduct](#) or the [Standards of Conduct](#) policy and procedure.

Trustees and committee members may acknowledge their incumbent role as part of their campaign. They are encouraged to use professional judgement when using their role or affiliation with the York Region District School Board to support any other candidates in partisan activities or campaigning.

## **2.3 Staff member expectations**

Staff members are expected to demonstrate the highest level of professionalism at all times. During any campaign period, staff members may engage in the democratic process; however, they may not use Board resources or time to campaign for or on behalf of any candidate, including themselves. While at work or representing the Board at meetings or events, staff members shall not be involved in partisan discussions or activities.

The Director of Education, members of senior team and those who work closely with or directly support the Board of Trustees are strongly encouraged to;

- (a) not endorse or actively campaign for any trustee candidate or trustee who is seeking election to another office; and
- (b) maintain neutrality and not be involved in partisan discussions or activities both at work and outside of the work environment.

Staff members must not use their role or affiliation with the York Region District School Board to support any partisan activities or campaigning.

Staff members who are candidates for, or elected to, public office should refer to, understand and adhere to their responsibilities under the [Staff Members who are Candidates for, or Elected to, Public Office](#) policy and procedure and all other applicable legislation.

## **2.4 Use of Staff Resources**

Staff resources may not be used for partisan activities or campaigning. This includes, but is not limited to;

- (a) preparing or disseminating materials, including, but not limited to newsletters, school newsletters, pamphlets, buttons, information tables, business cards, flyers, social media, speeches/greetings, brochures, websites, photos or videos,

- (b) scheduling and providing support at meetings or events with Board staff, students or other groups,
- (c) preparing speaking remarks or correspondence related to any campaign or which may be perceived to be partisan,
- (d) supplying personal information about students, parents, community members or staff members for the purposes of campaigning,
- (e) consolidating information available publicly, and
- (f) discussing or providing political or campaign advice.

## **2.5 Use of Physical and Technology Resources**

Board-owned physical resources may not be used for partisan activities or campaigning. This includes, but is not limited to;

- (a) computer technology,
- (b) electronic mail system and distribution lists,
- (c) bandwidth and internet service available on Board property,
- (d) board buildings, offices and property,
- (e) telecommunication devices and any device provisioned by the Board,
- (f) office supplies and any supply provisioned by the Board,
- (g) York Region District School Board email accounts, engagement forums and servers, and
- (h) York Region District School Board intellectual property, including, but not limited to photos owned by the Board or content posted to any Board website or social media account.

Board provisioned or subsidized devices, such as, but not limited to computers and smartphones may not be used to access, monitor or engage in partisan activities or campaigning.

Partisan information and campaign materials or messages may not be sent to or from any Board email account.

## **2.6 Social Media**

The following social media accounts must not be used for partisan activities or campaigning;

- (a) official Board accounts such as, but not limited to, [@YRDSB](#) and [@YRDSBDirector](#) Twitter accounts,
- (b) official student trustee accounts,
- (c) official staff member accounts,
- (d) official advisory committee accounts,
- (e) official school or department accounts, and
- (f) any other official account associated with a person's position or department of the York Region District School Board.

Social media accounts used for partisan activities or campaigning may not;

- (a) use the Board logo, and
- (b) use Board intellectual property, including, but not limited to photos owned by the Board or content posted to any Board website or social media account.

## **2.7 Board Logo**

Any unauthorized use of the York Region District School Board logo is not permitted. The Board logo may not be used on any partisan or campaign materials or communications including, but not limited to, pictures, flyers, advertisements, social media and campaign websites.

## **2.8 Meetings and Events**

The distribution of materials and making comments or statements about any partisan or campaign related matter is not permitted at any meeting or event hosted by the York Region District School Board including, but not limited to:

- (a) Board, Advisory and Board committee meetings,
- (b) school council meetings,
- (c) school visits,
- (d) graduation ceremonies, and
- (e) student or staff awards events.

Trustees, committee members and staff members may continue to perform their official duties at meetings and events. Remarks and correspondence by incumbent trustees, committee members and staff members should be non-partisan, related to their role and not related to the campaign of any candidate for any office.

## **2.9 Media Requests**

The Board Chair will continue to act as the spokesperson on behalf of the York Region District School Board. Support from Board staff will be provided for official communications, from the Board Chair, on behalf of the York Region District School Board. Corporate Communications support will not be provided for any requests that may related to partisan activities or campaign related matter.

## **2.10 All Candidate Meetings**

All candidate meetings may be held in schools or other Board facilities provided a minimum of two candidates, or designate(s), for the same position have been invited and confirmed their attendance at least one week prior to the meeting. If only one candidate is confirmed to attend, the event must be rescheduled or cancelled.

All candidate meetings must be structured so all candidates, or designate(s), for any position are invited to attend at least two weeks prior to the date of the event. All candidates, or designate(s), must have equal opportunity to address the issues/audience.

Additional information about all candidates meetings is outlined in the Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline.

### **2.11 Student Volunteers**

Students are encouraged to engage in the Canadian democratic process. Students may qualify for volunteer hours provided it meets the requirements of the [Community Involvement Hours](#) policy and procedure.

Board resources will not be used to support the recruitment of student volunteers.

Additional information about student volunteers and community involvement hours is outlined in the Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline.

### **2.12 Additional Information**

The Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline outlines best practices with regard to frequently asked questions related to Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections.

## **3. Definitions**

### **3.1 Partisan Activity**

Any activity behaviour that is considered to be affiliated with a political party or political position.

## **4. Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Trustees are responsible for:**

- (a) understanding that any trustee who is found to have violated the Partisan Activities and Campaigning policy is subject to the [Trustee Code of Conduct and Protocol for Trustee Code of Conduct](#); and
- (b) requesting clarity from the Director of Education, or designate, and/or the Integrity Commissioner with regard to the use of Board resources for partisan activities and campaigning.

### **4.2 The Director of Education, or designate, is responsible for:**

- (a) providing guidance with regard to the use of Board resources for partisan activities and campaigning.

**4.2 Committee members, candidates and staff members are responsible for:**

- (a) understanding and adhering to the information contained in the Partisan Activities and Campaigning policy referring to the Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline for clarity on frequently asked questions; and
- (b) being aware that any violation to the Partisan Activities and Campaigning policy may result in disciplinary action.

**5. Related Documents**

[Education Act](#)

[Municipal Elections Act](#)

[Elections Act](#)

[Federal Elections Act](#)

[Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline](#)

[Community Involvement Hours](#)

[Staff Members who are Candidates for, or Elected to, Public Office](#)

[Trustee Services](#)

[Conflict of Interest](#)

**6. Contact**

Manager, Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services

**7. History**

Working Document: April 2018

Revised: April 2019

## Procedure #275.1, Elected Official Visits to Schools

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### 1. Procedure Statement

This procedure outlines how requests for elected official visits to schools will be managed in the York Region District School Board.

### 2. Application

Schools play an important role in informing youth on the democratic process and creating a society that is engaged and informed. From time-to-time, it may be appropriate for an elected official to visit a school or classroom.

This procedure does not apply to:

- (a) visits by trustees;
- (b) visits by any elected official and/or candidates during campaign periods; and
- (c) events or visits initiated by the Director's Office.

#### 2.1 Approval Criteria

- (a) The visit must:
  - adhere to all Board policies and/or procedures, legislation and the Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline;
  - not, at any time, disrupt the normal operation of the school or interfere with regularly scheduled activities or delivery of instruction;
  - be initiated at the request of a classroom teacher or principal;
  - demonstrate relevance to the curriculum being delivered; and
  - be approved by the school principal, in consultation with the superintendent of education.
- (b) For any special event occurring at a school such as, but not limited to, anniversaries, graduations, school council events, the superintendent of education and Corporate Communications must approve the invitation to any elected official.
- (c) When a visit by an elected official is scheduled, the local trustee must be informed and invited to attend.

### 3. Responsibilities

#### 3.1 Superintendents shall:

- (a) support the principal with regard to the approval of elected official visits to schools;
- (b) ensure Corporate Communication is engaged in the approval of invitations to any elected official; and
- (c) invite the local trustee to any elected official visit to their schools.



### **3.2 Principals shall:**

- (a) ensure only requests for elected officials to visit schools that meet all of the requirements outlined in the approval criteria are approved; and
- (b) ensure their superintendent of education is informed of any elected official visit to their school;
- (c) refer to the Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline for best practices regarding elected official visits.

## **4. Related Documents**

[Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections Guideline](#)

## **5. Contact**

Senior Manager, Corporate Communications

## **6. History**

Approved: March 2018