



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

Your Guide to Hosting an All Candidates Meeting Provincial Election June 7, 2018





Your Guide to Hosting a Provincial Candidates Meeting

Where do your MPP candidates stand on issues affecting public education?

Provincial elections will take place on Thursday, June 7, 2018. On this day, Ontarians will elect Members of Provincial Parliament across the province. MPPs are elected to represent the views of their constituents in the legislative assembly. The education policies of government are far-reaching: the provincial government decides what is taught in Ontario schools and how much of our tax dollars are used to pay for education. These decisions affect everyone - whether or not we have children in the school system.

During provincial elections, The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) advocates for non-partisan strategies to engage politicians in issues that focus on education. OPSBA has declared May 23, 2018, Education Day in the province of Ontario. On this day, candidates from the four major provincial parties will be invited to attend Provincial Candidates Meetings in their ridings across the province.

What is a Provincial Candidates Meeting?

At a Provincial Candidates Meeting, all nominees running for MPP in a particular district are invited to gather and share their views. On Education Day, the focus is on issues affecting education. These events are nonpartisan. Interested community members attend and hear from each candidate, and then the audience has the opportunity to ask questions. Local media often cover and even moderate these events. Typically, Provincial Candidates Meetings take place in locations like community centres, town halls and school auditoriums. The meetings offer the community an on-the-ground, interactive way to learn about the issues and form an opinion about those running for office. This helps voters to make informed choices on provincial Election Day.

Why host a Provincial Candidates Meeting on Education Day?

Education is the second-largest item in the provincial budget. The public needs the opportunity to review party platforms and evaluate the various parties' promises. Provincial Candidates Meetings are an ideal platform to assess who would be the most effective representative and bring the candidates together to talk about the kind of issues that make a difference in education. In support of Education Day, many school board trustees and organizations are planning meetings. Not only is a meeting a chance for your community to listen to and participate in a dialogue with the provincial candidates, it is an opportunity to demonstrate the interest and concern that you or your group has for the quality of education in the community and in the province.



Planning a Meeting

May 23, 2018, is Education Day and the provincial elections will be held on Thursday, June 7. Ideally, meetings will take place on the date designated as Education Day, but another date may work better for your community. A meeting can be put together quickly – the key is making sure there is enough time to secure attendance from all candidates and that the meeting is well organized. You may begin planning as an interested individual or you could form a planning committee or partnership with a community organization. This can be an effective way of getting diverse voters to attend and sharing meeting costs.

What follows are recommendations and helpful checklists for organizing a successful and engaging Provincial Candidates Meeting.

Key Things to Consider

- ? Find out who is running in your electoral district. Contact each candidate as soon as possible to establish their willingness to participate and their availability.
- ? Decide on a time (early evening works best), and location for your meeting.
- ? Make the meeting accessible to persons with disabilities. In choosing a location, it is important to ensure that it is physically accessible to all members of the community. Also consider the use of assistive technologies.
- ? Establish a set of Rules and Procedures that will govern your meeting. A sample set of rules is included with this guide.
- ? Send each candidate a formal invitation and a copy of the Rules and Procedures that will guide the meeting. Ask each candidate for a bio that you can provide to the moderator you have selected. This will help him or her introduce the candidates. Invite each candidate to bring brochures or posters to the meeting and indicate these will be displayed on tables outside of the meeting room.
- ? Select a strong moderator. Ideally, you'll select a well-respected and prominent member of the community or media. He or she will have to maintain order and ensure the meeting is well-run. Given the political nature of the event, the moderator must be seen as non-partisan and capable of running an orderly meeting. Choosing to invite education reporters or other members of the media to act as moderator is a strategy that can contribute to increased media coverage and interest in Education Day from the public and political parties.



- ? Select a time-keeper who will ensure that the candidates and those asking questions stay within their allotted time limits.
- ? Plan the meeting's format. A typical meeting lasts between 1.5 and 2 hours and should allow enough time for each candidate to make an opening and closing statement. The middle of the meeting can be devoted to questions and answers from the audience. You may also choose to devote the first 30 minutes to questions from the moderator. These can be general questions to the panel of candidates or include some questions directed to specific candidates. A sample meeting agenda is included with this guide.
- ? Create a list of questions for the candidates.
- ? Promote the meeting. Send invitations to your contacts; display posters in libraries, schools and community centres. Post meeting details on your website. Be sure to take advantage of social media.
- ? Get the media involved. Consider sending a communications to our local media.
- ? Confirm the logistics. When choosing a location, ensure you'll have ample seating, good acoustics and the ability to make refreshments available for the audience. Consider whether or not you'll need insurance. Candidates should be seated at tables at the front of the room with name signs and plenty of water. The moderator and candidates will need microphones along with one for audience questions and answers. A podium for the moderator would be helpful. You may also set up a registration desk to gather guest information and ask for written questions.
- ? Ensure that the meeting is physically accessible to all members of the community and consider providing translation services.
- ? After the meeting, you may consider sending thank you notes to each candidate and the moderator. You may also send a follow-up media release that highlights key issues and quotes from the meeting.



Rules and Procedures

An effective and well-run meeting will follow a set of rules. Here is a sample set of rules and procedures you can tailor to your meeting. These rules offer a good starting point and can be adapted to suit your meeting format. Ensure that each candidate and the moderator receive a copy of your rules in advance of the meeting. Also have the moderator read the rules at the meeting itself. This will set the tone and let participants as well as the audience know that the meeting has a planned structure and that the rules will be enforced.

Suggested Rules & Procedures

1. Candidates should present themselves to the moderator 15 minutes prior to the call to order. This will allow time for them to draw for order of speaking.
2. Meeting to be called to order promptly.
3. Candidates will be seated alphabetically at the speakers' table and will be introduced in this order.
4. Each candidate will be allotted 3-5 minutes to make an opening statement. The order of these statements will be determined in advance by draw.
5. Candidates will be asked not to interrupt other candidates' opening or closing statements.
6. During the Question and Answer period, questions will be received from the floor in either written or oral form. The moderator will have the responsibility of making sure that questions are directed to the appropriate candidate and that the questions are balanced among candidates.
7. The moderator will rule out of order any questions deemed inappropriate, offensive and derogatory or that would seem to attack the integrity of the candidate.
8. The moderator will rule out of order any person who attempts to use the question period for making a speech rather than asking a question.
9. Questions from the floor will be limited to one per individual to ensure the widest possible participation from the audience. If everyone who wishes to ask a question has had the opportunity to do so and there is still time left in the Question and Answer period, a second question from a member of the audience will be entertained.
10. Answers to questions should be limited to 2-3 minutes to ensure as wide a discussion as possible.
11. Allow 3-5 minutes for closing statements. The order should be the same as opening statements.



Sample Provincial Candidates Meeting Agenda

A well-run meeting will follow a defined format. Here is a sample agenda you may follow. The key is to ensure that each candidate has enough time to make a prepared opening and closing statement and, more importantly, to make sure there is plenty of time for a Question and Answer period.

Sample Agenda

6:30 pm	Doors Open
6:45 pm	Candidates present themselves to the moderator to draw for order of speaking
7:00 pm	Call to order. A representative of the group that has organized meeting welcomes the community and introduces the moderator. Moderator delivers remarks and reads the rules and procedures.
7:10 pm	Introduction of the candidates in alphabetical order
7:15 pm	Each candidate to be given 3-5 minutes for their opening presentation
7:45 pm	Break for Refreshments / Time for audience to write questions for candidates.
8:00 pm	Question and Answer period
8:45 pm	3-5 minute closing statement by each candidate
8:55 pm	Moderator's concluding remarks
9:00 pm	Adjournment



Sample Provincial Candidates Meeting Questions

After each candidate has addressed the audience, it will be time for a Question and Answer period. The moderator will ask the audience to pose their questions to the candidates. It is often helpful to have a list of questions prepared in advance to help the question and answer session get off to a strong start should the audience be slow to ask questions. No doubt many of the questions will be specific to the current issues within your riding.

The questions below have been shared with each of the major political parties. Additional questions that focus on local issues should also be considered.

What distinguishes your party's education platform from those of the other parties?

What is your party's plan to support children and youth and their families who require timely access to community based services for issues related to mental health?

How would your party modify educational programs and instructional practices to ensure students have the skills, attitudes, values and knowledge to succeed in today's complex global context?

How will your party review the education funding formula to ensure that school boards receive full and adequate funding?

How would your party increase student achievement and improve the learning environment for Indigenous students?

How would your party maintain labour peace in our schools?

How would your party support the important role of school boards and the democratically elected school board trustee?