

# 2022

## SCHOOL TRUSTEE ELECTION RESOURCE GUIDE



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## Why your vote matters

School trustee elections are a great opportunity for MTS members to having meaningful involvement in the political process because the individuals elected to local school boards have an enormous impact on the working lives of teachers.

In fact, the decisions made by school boards affect virtually every important aspect of local schools, from budgets to bus schedules, curriculum to staffing, professional development to field trips.

In short, you are electing your future bosses.

Unfortunately, school board elections have very low participation by both candidates and voters.

The voter turnout for the 2018 Municipal and School Boards Election was 42.33 per cent. Of the 287 seats up for grabs across the province, 132 were uncontested, meaning the single candidate that registered won by acclamation.

The entire school boards of Garden Valley, Park West, Portage la Prairie, Turtle River, Western and Whiteshell were filled by acclamations.

Uncontested candidates and low voter turnout are serious concerns when it comes to selecting board members who can truly represent the voice of the local community.

Low voter turn out also means that school board elections, and by extension school policies, are susceptible to the whims of a small number of voters.

The most immediate way to affect the outcomes of school board elections is to vote. Your vote is a powerful way to reaffirm your commitment to public education, your profession and your students.

The next general school trustee election will be held on **Wednesday, October 26, 2022.**



## Thinking of running? Here's what you need to know!

Teacher locals can affect school board election outcomes and the policies that follow by raising awareness about public education issues, becoming a candidate and encouraging voter turnout.

### Candidate eligibility

School trustee candidates must:

- » Be Canadian citizens
- » Be 18 years old or older on the day of the election, **October 26, 2022**
- » Be a resident in the school division for six months, by the election date
- » Not be disqualified by law
- » Click [here](#) to read The Manitoba School Board Association candidate guide.

## Know someone who would be a great candidate?

Locals can help identify strong candidates and play a key role in convincing them to run.

When considering potential candidates, focus on individuals who have demonstrated concern about the community. Include individuals who have proven themselves in other elected offices, as they may want to take on a new role.

Next, prepare a summary of education issues in your division, including issues that may arise over the next four years. The summary will prove useful when you approach potential candidates, as it will help focus the conversation and provide valuable feedback on their priorities.

It is important that you do not make promises of campaign support from your local when approaching potential candidates. You are speaking only for yourself. You are not speaking for your local.

Bear in mind that it might take some time to convince the individual to become a candidate, so make contact early and get the conversation started.

Nominations open  
on **Wednesday,  
September 14**, and  
close on **Tuesday,  
September 20, 2022.**



	May	June	July	August	September	October
Identify potential candidates						
Prepare summary of education issues/priorities						
Approach candidates						
Nomination Period						
Election Day						

## Identifying educators' priorities

Educators believe that an optimal public education system should provide all students with opportunities to realize their full potential in an environment that is safe, caring and inclusive.

The Society's submission to the [Manitoba's Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education](#) and its pre-budget report [Beyond the Status Quo: Funding the Schools Manitoba Students Need](#) both outline the priorities of the province's 16,600 public school teachers and includes actionable recommendations for meaningful improvements to the public education system.

The recommendations focus on:

- » Funding successful student outcomes (equitable, stable and adequate funding)
- » Removing socio-economic barriers to education
- » Investing in classrooms (class size and composition)
- » Supporting successful inclusion and overall mental health and wellbeing
- » Dedicating funds for teacher PLD, recruitment and retention
- » Advancing reconciliation in support of TRC recommendations

These recommendations were drafted based on data collected from MTS member polls, MTS public polls, committee discussions, feedback from members and similar sources.

They are representative of MTS members' priorities. In fact, data from MTS polls have a margin of error of +/- 3 per cent and are considered accurate 19 times out of 20.

## Communicating educators' priorities

According to the 2021 MTS public poll, more than 75 per cent of respondents look to teachers for accurate information on education issues. This means that educators play an important role in raising awareness about the challenges and concerns that affect their ability to effectively deliver education to Manitoba students.

The MTS reports, referenced above, provide a good foundation for highlighting the main issues that affect public education on a provincial level, as identified by educators.

Using these documents as guides, teacher locals can “localize” the issues that are presented, giving school trustee candidates and voters a glimpse of the classroom realities in their school division.

Here are some of the options for communicating educators' priorities:

- » A letter to the editor in your [local paper](#)
- » An opinion piece in your [local paper](#)
- » Letters to each of your candidates
- » An ad in your [local paper](#)

	May	June	July	August	September	October
Familiarize yourself with the MTS recommendations						
Make a list of the ones that align with your local's priorities						
Meet with teachers from your local for feedback on the list						
Incorporate the feedback to help fine-tune and localize the issues						
Revisit the list and update if needed						
Send letters to your candidates outlining teachers' priorities						
Place an ad in your local paper						
Write an opinion piece for your local paper						

## Tips for writing to your local paper

1. **Before you start writing.** Read the submission info to ensure you are following the length guidelines, meeting the submission deadline, and sending to the right person.
2. **Start writing.** Use this simple structure.
  - a. Establish your credibility. A simple phrase such as “I have spent the last 20 years teaching at Gillis School” creates a mental image which brings you and your point alive.
  - b. Localize the issue. Use phrases like
    - i. In my experience...
    - ii. I have seen...
  - c. Clearly state your point/concern early in the letter.
  - d. No jargon. Speak plainly and directly so that everyone gets your point.
  - e. Request that a particular action be taken. In the case of the school trustee election, you can encourage readers to vote!
3. **Maintain professionalism.** The letter should reflect your passion for the issue, and contain crisp, cogent arguments that support your stance. This is not an opportunity to bash your employer or vent.
4. **Read out loud.** Before hitting send, make sure to read the letter or opinion piece out loud. Your ear will catch things your eyes may not, like run-on sentences and misplaced punctuation. You’ll even pick up on “tone” that needs refining. Have someone else read it, too. We are happy to look it over. Send it to [coms@mbteach.org](mailto:coms@mbteach.org).

### Where do I send it?

[Winnipeg Free Press](#)

[Winnipeg Sun](#)

[Brandon Sun](#)

[Community newspapers](#)

# Getting to know your candidates

## Candidate workshop

A workshop for school trustee candidates gives everyone a common base of facts about the school system.

It also gives teachers an opportunity to present their views on current education issues and their role in the system, exposes candidates to new ideas and expands the focus of single-issue candidates.

More importantly, it establishes a sense of cooperation among teachers and potential trustees from the start.

## Planning a candidate workshop

1. Select a date and location for the workshop. The first Saturday following nomination day is best (September 24, 2022).
2. Plan the agenda. Topics may include:
  - » Socio-economic factors in the division
  - » class size and composition
  - » assessment practices
  - » professional development needs
  - » safety issues
  - » curriculum, and
  - » funding issues.
3. Prepare background materials that provide candidates with an overview of the workshop topics.
4. Invite the candidates to the workshop by phoning them and following up with an email. The nomination deadline is **September 20, 2022**.
5. Select a facilitator and assign speaking responsibilities. Try to have the workshop conclude with a teacher's viewpoint.

	August	September	October
Select a date and time Book a venue			
Plan the agenda			
Prepare background materials			
Invite the candidates		Nomination deadline is Sept. 20	
Select a facilitator			
Host the event			



## Voter education

For many voters, election day is the first time they see the names of the school trustee candidates in their division. At this point, while looking at the ballot, it is too late to ask questions about the candidates' views on specific issues.

It's important that we vote based on facts rather than opinions or hearsay so that we can accurately vote and make a decision that aligns with our priorities and vision for public education.

Voter education is a vital step in ensuring that voters are given the information necessary to make an informed choice.

## Candidate questionnaires

A questionnaire is a simple way to gather candidates' views on priority issues. Responses can be shared through email, social media or websites which makes this option cost-effective and efficient.

### Tips for creating a questionnaire

1. Identify teachers' priorities over the next four years. Prepare a list of questions based on those priorities. Aim for no more than 10 questions.
2. Ensure that your questions are clear.
3. Email questions and instructions to candidates once nominations have closed **(September 20, 2022)**.
4. Make sure you include a deadline for responses. Two weeks is enough time.
5. Ask each candidate to supply a brief biography and photograph to be used alongside their responses.
6. Send a reminder to candidates two days before the questionnaire is due to remind them of the deadline.
7. Edit candidates' responses for spelling and grammar, but do not alter the content.
8. Send an email including the responses and/or directing teachers to the association's website. Promote the responses on social media, by providing a link to the full document on your website.
9. Share the info with MTS, so that we can expand your reach!
10. **Important:** You might not receive responses from all candidates. Post the ones that you receive and include a note that states all candidates were contacted and these are the responses that were received by the deadline.

	May	June	July	August	September	October
Familiarize yourself with the MTS recommendations						
Make a list of the ones that align with your local's priorities						
Meet with teachers from your local for feedback on the list						
Draft questions						
Email questions and instructions to candidates, ask for a photo and bio					Nominations close Sept. 20	
Send a reminder to candidates two days before the questionnaire					Around Sept. 30, depending on your deadline	
Edit responses for spelling and grammar						First week of Oct.
Share the responses with your members and MTS						
Promote on social media						Continue until Election Day

## Sample questions

1. Why are you running for school trustee?
2. Have you received any donations or endorsements from any group(s)? If so, which groups?
3. Is there a particular issue that motivates you to serve on the school board?
4. Which three areas of public education require immediate action in this division? What are your plans for addressing these issues?
5. What is your vision for education in this division?
6. How would you describe an effective school trustee?
7. What experiences or skills have prepared you to serve as a school trustee?

8. Why should you be elected to the school board?
9. What differentiates you from the other candidates?
10. What is the most important responsibility of a school board?
11. What are the current challenges facing public education in our division?
12. Which learning and working conditions do you deem negotiable? Which do you deem non-negotiable?
13. What issues do you believe your division needs to address in its academic program and offerings? What changes would you recommend?
14. What is the role of schools in teaching children about topics such as: gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, cyber-safety, mental health and wellness, bullying etc.?
15. What can be done to improve successful student outcomes?
16. How does a school board balance the need to provide a quality education with the need to respond to the local taxpayer burden?
17. As a trustee, where would you look to make budget cuts?
18. Are there any areas you would not consider cutting?
19. How would you determine your budget priorities?
20. Could you support a board decision you did not vote in favor of? Why or why not?
21. If the school division received a \$1 million grant to use in any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?
22. Is there anything else you'd like voters to know?
23. What is the one thing you think your division does well? What is the one thing you think it needs to improve?
24. Name one program or department you believe needs more funding. Conversely, which needs less?
25. How important is prep time for teachers in improving student learning? Do you think that teachers in your division have enough, too little, or too much planning time?
26. Do you believe that teachers should have a greater input/voice in district decisions that impact their work and their students? If so, what would you support?

## Candidate townhall

A candidate townhall will give teachers, parents and other voters the opportunity to interact with candidates. Attendees can listen to the candidate views and platforms as well as ask questions.

Townhalls can also attract media coverage which profiles the efforts of the teachers' locals, raises awareness of teacher priorities and encourages voter turnout.

## Tips for planning a townhall

1. **Select a date and time.** Ensure that no other major community events are scheduled for that date and time. Estimate attendance and check the availability of potential facilities. Ensure that the facility is wheelchair accessible. Book it.
2. **Stream it.** Explore the option of live streaming the event for those who are unable to attend in person.
3. **Extend invitations** to the candidates on nomination day (**September 20**). Obtain firm commitments if possible and make sure you provide guidelines about what is expected from the candidate.
4. **Book an impartial moderator.** Often journalists are willing to perform this kind of service. Other moderators include radio hosts and well-known community members.
5. **Invite parent councils.** In some areas, parent councils alone may constitute a sizable audience. Also, consider inviting to interest groups (e.g., chambers of commerce).
6. **Promote the event.** Radio stations will generally publicize the townhall as a public service announcement. Newspaper editors may also donate space. Don't forget about using social media to spread the word.
7. **Plant some questions.** Arrange for teachers and parents to ask questions on priority issues. This will help keep the forum moving during lags in discussion.
8. **Broaden the discussion.** When drafting questions, think of what interests your whole audience. Questions of interest only to teachers are best handled through questionnaires.
9. **Notify the media.** Issue an advisory to the media about a week in advance. Follow up with telephone calls a day or two before the forum.
10. **Stay on track.** Ensure that candidates stick to their time limits for introductory remarks. Give candidates a 30-second or one-minute warning before their time elapses.
11. **Closing remarks.** Conclude the forum by allowing each candidate a short closing statement. Reverse the order in which candidates delivered their introductory remarks. It's important to start on time, and end on time.

	August	September	October
Select and date and time and book a venue			
Book a moderator			
Invite the candidates			
Invite parent councils		Nominations close Sept. 20	
Promote the event			
Notify the media			One week before. Follow up one to two days before.
Host the event			

## Volunteer for a campaign

Volunteering for a political campaign is the perfect role for anyone interested in becoming politically active.

As you learn about the candidates, you may want to lend extra support to one of them, even if they are not running in your ward. If so, we encourage you to send them an email and let them know you want to help with their campaign.

Even one to two hours of your time, before the election, can make a tremendous difference in which candidates will sit on the future board of trustees in your division.

Here are a few ways in which you can get involved in helping a candidate you support:

1. **Door knocking**  
You are given a list of addresses in a neighborhood for people who are likely voters. Never been door knocking? Do not worry. Door knockers usually work in pairs, so you will not be on your own. This is an opportunity to answer voter questions and talk about how your candidate's vision for public education aligns with theirs.
2. **Deliver yard signs**  
Campaigns get calls and emails from supporters who want signs. If you can deliver yard signs for your candidate, it would be an excellent way to help the campaign.
3. **Driving the candidate**  
If you are a good driver and navigator, you can volunteer to drive the candidate to various meetings, debates, and events. This frees up the candidate to make fundraising calls or do other work from the passenger seat.
4. **Host a meet and greet**  
Early in the campaign, candidates, especially first-timers, need name recognition among voters almost as much as they need donations. You can invite your neighbours over for coffee and to meet the candidate.

Make sure you coordinate with the campaign office. They might look at their records and ask you to include nearby neighbours you do not know in the invitation.

If you are unable to host an event, ask if the campaign is having one in your area, and attend, and bring a friend or two. Hosts are always grateful for a good turnout.

Keep in mind this does not have to be a fundraiser (if asking for money makes you uncomfortable) it is simply a meet and greet – an opportunity for the candidate to share their vision for public education and to answer questions.

5. **Give money and raise money**

To earn votes, campaigns must connect with voters. Those connections are phone calls, emails, handshakes at events, articles in the newspaper, eyeballs on signs, etc., and even with a tremendous volunteer base, campaigns need to spend money to make these things happen. If you cannot write a big cheque, you can help with phone calls to potential donors.

6. **Drive voters to the polls**

Campaigns can usually connect you to the places where drivers are needed. This is incredibly helpful for people who otherwise would face transportation hurdles that might prevent them from voting.

## Budget

### PR grants are available

Public relations grants for 2022-23 will be available early to locals looking to develop projects targeted to the School Trustee Elections. The forms must be completed and submitted to MTS by Friday, June 10, 2022.

Local associations will be notified by Monday, June 27, 2022 as to whether their applications have been successful. PR grant funds will be disbursed as soon as school starts in September 2022. For more information, please contact Raman Job at [rjob@mbteach.org](mailto:rjob@mbteach.org).

**Note:** 2022-23 PR grants not targeted to the October 26, 2022 School Trustee Elections will be subject to a standard fall deadline in November 2022.

### Donations, expenses and more

Campaign contributions and expenses for candidates seeking election for school trustee are not legislatively regulated. Candidates are not required to file an audited financial statement.

Candidates are responsible for raising any funds required for their campaign.

Contributions made to a candidate are not tax-deductible for the contributor. Funds expended on the election of a candidate are not tax-deductible.

Please check the [Manitoba School Boards Association](https://www.manitobaschoolboards.org/) website for more information.

## Frequently asked questions

**Q: I am a public school teacher. Does that disqualify me from running for school trustee?**

A: A teacher or other school division employee may serve as a school trustee. If you work in the same school division or district in which you live, you will be required to take a leave of absence from your job to serve.

**Q: I live in one school division, but own property in a neighbouring one. Can I run for school trustee in either of the two divisions?**

A: No. *The Public Schools Act* requires that a candidate be “an actual resident in the school division or district,” and that he or she has been so for a period of at least six months at the date of the election.

**Q: My school division is divided into three wards. I live in Ward 1. Does that mean that I must run as a candidate in Ward 1, or can I run in one of the other wards?**

A: A candidate does not have to live in the specific ward in which he or she runs, provided they do reside in the division or district. However, electors who do live in the ward in which the candidate will be running must sign his/her nomination papers.

**Q: My spouse teaches in the school division in which we live. Can I still run for school trustee?**

A: An individual whose spouse works for a school division or district may still be a trustee in that same division or district. However, some matters come before school boards where that trustee would be considered to have a conflict of interest. In those situations (such as salary negotiations), that trustee would not involve him or herself in the debate or voting on that specific matter. There are several other situations where a trustee could have a potential conflict of interest. Legislation requires that situations such as these be declared when a trustee takes office.