



NIAGARA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

MEMO #: Director's Memorandum – DM 056 (2011-2012)

MEMO TO: Elementary and Secondary Principals / Vice-Principals and Managers

FROM: John Crocco, Director of Education

DATE: Wednesday, August 24th, 2011

ISSUED: i) Tuesday, August 24th, 2010
ii) Monday, March 28th, 2011

RE: **Municipal, Provincial and Federal Election Administrative Procedures**

Administrators are directed to implement the procedures within this Director's Memorandum "Municipal, Provincial and Federal Elections" effective immediately for the October 6th, 2011 Provincial Election.

Focus of our Board

The Niagara Catholic District School Board Mission Statement, Vision Statements and Strategic Directions provide the focus for its schools and staff.

Expectations of Staff, Catholic School Councils, Niagara Catholic PIC and SEAC

When elections are called, it is expected that all Niagara Catholic staff will act in an ethical and politically neutral manner toward all candidates and potential parties seeking office in Federal, Provincial and Municipal elections, including the position of Trustee. It is a fundamental tenet of publically funded education that schools remain free from politicization.

As part of our democracy, the election process, political parties and election issues are an important part of curriculum delivery, particularly at the junior through secondary school level. Staff is encouraged to discuss, in an unbiased manner, political parties and party platforms. Staff who are engaged in teaching election issues and/or political parties must maintain the highest ethical standards and impartiality. All Candidate Debates approved by the Principal are encouraged, providing full compliance with the section in this memorandum on Niagara Catholic Election Procedures.

It is imperative that all staff of Niagara Catholic, members of SEAC, Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee and Catholic School Councils act in an ethical and impartial manner. Neither staff nor Councils are authorized to use students to deliver political messages, either during an election campaign or at any other time of year. Equally, politically motivated individuals or groups are not authorized to involve SEAC, Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee, Catholic School Councils, school staff, or a school name, directly or indirectly, in the specifics of an election campaign.

Expectations of Employees of Niagara Catholic, Trustees, Catholic School Council, Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee and SEAC Members

Employees' democratic rights, as private citizens, to participate in an election process are fundamental to our society. As private citizens, Niagara Catholic employees are free to exercise all democratic privileges of every Canadian as protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Regulation 298, Section 24 under the *Education Act* governs advertisements and announcements in schools. Subsection 24(1) of the Regulation provides that “*no advertisement or announcement shall be placed in a school or on school property or distributed or announced to pupils on school property without the consent of the board that operates the school, except announcements of school activities.*”

In this regard, no candidates or political parties are permitted to place or distribute advertisements or announcements in a school or on school property without the consent of the Board.

Employees of Niagara Catholic are not permitted to promote, support, recruit, distribute information or materials or assist, directly or indirectly, candidates or political parties for public office in their capacity as an employee of the Board or in the course of their duties as an employee. Employees are prohibited from engaging in any political activity during normal working hours, unless a leave of absence has been approved in writing by the Board.

Trustees, SEAC and School Council members have specific roles as defined in the *Education Act*, Regulation 464/97 (SEAC), Regulation 612/00 (School Council), and Ministry Memoranda. Neither a Trustee, SEAC nor School Council member can use the Board, a school name or associate their preference for a political party, candidate or party policy with the Board or school operated by the Board in the course of their duties as either a Trustee or Council member.

Niagara Catholic Election Procedures

1. Campaign Literature

- a) The distribution of pamphlets, flyers, literature and other material in Board facilities and on Board property is prohibited, unless approved by the Board. Any material received through Canada Post must be forwarded to the addressee unopened as per procedure.
- b) The display of posters, signs or other forms of campaign advertising in Board facilities and on Board property, including staff mailboxes, staff bulletin boards and staff rooms is prohibited. The only exception is material, approved by the Principal, which is directly connected to the delivery of election curriculum specifically within the confines of a classroom. In the case of curriculum delivery, the principles of fairness must be ensured for all individuals / parties.
- c) School publications such as newsletters, bulletins, newspapers and websites must not be used to support, favour or publicize the campaign of any candidate, political party, or party/candidate platform.

2. All Candidate Meetings or All Candidate Debates and Political Party Meetings

- a) With the approval of the Principal, Family of Schools Superintendent and the Controller of Plant, through a Community Use Permit, “All Candidate Meetings” or “All Candidate Debates” may be organized with all candidates invited to participate in a given electoral area. The organizers of such meetings and/or debates on Niagara Catholic property must retain on file with the Principal and the Plant Services Department a copy of the letter of invitation sent to all candidates in a specific area and a copy of the response indicating whether the candidate will or will not attend the meeting.
- b) Participants of “All Candidates Meetings” and / or “All Candidate Debates” must agree to comply with the provisions of these guidelines including the prohibition and distribution of materials.
- c) Political Party meetings on any Board property is prohibited.

3. Board Resources

The use of Board resources, including but not limited to, the Board e-mail system, website, offices, photocopying equipment, projection or other equipment and materials, lists of parents, staff, students, SEAC, Catholic School Council and / or Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee members to assist candidates or political parties, is strictly prohibited.

4. SEAC, Catholic School Council, Niagara Catholic PIC Mandate

Regulation 464/97, Regulation 612/00 under the *Education Act* and Board Policy 800.1, provide the mandate of SEAC, Catholic School Councils and the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee. The SEAC, Catholic School Council and Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Chairs and the Principal or Superintendent of Education should exercise care that the agenda does not include election matters outside of their respective *Education Act* and Board mandates.

Implementation of this Director’s Memorandum

- a) It is the responsibility of the appropriate Supervisory Officer or Controller of Plant to review this memorandum with Principals, Managers and Supervisors at the call of each election.
- b) It is the responsibility of all Principals, Managers and Supervisors to review this memorandum with all staff and with Catholic School Councils at the call of each election.
- c) It is the responsibility of the Director of Education to review this memorandum with Trustees and the Presidents of OECTA Elementary, OECTA Secondary and CUPE at the call of each election.
- d) Clarification on the expectations of this Director’s Memorandum or situations which present themselves outside of the expectations of this memorandum are to be discussed with or approved by the Director of Education.