



# SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTIONS GUIDELINES DURING COVID-19

## Information for School Principals

### Election Yukon's Response to COVID-19

School councils play an important role in local school governance, providing a voice for students and families in their school communities. Elections Yukon is committed to ensuring safe and secure elections of members of school councils who will provide that voice.

Elections Yukon is working in close collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education to ensure that the necessary COVID-19 measures and precautions are in place to ensure a safe and secure election and to facilitate the right to vote and be a candidate.

Guidelines established by the Department of Health to safely conduct an election include the adherence to spacing requirements and infection control measures.

Spacing requirement reduces respiratory transmission through the air. Measures include physical distancing (2 meters) and using larger venues, separate entry and exits to help with traffic flow, space control in line-ups, and increased distances between polling stations. Information and forms will be available online. The use of outside venues may be an option.

Infection control measures reduce the transmission of the virus through contact with contaminated surfaces. Measures include handwashing and sanitizing stations, respiratory etiquette supplies such as tissues and lined waste containers, frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces, and the use of a screening tool to self assess for possible symptoms.

In addition, Elections Yukon will provide additional staff at polling sites to control traffic and sanitize contact points. Elections staff will wear masks. Masks and sanitizer will be available to electors.

### School Support of COVID-19 Public Health Measures

The Returning Officer will request to meet with a senior school official in early September to discuss the conduct of the election and arrangements with the school.

Use of the school during the election period include the following:

- Monday September 14: Notice of Nomination: This is the start of the election period. Drop of nomination kits, information sheets, mail-in ballot applications, and signage related to the election
- Between Sep 17 and Sep 23: Up to 2 hours: Host a Candidates Information Session Meeting – date to be confirmed. If held, this would be a group of less than 10 persons.
- Thursday, 24 September: Close of Nominations: The last opportunity for candidates to be nominated is between 10 AM to 12 PM. This would be a small group.

After the close of nominations, if there were more candidates than positions, the poll would be held. For info, only 6 of the 26 schools held polls in 2018; the previous election in 2016 there were 2/26 school councils that required poll to be held.

- Monday, 5 October. Polling Day (if required): The polls are open from 3 PM to 5 PM: A short set up time before the polls open and some time for the ballot count would be required.

This would be the busiest time; in 2018 there were 6 schools that hosted elections; there were an average of 54 electors over the 5 hours the polls were open. Turnout ranged from 189 – 80 electors.

Considerations are larger venues for distancing and two doors preferred for traffic flow. It may be that an outdoor venue could be used for a short period when the polls first open then move inside.

- Tuesday, 6 October. The Addition of the Vote (if required) will be held at 12:00 noon at the school. This time will be confirmed or adjusted by the returning officer in consultation with the school. This is a short session to confirm the statement of the vote. Witnesses may attend. This would be a small group and a short session, likely less than 30 minutes.

## **Signage and Materials**

If a poll is required to be held, Elections Yukon will provide COVID-related signage for the school including:

- self screening posters at entrances and, if applicable, in outdoor waiting areas
- arrows to help with flow and to indicate routes
- reminders to maintain 2 metre distancing
- floor signage to assure proper distancing
- “wait behind this line” signage
- sanitizers on entry and at the polling station
- masks will available for electors

## **Alternate Voting Option – Early Voting**

A number of electors may prefer to vote using mail-in ballots; this alternate option allows an elector to apply for, and receive, a ballot from the returning officer after the Close of Nominations.

On receipt, an elector may cast their ballot without going to the poll; they could fill out the ballot and return it to the returning officer. This could be done at the time of issue or they could return it to the returning officer anytime before the close of polls.

The mail-in ballot does not need to be mailed; if it is mailed, electors are reminded that they are responsible to ensure it is mailed in time to be received by the returning officer before the close of polls. If not received by that time, the ballot will not be counted.

The information below may be of interest for your newsletters and outreach activities.

### **TWO WAYS TO VOTE AT THE UPCOMING 2020 SCHOOL COUNCIL GENERAL ELECTION**

School councils play an important role in local school governance, providing a voice for students and families in their school communities.

The upcoming election for members of your school council begins on Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, with the Notice of Nominations. Candidates can submit their nomination papers from that date until noon on Thursday September 24<sup>th</sup>.

If at noon on September 24, the number of candidates does not exceed the number of positions, the candidates will be elected by acclamation. If the number of candidates exceed the number of positions a poll will be held to elect the members of the school council. Once a poll is required to be held, mail-in ballots would then become available.

If held, the polling day is Monday, October 5. There are two ways to cast your ballot for a school election;

- In Person: On Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup> between 3PM and 8PM at the school
- Mail-In ballot: Applications are available from the returning officer after 12 noon on September 24<sup>th</sup>. They must be completed and the ballot returned to the returning officer anytime before the close of polls at 8PM on October 5<sup>th</sup>. They do not have to be mailed.

For the upcoming School Council elections, mail-in ballots are an ideal voting option for anyone who wishes to avoid close contact with others, since they allow an elector to vote prior to polling day.

Applications for mail-in ballots will be available online and are administered by your Returning Officer.

