

## INFO & ENGAGEMENT SESSION

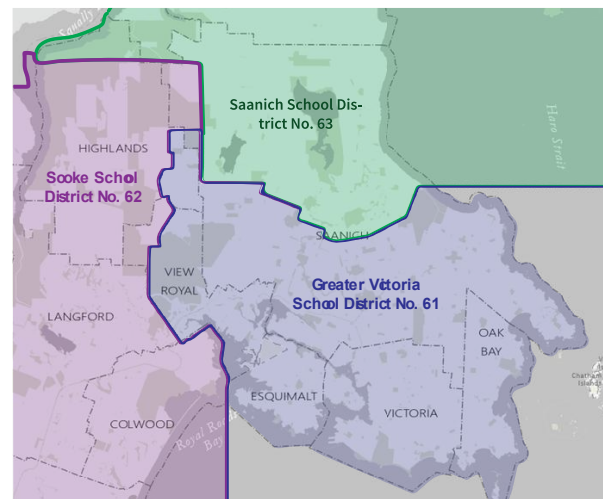
# TRUSTEE ELECTORAL AREAS

Tuesday, September 9

### Existing 'at large' model:

Nine school trustees in the Greater Victoria School District are currently elected at large where:

- There is one trustee electoral area, which is the entire school district.
- All candidates are listed on the ballot in all municipalities and the regional district. Each voter receives the same ballot.
- All resident (someone who lives in the community) and non-resident property electors (someone who owns property in the community but lives elsewhere) in the school district can vote for any listed candidate.

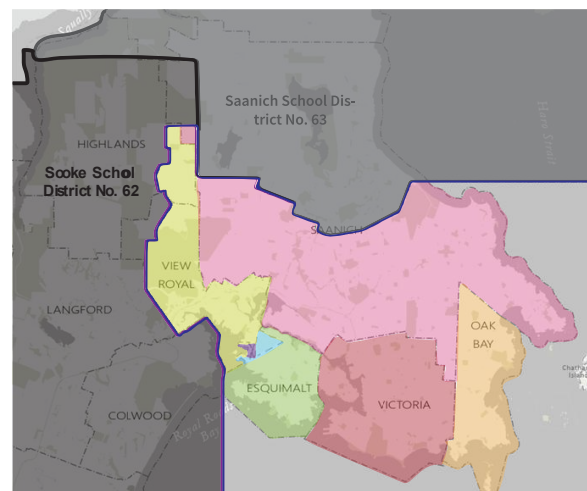


### Proposed model with multiple electoral areas:

There are no proposed changes to the number of trustees, which will remain at nine.

A distribution of the nine trustees amongst seven electoral areas as follows:

- **Proposed Electoral Area:** Esquimalt Nation (1 Trustee)
- **Proposed Electoral Area:** Songhees Nation (1 Trustee)
- **Proposed Electoral Area:** Highlands / View Royal (1 Trustee)
- **Proposed Electoral Area:** Oak Bay (1 Trustee)
- **Proposed Electoral Area:** Esquimalt (1 Trustee)
- **Proposed Electoral Area:** Saanich (2 Trustees)
- **Proposed Electoral Area:** Victoria (2 Trustees)



# Trustee Electoral Areas - Frequently Asked Questions

## Questions Pertaining to Different Electoral Models

### 1. What is an 'at large' electoral model?

School Trustees in the Greater Victoria School District are currently elected at large where:

- There is one trustee electoral area, which is the entire school district.
- All candidates are listed on the ballot in all municipalities and the regional district. Each voter receives the same ballot.
- All resident (someone who lives in the community) and non-resident property electors (someone who owns property in the community but lives elsewhere) in the school district can vote for any listed candidate.

### 2. What is an electoral model with multiple electoral areas?

In school districts with multiple trustee electoral areas:

- Only candidates running in the electoral area are listed on the ballot for that electoral area.
- Candidates can run for trustee in any electoral area; they are not restricted to running for trustee in the community they reside.
- Candidates can only run for trustee in one electoral area for a school district.
- Only resident and non-resident property electors of the electoral area can vote for the candidates running in that electoral area.

## Questions Pertaining to School Trustees

### 3. What is a school trustee and what is their role?

A school trustee is a member of a corporate board of education under the School Act and is a locally elected representative of the public and advocate for public education in their community. Individual trustees have no legal authority and must uphold the decisions of the board. A trustee's role is to maintain a focus on student achievement and wellbeing, and to participate in decision-making that benefits the entire school district while representing the interests of the entire electorate, no matter the electoral area from which they were elected.

### 4. Once elected, who does a school trustee represent?

A school trustee is a member of a corporate board of education under the School Act and advocates on behalf of the entire school district with a strong focus on student achievement and wellbeing, no matter the electoral area from which they were elected.

### 5. Who can be a school trustee?

To be qualified for nomination, election, and appointment, the person must meet the following requirements:

- Age 18 or older on voting day;
- A Canadian citizen;

- A resident of BC for at least 6 months before the date of the nomination, election, or appointment; and
- Not disqualified under the School Act or any other enactment. [School Act, section 32 (1)]

The School Act is silent with regard to residency requirements in the school district or trustee electoral area in relation to trustee eligibility.

A former trustee or a trustee whose term of office is about to expire is eligible for reelection, if otherwise qualified, but no person may be nominated or elected as trustee for more than one trustee electoral area in any one school district at the same time. [School Act, section 32 (3)]

## 6. How does someone become a school trustee?

To become a school trustee, you must:

- Be nominated by at least two nominators who are resident or non-resident property electors of the trustee electoral area for which the person is nominated [Local Government Act, section 86 (1) and (3)].
- Submit the *Candidate Nomination Package – School Trustee* to the Chief Election Officer during the nomination period in advance of the General School Election [Local Government Act, section 87, 89 and 90].
- Be declared as a candidate by the Chief Election Officer [Local Government Act, section 97].
- Be elected by acclamation where there are as many or fewer candidates than are to be elected [Local Government Act, section 98].
- Be elected by voting where there are more candidates than are to be elected [Local Government Act, section 98].

## 7. When is the next school trustee election?

School trustee elections are held at the same time as general local elections. General local elections in BC are held every four years on the third Saturday in October. The next general local elections will be held on Saturday, October 17, 2026. [Learn more.](#)

## 8. Who can vote for school trustees?

To be eligible to vote in a school trustee election, a person must qualify as either a:

**Resident elector** (you live in the community)

- Eligibility requirements of resident electors:
  - age 18 or older, on or before general voting day;
  - a Canadian citizen;
  - a resident of BC for at least six months immediately before the time of voting;
  - a resident of the trustee electoral area for which the election is held; and
  - not disqualified from voting by the School Act or any other enactment or law.
- Other important notes:

- A person may be the resident of only one trustee electoral area at a time, that being the area where the person lives and to which, whenever absent, the person intends to return. [Learn More.](#)

**OR a non-resident property elector** (you own property in the community but live elsewhere)

- Eligibility requirements of non-resident property electors:
  - age 18 or older, on or before general voting day;
  - a Canadian citizen;
  - a resident of BC for at least six months immediately before the time of voting;
  - be a registered owner of real property in the trustee electoral area for at least 30 days immediately before the time of voting; and
  - not be a resident elector in any trustee electoral area in the same school district.
- Other important notes:
  - a person may register as a non-resident property elector for only one parcel of real property in the school district [School Act, section 41 (2)] [Learn More.](#)

**AND be registered or deemed to be registered as an elector** of the trustee electoral area [School Act, section 39 (1)(a) and (c)].

A person is not permitted to vote more than once in a trustee election for any one school district [School Act, section 39 (4)]. Further, no corporation or its representative may be registered as an elector, and no corporation may vote [School Act, section 39 (3)]. [Learn More.](#)

## 9. Where do you vote for school trustees?

General School Elections are held at the same time as the General Election for Mayor and Council for municipalities and Directors for the regional district.

- **Trustees Elected at Large:** When School Trustees are elected at large, the trustee electoral area is the entire school district, and electors vote for school trustees at the same location they vote for the municipal or regional district election. Electors living on Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation Reserves vote for school trustees through the regional district.
- **Multiple Trustee Electoral Areas:** Assuming that trustee electoral areas are aligned with existing municipal or regional district boundaries, electors will vote for school trustees running in their electoral area at the same location they vote for the municipal or regional district election.

## Questions About the Proposed Variations

### 10. What are the proposed changes?

- A shift from an 'at large' electoral model to a model with seven trustee electoral areas based on municipal and First Nations boundaries—a model that currently exists within most school districts in the province that serve multiple municipalities. The change

has the potential to limit disproportionate representation of communities on the Board of Education and allow for more localized and inclusive representation, as well as create stronger relationships between the School Board and local Nations and municipal leaders.

- There are no proposed changes to the number of trustees, which will remain at nine.
- A distribution of the nine trustees amongst the seven electoral areas as follows:
  - Esquimalt Nation (1 Trustee)
  - Songhees Nation (1 Trustee)
  - View Royal / Highlands (1 Trustee)
  - Oak Bay (1 Trustee)
  - Esquimalt (1 Trustee)
  - Saanich (2 Trustees)
  - Victoria (2 Trustees)

#### **11. Why are these changes being proposed?**

The Greater Victoria School District recognizes the letter dated March 19, 2025 from the Township of Esquimalt requesting the Minister of Education and Child Care to “direct School District 61 to create an inclusive and collaborative task force to consider a Trustee Electoral Area election model for the Minister’s ultimate consideration of approval for implementation in time for the 2026 Local Government/Board of Education elections.” This letter sparked additional letters of support for changes to the trustee electoral areas within the Greater Victoria School District expressed by Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, and most municipalities that lie within the school district.

Upon receiving direction from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, the Official Trustee formed a Task Force consisting of representatives of the Greater Victoria School District, Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, the municipalities of Esquimalt, Highlands, Oak Bay, Saanich, Victoria, and View Royal, as well as the Capital Regional District. Task Force meetings allowed for discussion that resulted in a proposed variation to trustee electoral areas.

The collaborative discussions leading up to and including the proposed changes honour the school district’s and local government’s commitment to and active participation in truth and reconciliation. The work aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) final report and its 94 Calls to Action, as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

#### **12. If a proposal is to be submitted to the Ministry of Education and Child Care, when is it due?**

Should the Greater Victoria School District wish to request a variance to the trustee electoral area, it will need to submit its request and supporting documentation to the Ministry by September 30, 2025, for consideration.

#### **13. What are next steps and important dates?**

- **March 19, 2025** – The Township of Esquimalt requests the Minister of Education and Child Care to “direct School District 61 to create an inclusive and collaborative task force to consider a Trustee Electoral Area election model for the Minister’s ultimate consideration of approval for implementation in time for the 2026 Local Government/Board of Education elections”
- **March – April 2025** – Additional letters of support for changes to the trustee electoral areas within the Greater Victoria School District are expressed by Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, and most municipalities that lie within the school district
- **May – September 2025** – The Task Force meets to discuss potential changes to the current trustee electoral areas and develop proposed changes for community feedback
- **August 5, 2025** – The Task Force announces upcoming public engagement session on September 9, 2025, to gain feedback on proposed changes
- **August 5, 2025** – Online feedback form opens for those unable to make the public engagement session
- **September 9, 2025** – Public Engagement Session from 7:00pm to 9:00pm at SJ Willis in the gymnasium (923 Topaz Avenue) co-hosted and attended by the Greater Victoria School District, Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation, the municipalities of Esquimalt, Highlands, Oak Bay, Saanich, Victoria, and View Royal, as well as the Capital Regional District (CRD).
- **September 11, 2025** – Online feedback form closes for those unable to make the public engagement session on September 9, 2025
- **September 11 – 30, 2025** – Task Force reviews public feedback on proposed changes
- **September 30, 2025** – Proposed changes need to be submitted to the Ministry to allow adequate time for review prior to the next trustee election on October 17, 2026.

#### Questions About if the Proposed Variations were to be Adopted

##### **14. Is the proposed model utilized elsewhere in BC?**

Yes, neighbouring school districts of Sooke and Saanich both have multiple trustee electoral areas. As well, within BC there are 60 public school districts of which 44 serve multiple municipalities and use the multiple electoral area approach to electing school trustees. The remaining 16 school districts, including Vancouver School District, predominantly serve only one municipality and use an at large model.

##### **15. Will all trustees have equal voting power?**

Yes, each trustee will have equal voting power regardless of the electoral area from which they were elected. Each trustee has their own unique voice and are expected to make decisions based on the betterment of the school district as a whole. Trustees serve on a corporate board and do not solely represent the municipality from which they were elected.

##### **16. Who can I vote for? Will everyone voting for a trustee in the Greater Victoria School District get the same ballot?**

School trustee elections are held at the same time as local government elections. Voters will vote at the voting station associated with their home address. Each electoral area will have a different ballot. Only candidates running in a certain electoral area are listed on the ballot for that electoral area. Candidates can only run for a trustee in one electoral area for a school district. Only resident and non-resident property electors of the electoral area can vote for the candidates running in that electoral area.

**17. How many trustees can be on a school board?**

A school board consists of 3, 5, 7 or 9 trustees, as determined by order of the minister [School Act, section 30 (2)]. The proposal will not include a change to the number of trustees on the board and will remain at nine trustees.

**18. Are there any trustee remuneration changes associated with this proposal?**

No, since the board will remain at nine trustees, there will be no changes to remuneration.

**19. First Nations Chief and Council elections do not typically occur on the same local government election cycle for municipalities. How will this affect school trustee elections?**

The election for Chief and Council for Esquimalt Nation, the election for Chief and Council for Songhees Nation, and general local elections (during which trustees are elected) are separately run elections and occur at different times. Moving from one to multiple electoral areas will not affect the timing of any of these elections. Residents and property owners living within Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation will continue to have the opportunity to vote for school trustees during general local elections. In the proposed model, Songhees Nation residents and property owners will vote for one trustee running in their electoral area, as will Esquimalt Nation.

**20. What happens if no one runs as a school trustee candidate in a certain electoral area?**

If there are no candidates nominated in an electoral area, the nomination period can be extended until 4:00pm on the third day after the end of the nomination period. If no additional nominations are received during the extended period, Section 36 (6) of the School Act requires the Minister of Education and Child Care to appoint a trustee to fill the vacancy.

Within 30 days of the scheduled election, the school district would share with the Minister any names of persons the Board has received in respect of the appointment and any names that the board wishes to put forward with an affidavit signed by the Secretary-Treasurer stating that the person(s) meets the requirements for holding office as trustee. The Minister reserves the right to seek recommendations from sources other than the school district.

**21. If I have one child attending a school in one municipality and another child attending school in another municipality does that affect where and who I can vote for?**

No. Residents will vote for a school trustee based on their home address, not based on the municipality in which their child goes to school.

**22. Was population the only consideration of the proposed electoral areas? What else was considered?**

No, population was not the only consideration. As well, the collaborative Task Force discussions leading up to and including the proposed changes honour the school district's and local government's commitment to and active participation in Truth and Reconciliation. The work aligns with the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's \(TRC\) final report and its 94 Calls to Action](#), as well as the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). In addition, local representation and existing boundary lines were relied on.

**23. How have First Nations and municipalities been represented by successful trustee candidates over the last few school trustee elections?**

	Esquimalt Nation	Songhees Nation	Highlands	View Royal	Oak Bay	Esquimalt	Saanich	Victoria	Other	
2014							1	8		Elected
							1	12		Total Candidates
2018							1	7	1	Elected
							2	10		Total Candidates
2022								9		Elected
	1				2		4	23		Total Candidates

**Note:** numbers based on the home address within candidate nomination package

**24. How many Greater Victoria School District schools lie within each First Nation and municipality?**

	Esquimalt Nation	Songhees Nation	Highlands	View Royal	Oak Bay	Esquimalt	Saanich	Victoria
Elementary				2	1	1	15	9
Middle				1	1	1	6	1
Secondary					1	1	4	1
Alternative Sites								2
Total	0	0	0	3	3	3	25	13

**25. Do electoral areas have to match municipal boundaries?**

No, however matching electoral areas to municipal boundaries that already exist provides a smoother transition for voter understanding and the ability for a variation to take place before the next election. It is possible for there to be future variations to electoral area boundaries.

**26. Which First Nations and municipalities lie within the Greater Victoria School District boundary?**

The Songhees Nation reserve, Esquimalt Nation reserve, City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, and Township of Esquimalt all lie completely within the Greater Victoria School District boundary. Portions of the District of Saanich, Town of View Royal, and the District of Highlands also lie within the Greater Victoria School District.

**27. Will candidates running within the Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation electoral areas have different requirements to become a school trustee than within other electoral areas?**

No, candidates running within each electoral area have the same requirements. Provided that they satisfy age and citizenship requirements, any Indigenous person has the opportunity to run for trustee.

**28. The Greater Victoria School District works alongside the Four Houses to best serve Indigenous students. What is the reasoning behind allocating trustee seats to both the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations but not Métis Nation of Greater Victoria or Urban Peoples' House Indigenous Advisory?**

All Four Houses in addition to the Indigenous Education Council, offer valuable insight and direction on how to best support Indigenous students and to provide Indigenous education to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students within the school district. Of the Four Houses, the two local First Nations are self-governed by elected Chief and Council with land-based rights and therefore have geographical boundaries. The proposed Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation electoral areas are based on existing reserve boundaries.

**More Information**

**29. Where can I find more information?**

- [School Trustee Election Procedures in British Columbia](#)
- [Candidate Nomination Package – School Trustee](#)
- [School Act, Part 4 – School Trustees](#)
- [Local Government Act, Part 3 – Electors and Elections](#)
- [Voter's Guide for Electors Living on Reserve](#)
- [General local elections in BC](#)
- [Capital Regional District Map](#)
- [Trustee Electoral Areas of School Districts in BC](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)