

## Municipal Election 2025 – Advocacy Strategies for Trustees

On Monday, October 20, 2025 Albertans go to the polls to elect their municipal councils. Candidates will face questions on numerous issues. Funding and support for public libraries needs to be one of the issues on everyone's minds: local government support is critical for the survival of our libraries. What are you doing to bring attention to the public library during the campaign and vote?

Election-related advocacy should be part of your library board's overall advocacy strategy and plan. If you don't yet have an advocacy plan, contact your PRL consultant: we can help with that! In the meantime, whether you have a plan or not, here are some concrete actions you can take to get your library on the radar with candidates and voters.

### **Strategy: Tell Your Library's Story**

**Target:** Candidates and Voters

#### **Activities:**

- Create a brief Message (no more than one page) that highlights the value of the library to your community – stories and testimonials as well as statistics. Show your fiscal responsibility and incredible value.
- Point out the issues you face – declining municipal contribution, need for more space, pressures of addressing social issues, etc.
- Use your Message everywhere – at the circulation desk and at election forums and other public events. Trustees should carry a bundle with them and hand them out.
- Turn it into a media release, so the media know and ask candidates about library issues.
- Use it in your social media.

### **Strategy: Educate Candidates**

**Target:** Candidates

#### **Activities:**

- Mail your Message document to all candidates. Follow up with a phone call to answer any questions and provide additional information.
- Host a "Meet the Candidates" evening or All Candidates Forum at you Library. Invite candidates for a tour of the library so they can experience the excitement and see the challenges. Give them a copy of your most recent annual community report or newsletter.
- Assign trustees to various candidates; make personal contact with them, tell them your library story, answer their questions (like, who uses the library today?).
- If the candidate is an incumbent, remember to say *Thank You* for past support.

## **Strategy: Demonstrate and Grow Voter Support**

**Target:** Voters

### **Activities:**

- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) to encourage followers to consider candidates who express strong support for libraries (don't name individuals; keep the message generic).
- Make signs that say *We Love our Library* and ask library supporters to put them on their lawns. Or print 8.5x11 pages with that message to tape in car windows – mobile signage that will be seen everywhere! Bumper stickers work, too.
- Make buttons with the same message and hand them out to everyone.
- Trustees should hand out these signs/buttons at election forums and other public events.

## **Strategy: Participate in the Process**

**Target:** Candidates and Voters

### **Activities:**

- Host a "Meet the Candidates" evening or All Candidates Forum at you Library. What better location than the public library to participate in a democratic exercise?
- If you are unable to host an event, attend all election forums. Ask the candidates how strong their support is for the library, so voters in attendance will hear.
- Make an appointment to meet with your candidates for mayor, councillor, and/or school board trustee (usually no more than 15-30 minutes).
- Survey all candidates, asking them to answer your library-related questions. Tabulate the answers and share them with the community (local media, distribute at the library).
- Engage local media. Ask them to include library issues in their election coverage. Tell them the question you'd like addressed.
- Enlist library advocates to write an op-ed piece or letter to the editor of your local newspaper

## Sample Questions for Candidates

1. Do you believe that public libraries are an essential service to our community? Why/Why not?
2. How would you rank the library in importance among municipally funded services?
3. If elected, how would you support the Public Library's role in exposing local citizens to new technologies and enhancing their ability to compete in a global and digital economy?
4. What is your own experience with the Public Library?
5. What is your vision of our public library for the next 5 to 10 years?
6. The public demands convenience and this means library hours that suit their needs. Would you support the library to be open the hours that best suit the public's needs?

## Are you hosting a candidate's forum? Try a novel approach.

Most of us think of the **Traditional** forum format of short speeches, followed by audience questions, ending with concluding statements. Why not try something different?

A **Reverse Forum** has tables set up with identified themes, and candidates move between them at set intervals. Their role is to listen to the people at each table. At the end of the event they summarize what they learned.

Give **Speed Candi-Dating** a try. Each candidate is seated at a small table; attendees rotate between them and use their allotted time (3 minutes usually) to talk to the candidate about their concerns, or ask the candidate questions. It is amazing what you can learn about someone in three minutes!

\*\* Adapted from LAA's [Municipal Election 2013](#) primer and BCLA's [Municipal Elections 2014: Keeping Libraries Front and Centre](#)

Additional resources:

I love libraries (ALA initiative): <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/what-libraries-do>

Frontline Advocacy Toolkit (ALA):

[http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/advocacyuniversity/frontline\\_advocacy](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/advocacyuniversity/frontline_advocacy)

Advocacy: Talk about libraries and influence the political process (LAA & ALTA):

<http://www.librarytrustees.ab.ca/documents/advocacy/Advocacy-Booklet.pdf>

The Library Effect Advocacy Toolkit (PRL): <http://support.prl.ab.ca/libraryeffect>