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WHAT IS “LOCAL GOVERNMENT”?

- Local Government is the system of locally elected members representing their communities and making decisions on their behalf.
- Local factors such as geography, the environment, economic opportunities and health can be better taken account of by Local Governments charged with making decisions that affect their communities.
- These decisions can relate to the effective and efficient provision of services to meet community needs, to regulation of certain functions, to facilitation of local activities and to pursue community goals. In making these decisions, councils have to report to their communities in a clear and accountable way.
- Local authorities cannot achieve their objectives alone. They work closely with central government and with other organisations, public bodies, businesses and citizens.
- Once elected, Local Governments are empowered to serve the people who live within the Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council and Constituencies to which they were elected.

FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Governments are responsible for providing many important Services. Some of these responsibilities include:

- Improving working and living conditions in a specific Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council.
- Encouraging and supporting local economic activities.
- Improving the delivery of services.
- Promoting healthy social and cultural life.
- Raising the level of awareness of citizens about their community.
- Providing advice and supporting people in their communal activities.
- Maintaining and protecting public property.
- Protecting and improving local physical surroundings through:
 - ✓ Garbage collection
 - ✓ Cleaning of drains and parapets
 - ✓ Maintenance of streets

WHY YOU MUST VOTE AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS?

- ✓ Local Government officials make decisions every day that affect the well-being of your life, the lives of your family and community.
- ✓ By voting for a Voluntary Group, Political Party or Individual Candidate of your choice, you will be electing the people who will make these very important decisions.

- ✓ If you don't vote, then you allow other people who do vote to choose Local Government Officials without your input.
- ✓ Those others may not share your views about issues that matter to you.
- ✓ Voting also provides you with an opportunity to remind the elected government officials that they are accountable to you.
- ✓ Every eligible citizen has the right and responsibility to vote at Local Government Elections.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS TO VOTE AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

The eligibility requirements for voting at Local Government Elections are:-

- ✓ You must be a Guyanese citizen by birth, descent or naturalization or a citizen from a commonwealth country living in Guyana for one year or more.
- ✓ You must be 18 years or over by February 29, 2016;
- ✓ You must be registered and living in the Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council and the Constituency in which you are desirous of voting; and
- ✓ You must be listed on the Register of Voters for the Municipality or NDC and Constituency in which you are desirous of voting.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A VOTER

Your Rights As A Voter

As a registered voter, you have certain rights, including:

- ✓ To vote as your conscience tells you.
- ✓ To attend political meetings and campaign rallies.
- ✓ To expect an orderly and peaceful election, free from fear, violence or intimidation.

Your Responsibilities As A Voter

As a registered voter, your responsibilities include:

- ✓ Knowing the boundaries of the Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council in which you live.
- ✓ Knowing the boundaries of the Constituency in which you live.
- ✓ Taking part in the election of persons who would be making decisions, about your community, that affect you directly and indirectly.
- ✓ Knowing the various Voluntary Groups, Political Parties, Individual Candidates, and their stance on important communal issues.
- ✓ **Voting only once for the Voluntary Group or Political Party of your choice and once for the Constituency Candidate of your choice.**
- ✓ Giving other voters equal opportunities to vote.

SYSTEM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

- ✓ The **Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Act No. 26 of 2009**, provides for Local Government Elections to be held in all of Municipalities and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils in Guyana using a Mixed Electoral System of **Proportional Representation** and **First-Past-the-Post**.
- ✓ 50% or half of the number of Councillors of each Municipality and Neighbourhood Democratic Council will be elected through the **Proportional Representation** component and the other 50% through the **First-Past-the-Post** or Constituency component of the Electoral System.
- ✓ This System provides opportunities for **Voluntary Groups, Political Parties and Individual Candidates** to contest for seats in the Municipalities and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils.
- ✓ **ONLY Voluntary Groups and Political Parties** can contest in the **Proportional Representation** aspect of Local Government Elections.
- ✓ **Voluntary Groups and Political Parties CAN** also contest any or all of the seats under the Constituency component of the elections. The candidate(s) must be living in the Constituency being contested.
- ✓ Under the **First-Past-The-Post Component**, an individual candidate **CAN CONTEST FOR ONLY ONE SEAT** in a **single Constituency in which he/she is registered and resides**.

CONSTITUENCIES

- ✓ A Constituency in the context of Local Government Elections is a specifically demarcated part of a Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council as defined and identified by its given boundaries.
- ✓ For the purpose of electing individual Candidates to represent the respective Constituencies each Local Authority Area is divided into a given number of Constituencies, equal to half of the number of seats on a Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council,.
- ✓ A Candidate seeking election under the First-Past-the-Post or Constituency component of the Local Government Elections must be registered and living in the Constituency in which he/she is seeking to be elected as a Councillor.
- ✓ An elector can vote only in the Constituency in which he/she is registered.
- ✓ Detailed descriptions and sketch maps of all of the Constituencies within all of the Municipalities the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils in Guyana can be accessed on the GECOM Website.
- ✓ Take the opportunity to get to know your Constituency.

NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS REQUIRED TO SUPPORT LISTS OF CANDIDATES

Elections in the Municipalities

Proportional Representation List of Candidates		Constituency List of Candidates
Voluntary Group and Political Party	Must be supported by not less than 100 and not more than 110 registered voters residing in the specific Municipality to be contested.	Must be supported by not less than 50 and not more than 60 registered voters residing in the specific Constituency to be contested.
Individual Candidate	Cannot contest Proportional Component of the elections	Must be supported by not less than 20 and not more than 30 registered voters residing in the specific Constituency to be contested.

Elections in the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils

Proportional Representation List of Candidates		Constituency List of Candidates
Voluntary Group and Political Party	Must be supported by not less than 20 and no more than 30 registered voters residing in the specific NDC being contested.	Must supported by not less than 20 and not more than 30 registered voters residing in each specific Constituency being contested.
Individual Candidate	Cannot contest Proportional Component of the elections.	Must be supported by not less than 15 and not more than 20 registered voters residing in the specific Constituency being contested.

QUALIFICATION TO BE ELECTED AS COUNCILLORS

A person CAN qualify to be elected a Councillor for a Local Authority Area if he/she is registered to vote and is a resident in the Municipality/Neighbourhood Council/Constituency in which he/she is seeking election.

A person CANNOT qualify to be elected as a Councillor, and if elected, cannot hold or continue in office if he/she is the holder of or is acting in an office specified in the Schedule e.g. Member of the National Assembly, Member of the Police Force/Guyana Defence Force, Judge, Magistrate, Local Government Officer, Ombudsman, Director of Public Prosecutions, Election Officer, Registration Officer, or:-

1. Has within 12 months before Election Day received any assistance under the Poor Relief Act.
2. Has within 5 years before Election Day been surcharged to an amount exceeding \$1000 dollars.

3. Is serving a sentence of imprisonment.
4. Has been disqualified from holding office as a Councillor.
5. Has within 5 years prior to Election Day been convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice.
6. Is unable to read or write the English Language.
7. Has consented to the inclusion of his name on a List of Candidates for another Municipality/Neighbourhood Council/Constituency.

SUBMISSION OF LISTS OF NAMES OF CANDIDATES QUALIFIED TO BE ELECTED AS COUNCILLORS

For the Proportional Representation Component:

Each Voluntary Group or Political Party must submit a List of Candidates with ten (10) or more names of candidates than the total number of Councillors for the Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council.

For the Constituency Component:

Each Voluntary Group or Political Party can submit names of Candidates qualified to be Councillors equal to the number of Constituency seats which it intends to contest in the Local Authority Area.

The name of an Independent Candidate can be submitted **ONLY** for the one seat in the single Constituency he/she is contesting.

Format of Lists of Candidates

Each List of Candidates must be submitted on the prescribed Form and should indicate the name, address, ID number, occupation and signature of each Candidate. The names should be one below the other with the **Surnames in Alphabetical Order**. The signature or mark of each person submitting the List must be stated together with the name and the ID Card number. Each List of Candidates must also be accompanied by a declaration, on the prescribed Form, from each Candidate contesting the Election.

NOTE

- A Candidate's name **CAN** appear on only one Proportional Representation List and on only one Constituency List for only one Voluntary Group or Political Party.
- A Candidate's name **CANNOT** appear on the Proportional Representation list and Constituency list of more than one Voluntary Group or Political Party.
- If a Candidate is elected on a Proportional Representation List and the Constituency List of Voluntary Group or Political Party, he/she can be appointed only to one seat as a Member of the Council of the concerned Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council.

TIMELINES FOR SUBMISSION TO APPROVAL OF LISTS OF CANDIDATES TO CONTEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Application for Symbols	No later than 21 days before Nomination day
Submit Lists of Candidates (Nomination Day)	No later than 50 days before Election Day
Examine Lists of Candidates	No later than 49 days before Election Day
Correct Lists of Candidates	No later than 48 days before Election Day
Approve Lists of Candidates	No later than 46 days before Election Day
Notify contestants of Approved Lists	No later than 46 days before Election Day
Withdrawal of Lists	No later than 45 days before Election Day
Receive appeal(s) against refusal of approval	No later than 45 days before Election Day
Publish Symbols	No later than 44 days before Election Day
Publish Approved Lists	No later than 44 days before Election Day