

(e) If, having been forwarded by post, the sealed envelope containing the voting-paper is not received at the office of the Returning Officer before the close of the seventh day after the day of election, or if, from the post-mark on the envelope or otherwise, the Returning Officer is satisfied that it was not posted until after the day of the election ;

(f) If there is reasonable cause to believe that it was not issued to the voter by the Returning Officer ; or

(g) If the voter fails to place his signature on the inside of the flap of the envelope.

(16) The Returning Officer shall decide whether a voting-paper is invalid or informal whether by reason of the time of receipt or delivery or by reason of the fact that the voter's intention is not indicated, or for any other reason, and his decision shall be final.

(17) On the eighth day after the closing of the poll the Returning Officer shall open and examine all voting-papers duly delivered to him or received by him through the post as aforesaid, and, after rejecting all informal voting-papers, shall ascertain the candidates (not exceeding the total number to be elected) who have received the greatest number of votes, and shall declare such candidates to be elected.

(18) If by reason of an equality of votes given for two or more candidates the election is not complete, the Returning Officer shall decide by lot, in the presence of two members of the Board, which candidate or candidates shall be elected, and thereby complete the election.

(19) (a) Each candidate may, by writing under his hand, appoint one scrutineer, who may be present at the examination of the voting-papers and the counting of the votes by the Returning Officer.

(b) The Returning Officer shall, immediately after counting the votes, seal up all voting-papers, and transmit the whole to the Clerk of the nearest Magistrate's Court, who shall keep the same for six months thereafter, and shall not open or permit to be opened such packet except on the order of some Court of competent jurisdiction, and shall at the end of six months effectually destroy the same.

(c) Forthwith after the completion of the election the Returning Officer shall, by notice exhibited on the outside of the office of the Board, and by advertisement in a newspaper circulating in the locality of the school, notify the names of the persons elected, the number of valid votes recorded for each candidate, and the total number of votes rejected as informal.

(d) The Returning Officer and every clerk or other person employed by him and every scrutineer shall be required faithfully and impartially to perform the duties of their offices, and shall not directly or indirectly make known the state of the poll or give or pretend to give any information by which the state of the poll may be known before the final declaration thereof by the Returning Officer, or make known for which candidate any voter has voted, or communicate to any person any information likely to defeat the secrecy of the ballot.

(20) If a candidate informs the Returning Officer in writing not later than three clear days before the closing of the poll that he retires from the election, the Returning Officer shall give public notice thereof ; and if by such retirement the number of candidates is reduced to the number of vacancies to be filled, the Returning Officer shall publicly declare the remaining candidates to be duly elected ; but if the said number of candidates is not so reduced the poll shall proceed, but the person so retiring shall not be capable of being elected.

(21) The Returning Officer shall be the sole and absolute judge of the regularity and propriety of all matters connected with an election, and no election shall be called in question on the ground that a voting-paper or an addressed envelope was not posted to any elector, or that a voting-paper from any elector was not received by the Returning Officer, or that a voting-paper prepared by the Returning Officer was irregular in form, or that any vote was irregularly cast, or that any votes were wrongly computed, or that any other irregularity occurred in connection with the election, unless in the opinion of the Returning Officer (whose decision shall be final) such irregularity materially affected the result of the election or occurred otherwise than in good faith.

Dated at Wellington this 30th day of November, 1928.

R. A. WRIGHT,  
Minister of Education.