

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN  
BRITISH COLUMBIA 2026:



Supporting  
a Candidate  
for Local  
Elections in  
B.C.





This brochure answers questions about how you can support candidates in local government elections in British Columbia.

## LOCAL ELECTIONS

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### What are local elections?

General local elections in B.C. are held every four years on the third Saturday in October. The next general local elections will be held on **Saturday, October 17, 2026**. By-elections may be held between general local elections to fill a vacancy.

Through local elections, resident electors and non-resident property electors determine the individuals who will collectively make decisions and govern on their behalf following general voting day. Electors do this by voting – casting their ballots in favour of one or more candidate(s).

Unlike provincial elections, local elections are not managed by one organization.

For general information about local elections and the key participants, please refer to the [\*General Local Elections 101\*](#) brochure.

Each local government is responsible for running its own local elections, including voting, counting, reporting results, and

accepting candidate nominations. Elections BC is responsible for administering the campaign financing and election advertising rules in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

## What is a candidate?

A candidate in general local elections is an individual seeking election as mayor, councillor, electoral area director, school trustee, specified parks board commissioner, local community commissioner or Islands Trust local trustee. **A candidate must be nominated by eligible electors and declared a candidate by the Chief Election Officer.**

Refer to the [\*Candidates Guide to Local Government Elections in B.C.\*](#) for more detailed information about being a candidate for local government office. Refer to the BC School Trustees Association's [\*A Guide For School Trustee Candidates \(2026\)\*](#) for information about being a candidate for board of education elections.

## What should you expect of people who run for elected office?

Locally elected officials are collectively responsible for making decisions that impact the daily lives of community residents. These decisions include, but are not limited to, establishing and operating services, such as water and sewer, fire protection, solid waste management, land use planning, and parks and recreation.

Refer to the [\*Foundational Principles of Responsible Conduct\*](#) brochure and the [\*Forging the Path to Responsible Conduct\*](#) guide for information about the key values that guide locally elected officials' conduct.

Elected officials are expected to learn about and comply with local government legislation and other Acts, as applicable, including conduct rules, privacy and employment laws and policies, and local government procedures.

This ensures elected officials are well-prepared when communicating with staff and the public and engaging in decision-making (e.g., passing bylaws and resolutions).

## What is an election campaign?

An election campaign is a connected series of actions for the purpose of electing a candidate or a group of candidates to a municipal council or regional district board.

Typically, an election campaign involves candidates and/or elector organizations communicating with the electorate, through:

- public appearances and speeches;
- advertisements on television, radio, the Internet and social media;
- newspapers and magazines;
- brochures, signs, posters and billboards;
- mail inserts and newsletters; and/or,
- bumper stickers, buttons and displays.

### CAMPAIGN FINANCING

Refer to [Elections BC's website](#) for detailed information regarding campaign financing rules and/or election advertising rules under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

## SUPPORTING A CANDIDATE

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Some of the ways you can support a candidate include:

- voting;
- making campaign contributions;
- nominating a candidate;
- promoting a candidate by advertising and/or posting signs;
- volunteering by canvassing door-to-door;
- participating on telephone banks;
- organizing an event;
- participating in an elector organization; or,
- becoming a candidate representative (e.g., financial agent, official agent, scrutineer).

## Voting

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### When can I vote?

All local governments must offer general voting from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on general voting day. They must also offer at least one advance voting opportunity 10 days prior to general voting day. The required advance voting opportunity for the upcoming general local elections is **Wednesday, October 7, 2026**.

Local governments may also offer other voting opportunities if permitted in their local election bylaw, including:

### *Special Voting*

Special voting opportunities may be held in any location – inside or outside the local government boundary – to provide eligible electors who may not otherwise be able to attend a voting place an opportunity to cast their ballots during local elections.



Special voting opportunities are generally held in hospitals, long-term care facilities or other locations where electors' mobility may be impaired. Only designated electors are eligible to vote at special voting opportunities.

### *Mail Ballot Voting*

Mail ballot voting provides electors the ability to register to vote and cast their ballot by mail rather than attending a voting location.

Contact your local government for more information on voting opportunities available in your jurisdiction.

## **Campaign Contributions**

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### **How do I contribute to an election campaign?**

You can help a candidate and/or an elector organization finance their election campaign by making a campaign contribution.

You must be a resident of British Columbia; and, a Canadian citizen or permanent resident in order to make a campaign contribution.

Refer to the *Local Government Act*, s.67 for the rules for determining B.C. residency.

There are several ways that you can contribute to an election campaign, including:

- providing a monetary contribution to a candidate or an elector organization;
- providing property or services less than market value;
- purchasing services or property above market value;
- selling fundraising event tickets over \$50; and,
- paying membership fees to an elector organization.

There are restrictions that apply, such as campaign contribution limits that regulate how much you can contribute to a candidate or elector organization per campaign when you are making a campaign contribution.

## CAMPAIGN FINANCING

For 2026, individuals can contribute up to \$1,429.70 towards an election campaign. This includes a candidate, the elector organization endorsing the candidate (if applicable) and any other candidates endorsed by the same elector organization in relation to the same election campaign.

Every candidate, elector organization and third party sponsor also has limits on the value of expenses they can use during the campaign period, which can be found on the [Elections BC website](#).

## Candidate Nominations

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### How do I nominate a candidate for local elections?

Nominating an individual for office is a meaningful way you can show support for a prospective candidate and their election platform in an election campaign. The individual being nominated must consent to the nomination.

If you want to nominate a candidate for local office, you must:

- be 18 years of age or older when you register to vote or will be 18 years of age or older on general voting day;
- be a Canadian citizen;
- have been a resident of B.C. for at least six months before registering to vote;
- be a resident elector or non-resident property elector in the municipality or electoral area for which the nomination is being made; and,
- not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act* or any other enactment from voting in an election or be otherwise disqualified by law.

### TYPES OF ELECTORS WHO CAN NOMINATE A CANDIDATE FOR OFFICE

**Resident Elector:** the person must be a resident of the municipality or electoral area, as determined in accordance with section 67 of the *Local Government Act*.

**Non-resident Property Elector:** the person must have been a registered owner of real property in the municipality or electoral area for at least 30 days immediately before the day of registration.

Prospective candidates generally approach possible nominators to support their candidacy. Two (or more) nominators must sign the candidate's nomination form.

Signing candidate nomination documents will involve you providing your name and residential address and affirming that, to the best of your knowledge, the candidate is qualified to run for office and that you are qualified to nominate

them. Non-resident property electors will also be required to provide the full address of the property they own in addition to their residential address.

Candidate nomination documents are available for public inspection after the end of the nomination period until 30 days after the declaration of election results. Local governments must make the documents available for viewing during regular business hours, and they may also make the documents available by other means – including on the Internet. **You must be prepared for your name and address to be publicly available if you nominate a candidate.**

Refer to the [Candidates Guide to Local Elections in B.C.](#) for more detailed information about nominating a candidate for mayor, councillor, or electoral area director.

## Promoting a Candidate

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### How can I promote a candidate?

You can promote a candidate by: advertising; posting signs; volunteering; canvassing; organizing events; and/or participating in an elector organization.

#### ELECTOR ORGANIZATIONS

Elector organizations are organizations that endorse or intend to endorse a candidate(s) in general local elections. Elector Organizations must register with Elections BC prior to endorsing candidates.

### Advertising

Advertising is a key component in most local election campaigns.

Candidates, registered elector organizations and registered third party sponsors may use print, radio, television, or social media advertising to promote or oppose candidates, elector organizations or points of view during an election campaign. These activities are subject to the campaign financing and election advertising rules set out in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

### **ELECTION OFFENCES**

It is an election offence to transmit new election advertising on general voting day.

Election advertising and campaigning of any sort is also prohibited within 100 metres of a voting place during voting proceedings (i.e., advanced voting, special voting or general voting day).

Election advertising includes displaying signs, posters, bumper stickers on vehicles parked outside the voting place, badges worn by supporters, canvassing, or otherwise trying to influence electors to vote for a particular candidate.

### **What is third party advertising?**

Third party sponsors are individuals or organizations that sponsor election advertising independently from candidates and elector organizations.

Third party sponsors must register with Elections BC before conducting advertising during the pre-campaign and campaign periods. Third party sponsors are also subject to contribution limits.

Third party advertising includes advertising for or against a candidate and/or an elector organization. In the campaign period, it also includes advertising on an issue with which a candidate or elector organization is associated.

Refer to Elections BC's [Guide for Local Third Party Advertising Sponsors in B.C.](#) for more information about the election advertising rules that apply to third party sponsors.

### THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING

Third party advertising activities may trigger rules under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* – you must be aware of and follow these rules.

If you fail to follow these requirements, you may have committed an offence and may be subject to penalties.

### *Posting Signs*

Signs play a significant role in election advertising. Candidates may have their supporters display signs on their behalf in windows, on lawns, or post signs in other public places throughout the community.

Local governments have the authority to regulate the size, placement, maintenance and removal of signs and other forms of public advertising – the rules may be different between local governments. The Ministry of Transportation and Transit regulates sign placement along Provincial highways, medians, bridges and along major roadways.

Contact your local government or local Ministry of Transportation and Transit office before placing election campaign signs on medians, bridges or along major roads.

Local government contact information is available online at [CivicInfo BC](#) and Ministry of Transportation and Transit District Offices contact information is also available [online](#).

### *Sponsorship Information*

There are rules with respect to sponsorship information on election advertising in the pre-campaign and campaign period. Election

advertising, such as billboards, commercials, and mailing material must include sponsorship information during this timeframe.

Refer to Elections

BC's [\*Guide to Local Elections Campaign\*](#)

[\*Financing in B.C. for Candidates and their Financial Agents\*](#) for more information about election advertising requirements.

The pre-campaign period is from **Monday July 20, 2026** to **Friday September 18, 2026**.

The campaign period begins **Saturday September 19, 2026** and ends **Saturday October 17, 2026**.

## Volunteering

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### Can I volunteer for a candidate?

**Yes.** You can provide services, such as preparing and distributing flyers, canvassing, calling eligible voters, handling logistics and taking on other election campaign-related activities for a candidate or an elector organization.

Third party sponsors may also use volunteers to undertake advertising activities independent of an election campaign.

**If you volunteer for an election campaign, you MUST NOT receive any payment or remuneration for your services.**

## Canvassing

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### What is the role of a canvasser?

You may canvass door-to-door throughout the community to raise awareness of the candidate or elector organization and their election platform, identify issues of importance to electors and determine the level of elector support for a given candidate.

Cooperatives, strata and rental property representatives are required to grant reasonable access to the building for canvassing purposes between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. during the campaign period.

Government-issued photo ID and proof of candidacy, or written authorization to canvass on behalf of a candidate, must be made available upon request when you are canvassing in a cooperative, strata or rental property.

A Candidate Canvasser Authorization Form may be available from the local Chief Election Officer for your use when canvassing.

## Organizing In-person Events

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### Can I organize an event where my candidate speaks?

**Yes.** You and/or the candidate may hold “meet and greet” events (e.g., luncheons or fundraising dinners) where the community can listen to the candidate’s platform and ask questions. Additionally, local governments, community groups and local media often provide opportunities for candidates to communicate their platform or position on specific issues to the electorate at “all-candidate” forums.

## Participating in an Elector Organization

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### What is an Elector Organization?

Another way you can support a candidate is by creating, joining or becoming one of the responsible principal officials for an elector organization.

An elector organization may endorse candidates on

Responsible principal officials act as the elector organization’s representatives – they are often the organization’s president or chief officer.

the ballot by allowing its name, abbreviation or acronym to appear on the ballot beside its endorsed candidate(s) name and/or promoting the candidate(s) and the organization's viewpoints during an election campaign.

### **ELECTOR ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE REGISTERED**

Only elector organizations registered with Elections BC can endorse a candidate, receive campaign contributions and incur election expenses.

If you are interested in creating or becoming one of the responsible principal officials for an elector organization, please refer to Elections BC's [\*Guide to Elector Organization Registration and Deregistration\*](#).

## **Being a Candidate Representative**

### **What are the different types of candidate representatives?**

You may be appointed as a financial agent, an official agent or scrutineer to assist with a candidate's election campaign and to take on campaign activities.

#### *Financial Agents*

A financial agent is a representative that candidates and elector organizations are legally required to have during an election campaign.

**A candidate is their own financial agent unless they appoint another individual to the position.**

As a financial agent, you are responsible for administering campaign finances in compliance with the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*, including:

- opening and depositing contributions to, and paying election-related expenses from a candidate's campaign account;

- maintaining records for campaign contributions, election expenses and all other election-related transactions; and,
- filing required campaign financing disclosure statements with Elections BC.

Refer to Elections BC's [\*Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Candidates and their Financial Agents\*](#) for more information about the financial agent's role.

### *Official Agents*

An official agent may act as the campaign manager or spokesperson or be the point of contact for the people helping on the candidate's election campaign.

An official agent may be the first or only contact between a candidate and potential voters. An official agent's words or actions during the candidate's election campaign will likely reflect upon the candidate and as such they should strive to treat potential voters, other candidates, and their representatives with respect. Official agents need to be well aware of the legislated rules around local elections so as not to mistakenly commit an election offence.

### *Scrutineers*

Scrutineers observe the voting and ballot counting process at voting places during advance, special and general voting opportunities. Scrutineers play a role in helping protect the integrity of the voting process for their community and the candidate they represent.

Scrutineers must follow the legislation, the local government's election bylaw and the direction of the Chief Election Officer and/or Presiding Election Official at the voting place during voting proceedings and the ballot counting process.

While scrutineers are appointed to represent candidates at a voting opportunity, they are not there to campaign for the candidates. They are there to neutrally observe the voting process. Scrutineers are not permitted to wear anything that shows support for a particular candidate (e.g., shirt, hat, button) while they are in or near the voting place.

Further information about scrutineers is available in the [\*Scrutineers Guide to General Local Elections in B.C.\*](#)

## How can I become a candidate representative?

You must be appointed as the financial agent or the official agent for an election campaign by the candidate. The candidate or official agent may in turn appoint scrutineers. The financial agent, official agent and scrutineer appointments must be made in writing, be signed by the candidate and submitted to the Chief Election Officer as soon as practicable after the appointment has been made.

As a candidate representative, you must carry copies of your appointment papers whenever you represent a candidate at an election proceeding (e.g., advance voting, special voting, general voting day).

Each candidate representative who attends a voting place must have made a solemn declaration to preserve the secrecy of the ballot and not interfere with an elector marking a ballot. Official agents and scrutineers may attend a voting place once they have made their solemn declaration.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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Local government mailing addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and websites are available online from CivicInfo BC at:

[www.civicinfo.bc.ca/directories](http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/directories)

For answers to legislative **questions about municipal and regional district elections** please contact:

**Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs**

Governance and Structure Branch

Phone: 250 387-4020

Email: [LGgovernance@gov.bc.ca](mailto:LGgovernance@gov.bc.ca)

Website: [www.gov.bc.ca/localelections](http://www.gov.bc.ca/localelections)

For answers to **questions about elector organization registration, election advertising, third party sponsors or campaign financing disclosure** please contact:

**Elections BC**

Phone: 250 387-5305

Toll-free: 1 800 661-8683

TTY 1 888 456-5448

Email: [electoral.finance@elections.bc.ca](mailto:electoral.finance@elections.bc.ca)

Website: <https://elections.bc.ca/local-elections/2026-general-local-elections/>

Full text of the *Local Government Act*, *Local Election Campaign Financing Act*, *Community Charter*, *Vancouver Charter*, *School Act*, and *Offence Act* can be found online at: [www.bclaws.ca](http://www.bclaws.ca)

## DISCLAIMER

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In the event that there is inconsistency between this brochure and *the Local Government Act*, the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*, or any other Act, the legislation shall prevail.

## **Land Acknowledgment**

The BC Public Service acknowledges the territories of First Nations around B.C. and is grateful to carry out its work on these lands – it acknowledges the rights, interests, priorities, and concerns of all Indigenous Peoples – First Nations, Métis, and Inuit – respecting and acknowledging their distinct cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments.