

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA 2026:



What Every Candidate Needs to Know





General local elections will be held on **Saturday, October 17, 2026.**

This brochure provides candidates with basic information about general local election rules and answers questions about running for local office in British Columbia.

Refer to the *Candidates Guide to Local Government Elections in B.C.* for more detailed information about being a candidate for mayor, councillor, or electoral area director.

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2026

There have been some notable changes since the 2022 general local elections:

- Candidates may submit their nomination documents to the Chief Election Officer in-person, by mail, or electronically, (e.g., by email or fax), so long as the documents are received by the end of the nomination period. Candidates are no longer required to deliver originals of nomination documents submitted by fax or email.

NEW

NEW

- Public notices and online publications of nomination documents will no longer include candidate personal information, such as personal telephone numbers and residential addresses. Electors will instead see the name of the jurisdiction in which the candidate is a resident (e.g., name of the municipality, electoral area, or treaty lands where the candidate resides) in public notices and online nomination documents.

NEW

- A candidate and the authorized principal official of an elector organization must work together to complete the endorsement section of the candidate's nomination documents in order for the candidate to be endorsed by the elector organization. Both parties must provide signed consent to the endorsement. Separate endorsement documents are no longer required (**Elector Organizations must be registered with Elections BC prior to endorsing a candidate(s)**).

NEW

- Members of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia are disqualified from holding local elected office under the *Eligibility to Hold Public Office Act*. If a mayor, councillor, electoral area director or any other local elected official becomes a Member of the Legislative Assembly, that individual is considered to have resigned their local elected office.

ROLE OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

What is the role of a local elected official?

Local elected officials are the stewards of their community's public assets and collectively responsible for making decisions.

In their role, 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.

Elected officials that develop positive trusted relationships with colleagues, local government staff, and the public, support councils and regional district boards to carry out their collective responsibilities. How elected officials conduct themselves in their role and in these relationships directly impacts successful community governance.

The roles and responsibilities of elected officials and local government staff are distinct and interdependent.

Local government staff provide the council/regional district board with information and professional advice to support informed decision-making, implement the collective decisions, policies, and direction of the council/regional district board, and communicate those decisions to the public and other orders of government.

Clarity about the distinct roles and responsibilities of elected officials and local government staff can help create a healthy working relationship during the term of elected office.

Refer to the *Thinking About Running for Local Office?* brochure for more information on the roles and responsibilities of locally elected officials.

GENERAL LOCAL ELECTIONS

What are general local elections?

Through general local elections, residents 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 a candidate(s).

How often are general local elections held?

General local elections are held every **four years on the third Saturday of October.**

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Who oversees local elections?

Unlike provincial elections, local elections are not managed by one organization. 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*. This includes providing information about



the rules, maintaining the register of elector organizations and advertising sponsors, receiving and publishing financial reports, assessing compliance through reviews and audits, and investigating non-compliance to determine appropriate enforcement.

CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

The Chief Election Officer is an individual appointed by a municipal council or regional district board to conduct a general local election or a by-election. The Chief Election Officer is responsible for overseeing all local election administration activities, including: issuing statutory public notices; receiving nomination documents; declaring candidates; administering voting opportunities; preparing ballots; reviewing ballot accounts; and, determining and declaring official election results.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Am I eligible to run for office?

To be eligible to run for office you must:

- be 18 years of age or older on general voting day;
- be a Canadian citizen;
- have been a resident of British Columbia for at least six months immediately before filing nomination documents; and,
- not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act*, or any other enactment from voting in an election in B.C. or from being nominated for, being elected to or holding the office, or be otherwise disqualified by law.

EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

There are additional requirements and eligibility considerations that people who work or volunteer for a local government must follow. For more information, please visit the B.C. government webpage about [Employees and volunteers](#).

How do I get nominated?

You must be nominated by at least two eligible electors from the jurisdiction where you are seeking to be elected – some local governments may, by bylaw, require each candidate to have as many as 10 or 25 nominators. You may also be required to pay a refundable nomination deposit (up to a \$100 maximum) as part of the nomination process. You can confirm specific nomination requirements with the Chief Election Officer in your community.

You must have become a B.C. resident by March 10, 2026, or, if the nomination period is extended, by March 13, 2026 in order to meet the B.C. residency requirement to run for local office. Refer to [section 67 of the Local Government Act](#), for the rules for determining B.C. residency.

NOMINATORS

A nominator must be a qualified elector of the municipality or electoral area (or neighbourhood constituency, if applicable) where the candidate is running. Elector qualifications are listed in the *Local Government Act* and the *Vancouver Charter*.



Where can I find nomination forms?

Candidate nomination documents are available from your local government during regular business hours, generally, two to four weeks before the nomination period begins. Local government contact information is available online from CivicInfo BC at: www.civicinfo.bc.ca/directories

What are some key nomination requirements?

Nomination documents require you to provide detailed contact about yourself and the people who will work for you during the election (e.g. financial agent, official agent). Information provided on the nomination document also includes the office you are running for, your nominators, your consent to be nominated, any endorsement you are accepting from an elector organization, and the Statement of Financial Disclosure required under the *Financial Disclosure Act*.

You are also required to make a solemn declaration stating that you are qualified to be a candidate and you are aware of, understand, and will comply with the requirements of the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

Where do I file my nomination papers?

You must file your nomination documents with the Chief Election Officer where you intend to run for office. The nomination deadline is 4:00 p.m. local time on **Friday, September 11, 2026**. Candidates may submit their nomination documents to the Chief Election Officer by hand, by mail or other delivery service, by fax or by email so long as they are received by the end of the nomination period.

You are required to make a solemn declaration in order for your nomination documents to be accepted for filing. If you are not submitting your documents in-person to the Chief Election Officer, you may make your solemn declaration before a commissioner for taking affidavits for British Columbia, such as a lawyer or notary. The solemn declaration must be signed by you and the person that took the solemn declaration.

Who can help me run my election campaign?

You may appoint a financial agent, an official agent, and scrutineers to help with your election campaign and to take on campaign activities. Your election campaign may also be supported by volunteers.

You may also be endorsed by an elector organization that may undertake certain campaign activities on your behalf (e.g., advertising, canvassing) to help you get elected.

Financial Agents

A financial agent is a representative that a candidate is legally required to have during an election campaign. **You are your own financial agent unless you appoint another individual to the position.**

Financial agents are responsible for administering campaign finances in accordance with the *Local Elections Campaign Financing*

Act. This includes 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 campaign transactions; and, filing the candidate's required campaign financing disclosure statement with Elections BC within 90 days following general voting day.

You must appoint your financial agent in writing and have their written consent to be your financial agent. The written appointment must be submitted to the Chief Election Officer as part of your nomination package and the Chief Election Officer will send all required information to Elections BC.

GUIDANCE FOR FINANCIAL AGENTS

Elections BC will send the financial agent the ***Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Candidates and their Financial Agents*** shortly after receiving the required candidate information and appointment of financial agent forms from the Chief Election Officer. The required disclosure statement will be sent by Elections BC to the candidate or their financial agent after general voting day. This information will assist you or your financial agent when it is time to disclose your campaign contributions and expenses.

Official Agents

Candidates may appoint an official agent to represent them during the election process. The official agent may act as your campaign manager or spokesperson or be the point of contact for the people helping on your election campaign. You must appoint your official agent in writing and deliver the appointment (including the name and address of the person) to the Chief Election Officer as soon as practicable after you have made the appointment.

Scrutineers

Candidates or their official agent may appoint scrutineers to observe voting procedures and the ballot-counting process. You or your official agent may appoint one scrutineer for each ballot box used at a voting place during general local elections. In some cases, the local government may allow you to have more than one scrutineer for each ballot box.

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

Volunteers

Candidates may retain volunteers to take on election campaign-related activities (such as preparing and distributing flyers, canvassing, calling eligible voters and/or handling logistics).

A volunteer who works on your election campaign **must not receive any payment or remuneration for their services.**

CANVASSING

Authorized canvassers are entitled to access multi-residential buildings (i.e. housing cooperatives, strata corporations and rental properties) between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. local time during the campaign period. You must appoint your canvasser(s) in writing and provide them with written consent to act as your canvasser. A canvasser entering a multi-residential property must produce government-issued photo ID and their written appointment at the request of a resident or an individual acting on behalf of the multi-residential property (e.g., building or property manager).

Elector Organizations

An elector organization is an organization that endorses or intends to endorse a candidate(s) in general local elections. An elector organization may endorse you on the ballot by allowing its name, abbreviation or acronym to appear on the ballot beside your name.

Elector organizations and candidates may each direct their own separate election campaign or run complementary campaigns; you may also decide to rely solely on the elector organization to run campaign activities on your behalf.

An elector organization must provide a signed consent statement that is included in your nomination documents. You must also sign a statement consenting to the endorsement as part of your nomination documents submitted to the Chief Election Officer.

Elector organizations are required to register with Elections BC before endorsing a candidate.

What is a third party sponsor?

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

Third party advertising includes advertising for or against a candidate and/or an elector organization. Third party advertising also includes advertising on an issue with which a

THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING

Third party sponsors must register with Elections BC before conducting advertising during the pre-campaign and campaign periods. Refer to the Elections BC [*Guide for Local Third Party Advertising Sponsors in B.C.*](#) for more information about the responsibilities and legal obligations of third party sponsors.

candidate or elector organization is associated during the campaign period.

Third party sponsors must be independent from candidates and/or elector organizations and must not coordinate, or sponsor advertising together with, or on behalf of a candidate and/or an elector organization.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN FINANCING

What campaign financing and election advertising rules should I be aware of?

Election advertising, such as billboards or commercials, must include sponsorship information during the pre-campaign and campaign period.

Election advertising rules apply to advertising that promotes or opposes the election of a candidate or an elector organization that is endorsing a candidate (e.g., directed advertising) during the pre-campaign and campaign period.

CAMPAIGN PERIODS

The pre-campaign period begins on **Monday, July 20, 2026**, and ends on **Friday, September 18, 2026**.

The campaign period starts on **Saturday, September 19, 2026**, and ends when voting closes at 8:00 p.m. local time on **Saturday, October 17, 2026**.

Elections BC has investigative and enforcement tools to ensure compliance with the campaign financing and advertising rules in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*. Elections BC can issue monetary penalties for a wide

Refer to Elections BC's [website](#) for detailed information regarding campaign financing and election advertising rules.



range of contraventions, including exceeding campaign contribution limits or expense limits for candidates.

ELECTION CAMPAIGNING

What can I do to get my message out to the voting public?

Election campaigns are generally a planned set of actions, events or initiatives designed to raise awareness about you or your election platform with voters.

Key campaign activities you could undertake include:

- making public speeches;
- canvassing by phone or door-to-door to raise awareness about your campaign and/or identifying issues important to voters;
- holding events where voters can listen to your election platform and ask questions;
- advertising in print, on radio, television or social media platforms; and/or,
- putting up signs as a way of “getting your name out there.”

VOTING DAY

Will voters be able to cast their ballots before general voting day?

Yes. Generally, at least two advance voting opportunities must be held in every local government before general voting day.

One voting opportunity must be held 10 days before general voting day (**Wednesday, October 7, 2026**), and in most cases, an

additional one on a date established in the local government's bylaw. Local governments may set out in their election bylaw whether additional advance voting opportunities will be offered, or in communities of less than 5,000, whether the second additional advance voting opportunity will be waived.

Voting places are open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. local time **Saturday, October 17, 2026**, for general voting.

Can I campaign on general voting day?

You are allowed to campaign on general voting day by:

- advertising on the Internet, as long as the advertising was transmitted to the public before general voting day and was not changed before being transmitted on general voting day;
- advertising by means of signs, posters, or banners;
- canvassing and/or distributing pamphlets; and/or,
- advertising that exclusively encourages people to “get out and vote.”

It is an election offence to transmit new election advertising on general voting day. It is also an election offence to campaign within 100 metres of a voting place during voting proceedings.

Can I watch the ballot counting process?

Yes. Candidates can be present during the ballot count. The Chief Election Officer can tell you the time and location for the final vote count and when the election results will be declared. Ballot counting starts after 8:00 p.m. local time following the close of voting. Your official agent or a scrutineer may also attend at each location where ballot counting takes place.

When will the election results be announced?

The official election results must be declared by 4:00 p.m. local time on **Wednesday, October 21, 2026**. Candidates with the most votes will be declared elected.

The Chief Election Officer must refer the election for a judicial recount if there is a tie in the number of votes between one or more candidates.

Following a judicial recount, a tie between two or more candidates must be broken in accordance with the *Local Government Act* (or *Vancouver Charter* in the City of Vancouver) and the local government's election bylaw. The judicial recount must be completed by **Friday, October 30, 2026**.

AFTER THE ELECTION

What do I do if I am elected?

All candidates must file a campaign financing disclosure statement with Elections BC within 90 days of general voting day.

You must also make an oath of office or solemn affirmation within 45 days after the official election results are declared, or if you are declared elected by acclamation, within 50 days of general voting day.

Refer to Elections BC's [Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Candidates and their Financial Agents](#) or contact Elections BC directly for more detailed information about campaign financing disclosure requirements.

A candidate who has been declared elected by the Chief Election Officer may make the oath of office or a solemn affirmation as soon as the time period for making an application for judicial recount has ended. The period to apply for a judicial recount ends nine days after the close of general voting (**Monday, October 26, 2026**).

Elected candidates do not take office immediately after making their oath of office or solemn affirmation. Municipal council members (i.e., mayor and councillors) formally take office at the first regularly scheduled council meeting following general local elections – this meeting must take place before **Tuesday, November 10, 2026**.

The term of office for regional district electoral area directors begins on the first Monday after November 1 following the general local election or when the individual makes their oath or solemn affirmation, whichever is later. The term of office for a municipal council member appointed to a regional district board begins when the person has made an oath of office or solemn affirmation as a regional district director.

Are there things I need to do even if I am not elected?

Yes. You must file a campaign financing disclosure statement with Elections BC by **Tuesday, February 16, 2027**, at the latest – even if you received no campaign contributions and incurred no election expenses. Statements filed after **Friday, January 15, 2027**, are subject to a \$500 late filing penalty fee.

ELECTION OFFENCES AND PENALITIES

What happens if I don't comply with all of the election rules?

You could be disqualified from office if you fail to take the oath of office following local elections.

Candidates who fail to file a campaign financing disclosure statement are automatically disqualified from being nominated for, elected to or holding office anywhere in B.C. until after the next general local elections. A candidate declared elected also loses their seat and the seat then becomes vacant.

Additional monetary and disqualification penalties for contravening campaign financing and advertising rules are set out in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*. Elections BC can be notified when a person believes someone has committed a campaign financing election offence.

You may also be subject to penalties of up to \$5,000 and/or imprisonment for up to one year for providing and/or distributing false information, campaigning near a voting place during voting proceedings, falsely withdrawing a candidate or an endorsement, fraudulently voting, interfering with ballots or ballot boxes, or otherwise contravening section 163 of the *Local Government Act*. These penalties could apply whether or not you were elected.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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

Website: 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

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

DISCLAIMER

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.