VOTER'S GUIDE

TO LOCAL ELECTIONS IN B.C.

2026

BRITISH COLUMBIA

This guide answers a few of the basic questions about local government elections in British Columbia.

Locally elected officials are collectively responsible for making decisions that impact the daily lives of community residents.

These decisions include, and are not limited to, establishing and operating services, such as water and sewer, fire protection, solid waste management, land use and planning, and parks and recreation.

When are general local elections held?

General local elections are held every four years on the third Saturday of October. The next general voting day is **Saturday, October 17, 2026**. Voting places are open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. local time on general voting day.

Refer to the General Local Elections 101 brochure for general information about local elections in B.C.

Further information about board of education (i.e., school trustee) elections can be found at Ministry of Education and Child Care website.

Local elections are held for the following jurisdictions:

- municipalities;
- regional districts;
- boards of education;
- specified parks boards;
- local community commissions; and,
- trust areas (Islands Trust).

VOTER ELIGIBILITY

Am I eligible to vote?

You are eligible to vote in local elections as a resident elector when you:

- are 18 years of age or older when you register to vote or will be 18 years of age or older on general voting day;
- are a Canadian citizen;
- have been a resident of British Columbia for at least six months immediately before you register to vote;
- are a resident of the municipality or electoral area on the day you register to vote; and,
- are not disqualified under the *Local Government Act* or any other enactment from voting in an election or be otherwise disqualified by law.

Refer to section 67 of the *Local Government Act* for the rules that determine B.C. residency.

You are eligible to vote as a non-resident property elector when you:

- are 18 years of age or older when you register to vote or will be 18 years of age or older on general voting day;
- are a Canadian citizen;
- have been a resident of British Columbia for at least six months immediately before you register to vote;
- are the registered owner of real property in the jurisdiction where you intend to vote for at least 30 days immediately before you register to vote; and,
- are not disqualified under the *Local Government Act* or any other enactment from voting in an election or be otherwise disqualified by law.

I live in one jurisdiction and attend school in a different one – can I vote in both places?

No. You can only vote in one jurisdiction when you live away from your usual place of residence to attend an educational institution. You may choose to vote either where you attend school or your usual place of residence.

I live in one jurisdiction and work for extended periods of time in a different one – can I vote in both places?

No. You can only vote in one jurisdiction when you live away from your usual place of residence and work for extended periods of time in another jurisdiction. You must vote in the jurisdiction where you maintain your usual place of residence.

I live on Reserve – can I vote?

Yes. Eligible Indigenous and non-Indigenous electors living on Reserve are entitled to vote in local government elections. Where you vote will depend on whether the Reserve you live on is included in the Letters Patent of a municipality or regional district. Letters Patent establish the legal boundaries of local governments.

Contact the appropriate municipality or regional district to determine where you can vote.

Refer to the Voter's Guide for Electors Living on Reserve brochure for more information about voter eligibility when living on Reserve.

Who cannot vote in local elections?

You cannot vote in local elections (as either a resident elector or a non-resident property elector) when you:

- have been convicted and sentenced for an indictable offence and are in custody; or,
- have been found guilty of an election offence, such as intimidation or vote-buying; or,
- do not otherwise meet voter eligibility requirements.

FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

I live in one jurisdiction and I own property in another – can I vote in both jurisdictions?

Yes. You may vote in the municipality or regional district electoral area where you live when you qualify as a resident elector. You are also eligible to vote as a non-resident property elector in a different municipality or electoral area when you have owned property in that jurisdiction for at least 30 days immediately before registering to vote. You may not vote as a resident and a non-resident property elector in the same jurisdiction.

I own property in British Columbia and I live in a different province or country – can I vote as a non-resident property elector?

No. You must be a resident of British Columbia for at least six months and have owned property in the jurisdiction where you intend to vote for at least 30 days immediately before you register to vote.

I own more than one property in the same jurisdiction – can I vote more than once?

No. You may only vote once in the same local election even if you own more than one property in that jurisdiction.

I own a property in a jurisdiction with someone else, and neither of us lives in that jurisdiction – can both of us vote?

No. Only one non-resident property elector may vote per property. The majority of owners must designate – in writing – that one owner is authorized to vote as the non-resident property elector for that property when you own a property with another person(s). No one is eligible to vote in relation to property owned through or in conjunction with a business or a corporation.

I own a property in a jurisdiction with someone else and that person is living in the house – can both of us vote?

Possibly. The person living in the house may vote as a resident elector because they live within the jurisdiction. You may also be eligible to vote as a non-resident property elector if you are not eligible to vote as a resident elector in the same jurisdiction and you have owned the property for at least 30 days immediately before registering to vote.

The other owner must designate – in writing – you as the non-resident property elector for that property. You must both meet all the eligibility requirements set out for resident electors or non-resident property electors.

I own a business – do I get an extra vote in a local election?

No. There is no business or corporate vote in local elections. Voting rights are granted to citizens based on residency or property ownership. You cannot vote on behalf of a corporation, or as a non-resident property elector based on a property owned wholly or in part by a business or a corporation.

VOTER REGISTRATION

How do I register to vote as a resident elector?

You may already be registered to vote in local elections if the jurisdiction where you are eligible to vote uses the Provincial Voters List or maintains its own list of registered electors for voter registration. You will not be required to show identification to receive a ballot if your name appears on the list of registered electors.

Advance voter registration must be available in those jurisdictions that maintain their own list of registered electors. Some local governments limit registration to same day only, and, in this case, all voters register at the time of voting. You may also register at the time of voting in any case (even if advance registration is offered).

You must provide two separate pieces of identification to register at the time of voting. See question about identification 'On Voting Day' on page 9 for more information

Contact your local government for more information about voter registration procedures.

How do non-resident property owners register to vote?

You may register to vote in the jurisdiction where you own property when advance registration is offered. You may also register at the time of voting.

You must provide two separate pieces of identification to register at the time of voting. The identification must satisfy the election official of your identity and where you live – one piece of identification must include your signature. You must also provide additional information about the property you own. See question about identification 'On Voting Day' on page 9 for more information.

Contact the local government where you own property for more information about voter registration procedures.

ON VOTING DAY

General voting day is the most publicized or widely known voting opportunity resident electors and non-resident property electors have to cast their ballot in local elections.

Can I vote before general voting day?

Yes. At least one advance voting opportunity must be held in every jurisdiction 10 days before general voting day. Many jurisdictions hold more than one advance voting opportunity. The required advance voting opportunity for the upcoming general local elections is **Wednesday, October 7, 2026**.

Jurisdictions may also hold special voting opportunities for eligible electors who may not otherwise be able to attend an advance voting opportunity or cast a ballot on general voting day.

Special voting opportunities are most often held in hospitals, long-term care facilities, or other places where an elector's mobility may be impaired. Only designated electors are eligible to vote at special voting opportunities.

You may also vote by mail ballot if your local government permits mail ballot voting in its election bylaw.

Contact your local government to find out how you can vote before general voting day.

How can I vote if I am absent from my community on advance and general voting day?

You are eligible to vote by mail ballot if your local government has authorized mail ballot voting in its election bylaw. Contact your local government for information about mail ballot voting or other advance voting opportunities in the jurisdiction where you intend to vote.

Do I need identification in order to vote?

Identification is not required when a jurisdiction uses a list of registered electors (voters list) and your name is on the list. You will be required to provide identification if your name is not on the list of registered electors at the time of voting, or if the jurisdiction limits to same-day voter registration only.

You **must** provide two separate pieces of identification when registering to vote as a resident elector on voting day. The identification

must satisfy the election official of who you are and where you live - and one piece of identification must include your signature. You can make a solemn declaration about where you live if none of your identification documents contain an address.

Contact the Land Title Survey Authority for information about the property you own or to order a land title record.

You **must** provide proof of who you are and where you live, as well as the address or legal description and title certificate (or other proof of ownership) of the property you own when you are voting as a non-resident property elector.

Only one owner can vote when you own property with one or more people and you must have the written consent of the majority of the other owners in order to vote in relation to that property.

Acceptable identification documents include, a:

- Driver's Licence;
- British Columbia Identification (BCID) card (note: the BC Services Card when combined with a Driver's Licence is considered **one** piece of identification);
- Certificate of Indian Status;
- Citizenship and/or membership card issued by an Indigenous governing body;
- Utility bill (that contains your residential address); or,
- Credit or Debit Card.

A full list of accepted identification can be found online in the Local Government Elections Regulation (BC Reg 380/93).

Contact your local government if you believe you are eligible to vote in your jurisdiction and cannot satisfy the identification requirements or have questions about what identification will be accepted.

What if I need assistance to vote?

All local governments are required to make voting places as accessible as reasonably possible. You may:

- ask an election official to bring you a ballot if you are able to travel to a voting place and find it difficult to get into the building or room where voting is taking place (this is called "curb-side" voting);
- ask an election official, friend or relative to accompany you to the ballot box and help you if you are unable to mark your own ballot; or,
- bring someone to assist you if you need a translator. The translator must be capable of making a solemn declaration that they can and will make the translation to the best of their ability.

The person assisting you to vote must make a solemn declaration that they will preserve the secrecy of the ballot, mark the ballot in the manner they are directed to, and in no way attempt to influence how you choose to vote. Candidates, candidate representatives, and candidate financial agents may not assist an elector to cast their ballot.

Can I vote on the Internet or by phone?

No. You may not cast your ballot over the Internet or by phone.

ELECTION OFFENCES

What is an election offence?

Specific election offences are outlined in the *Local Government Act* and *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*. They include activities, such as intimidation, providing or distributing false information, fraudulently voting, interfering with ballots or ballot boxes, and hindering or obstructing an election official.

What can I do if I believe someone has committed an election offence?

Contact your Chief Election Officer and/or local law enforcement if you believe someone has committed an election offence. The local Chief Election Officer may be able to deal with certain elections offences immediately (e.g., removing campaign signs within 100 metres of a voting place) and in other circumstances the police may need to be involved.

The police are responsible for conducting an investigation and recommending to Crown counsel whether charges could be laid for election offences such as vote-buying or voter intimidation. Crown counsel makes the determination to proceed with a prosecution. Election offences are prosecuted through the courts.

Notify Elections BC if you believe someone has committed an advertising-related election offence – such as publishing advertisements without sponsorship information – or a campaign financing and/or election advertising offence. Elections BC is responsible for administering and enforcing local election advertising and campaign financing rules under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

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 election advertising, third party sponsors and 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 Elections 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.

Translations

Chinese Simplified (Translated)

French (Translated)

Chinese Traditional (Translated)

Korean (Translated)

Farsi (Translated)

Punjabi (Translated)