



# General Local Elections 101



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA



This brochure answers a few of the basic questions about local government elections in British Columbia. Local government is government at the community level – government that affects British Columbians, every day.

Locally elected officials are charged with making decisions that affect the daily lives of citizens, families, the business community and others.

Municipal councils, regional district boards, boards of education, specified parks boards, local community commissions and the Islands Trust local trust committees and other local bodies influence jobs, foster healthy, safe and sustainable communities for British Columbians and shape the long-term vision for their communities.

## **GENERAL LOCAL ELECTIONS**

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### **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).

## What jurisdictions hold general local elections?

General local elections are held for: municipalities; regional districts; boards of education; specified parks boards; local community commissions; and, Islands Trust trust areas.

## How often are general local elections held?

General local elections for: mayors; councillors; electoral area directors; school trustees; specified parks board commissioners; local community commissioners; and, Islands Trust local trustees are held every **four years on the third Saturday of October.**

General local elections will be held on **Saturday, October 15, 2022.**

## How many people run for elected office in general local elections?

Approximately 3,300 candidates run for 1,650 positions in over 250 jurisdictions across British Columbia.

Because British Columbia is made up of small and large communities, the scale of individual general local elections varies. Some communities may only have a handful of candidates running for office and one or two voting places, while others may have many candidates running for office and multiple voting places.

## What should the public expect from people who run for elected office?

People who demonstrate *integrity, accountability, respect, leadership* and *collaboration* with other elected officials and local government staff are essential to the effectiveness and success of a local government.

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.

## What is responsible conduct of locally elected officials?

Responsible conduct is how locally elected officials conduct themselves in their relationships with elected colleagues, local government staff and the public – and is directly connected to how a community is governed.

An elected official’s relationships with their colleagues, local government staff and the public can play a significant role in helping councils and regional district boards carry out their collective responsibilities as decision-makers for their communities.

## How are general local elections administered?

General local elections are a shared responsibility between local governments (municipalities and regional districts) and Elections BC. Each local government is responsible for running its own general local election.

Local governments appoint Chief Election Officers to run the elections process. The Chief Election Officer may be a senior local government employee, such as a corporate officer, or a private contractor hired to conduct the election on the local government’s behalf.

Chief Election Officers are responsible for overseeing all general local elections administration activities, including: receiving nomination documents; declaring candidates; administering voting opportunities;



counting ballots; and, declaring election results. Chief Election Officers also work with Elections BC to monitor compliance with election advertising regulations and may assist Elections BC to address incidents of election advertising non-compliance.

Elections BC is the non-partisan and independent Office of the Legislature responsible for the administration of the provincial electoral process in B.C. and the campaign financing and advertising rules for local elections and non-election assent voting events under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*. These rules are administered and enforced by Elections BC.

### What legislation governs general local elections?

General local elections must be run in accordance with the *Local Government Act*, the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*, the *Vancouver Charter*, the *Community Charter*, the *School Act*, and the local government's election bylaw, as applicable.

The elections legislation contains provisions that must be consistently applied to all general local elections; however, the legislation is also flexible enough that local governments are able to make choices about how to conduct

some aspects of elections in a way that suits local circumstances – such as offering mail ballot voting for all electors, determining the number of advance voting opportunities to be held or drawing lots to break a tied election.

The election bylaw enables a local government to make decisions about election administration, including whether: voting machines will be used; mail ballot voting will be allowed; additional advance voting opportunities will be offered; voter registration will be conducted both on voting day and in advance or on voting day only; and, nomination deposits will be required.



## Who are the key participants in general local elections?

Electors, candidates, financial agents, official agents, scrutineers, volunteers, elector organizations and third party sponsors are the key participants in general local elections.

### *Electors*

An elector is an individual who is a resident elector (e.g., lives in the municipality or regional district electoral area) or a non-resident property elector (registered owner of real property in a municipality or regional district electoral area) and who is qualified to vote in municipal, regional district, school district, specified parks board, local community commission or Islands Trust elections.

### *Candidates*

A candidate is an individual seeking election as a mayor, councillor, electoral area director, school trustee, specified parks board commissioner, local community commissioner or Islands Trust local trustee, within a municipality, regional district electoral area, school district, specified parks board jurisdiction, local community commission area or Islands Trust trust area. A candidate must be nominated by eligible electors and declared a candidate by the Chief Election Officer.

Candidate nominators must be qualified under the *Local Government Act* or *Vancouver Charter* to nominate a candidate for office.

## 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.**

The financial agent is 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 disclosure statement with Elections BC within 90 days following general voting day.

## Official Agents

Candidates may appoint an official agent to represent them during the election process. The 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.

Candidates must appoint their 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 the appointment has been made.

## Scrutineers

Candidates or their official agent may appoint scrutineers to observe voting procedures and the ballot-counting process.

Further information about scrutineers is available in the *Scrutineers Guide to General Local Elections*

Each candidate or their 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's election bylaw may allow a candidate to have more than one scrutineer for each ballot box used at a voting place.





Candidates must appoint their scrutineers in writing and deliver the appointment (including the name and address of the person) to the Chief Election Officer as soon as practicable after the appointment has been made.

### *Volunteers*

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

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

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

### *Elector Organizations*

Elector organizations are organizations that endorse or intend to endorse a candidate(s) in general local elections and that file endorsement documents with the Chief Election Officer and Elections BC.

Election campaigns for elector organizations are generally a connected series of actions designed to elect a candidate or a group of candidates to a municipal council, regional district board, board of education, specified parks board, local community commission or Islands Trust trust area.



An elector organization may endorse candidates on the ballot by allowing its name, abbreviation or acronym to appear on the ballot beside its endorsed candidate(s) name and/or promote the candidate(s) and the organization's viewpoints during an election campaign. Elector organizations may also be known as "civic political parties."

New campaign financing rules came into effect on December 1, 2021. **Elector organizations are required to register with Elections BC** to endorse a candidate in an election, receive campaign contributions or incur election expenses.

To register an elector organization, see the registration forms for elector organizations, and read Elections BC's *Guide to Elector Organization Registration*.

Elector organizations must also file annual financial reports with Elections BC detailing their finances, including campaign contributions received and all expenditures incurred.

### *Third Party Sponsors*

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.

Third party sponsors must register with Elections BC before conducting advertising during the pre-campaign and campaign periods.

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 elector organization.

Refer to Elections BC's *Guide for Local Elections Third Party Sponsors in B.C.* for detailed information regarding third party sponsors.

## What are some of the key dates in general local elections?

<b>2022 GENERAL LOCAL ELECTIONS KEY DATES</b>	
<b>ACTION OR DEADLINE</b>	<b>DATE</b>
Start of Election Period	January 1, 2022
Start of Pre-Campaign Period	July 18, 2022
Start of Nomination Period	August 30, 2022
End of Nomination Period	September 9, 2022
Declaration of Candidates	September 9, 2022
Candidate Nomination Withdrawal Deadline	September 16, 2022
End of Pre-Campaign Period	September 16, 2022
End of Election Period (12:00 Midnight)	September 16, 2022
Start of Campaign Period (12:01 a.m.)	September 17, 2022
Required Advance Voting Opportunity	October 5, 2022
General Voting Day	October 15, 2022
End of Campaign Period	October 15, 2022
Last Day for Declaration of Official Election Results by Voting	October 19, 2022
Start of Period to Make Oath of Office	October 25, 2022
End of Period to Make Oath of Office (by Voting)	December 3, 2022

## 2022 GENERAL LOCAL ELECTIONS KEY DATES

ACTION OR DEADLINE	DATE
End of Period to Make Oath of Office (by Acclamation)*	December 4, 2022
End of Period to File Campaign Financing Disclosure Statement with Elections BC	January 13, 2023
Start of Period for Late Filing of Campaign Financing Disclosure Statement with Elections BC	January 14, 2023
End of Period for Late Filing of Campaign Financing Disclosure Statement with Elections BC	February 13, 2023

\*This date may be subject to change under the *Interpretation Act*.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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Local government mailing addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and websites are available online from CivicInfoBC 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 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

Fax: 250 387-3578

Toll-free Fax: 1 866 466-0665

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

Website: <https://elections.bc.ca>

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.