



# 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, the Islands Trust local trust committees, local community commissions, specified parks boards and other local bodies influence jobs, foster healthy, safe and sustainable communities for British Columbians and shape the long-term vision for their communities as a whole.

## GENERAL LOCAL ELECTIONS

### What are general local elections?

Through general local elections, residents and non-resident property electors determine the individuals who collectively will 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; councilors; 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 20, 2018.**

### 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 are able to lead with *integrity, accountability, and respect* and in *collaboration* with other locally 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 for information about responsible conduct and expectations for B.C.'s locally elected officials. The brochure is available online at: [www.gov.bc.ca/localgov-elected-officials-conduct](http://www.gov.bc.ca/localgov-elected-officials-conduct)

## 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 local Chief Election Officers to run the elections process. The local 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.

Local Chief Election Officers are responsible for overseeing all local elections administration activities, including: receiving nomination documents; declaring candidates; administering voting opportunities; counting ballots; and, declaring election results. Local Chief Election Officers also work with Elections BC to monitor compliance

The local Chief Election Officer's role is different from the B.C. Chief Electoral Officer's role. The B.C. Chief Electoral Officer is an independent officer of the Legislature who administers campaign financing and election advertising in general local elections and ensures compliance with the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*. Local Chief Election Officers are appointed by local governments to administer local elections.

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 third party advertising rules for local elections and non-election assent voting events under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

## 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 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 property in a municipality or regional district electoral area) and who is qualified to vote in municipal, regional district, school district, Islands Trust, community commission and specified parks board 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 trust area. A candidate must be nominated by eligible electors and declared a candidate by the local Chief Election Officer.

### *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 compliance with the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

### *Official Agents*

Candidates may appoint an official agent to represent them during the election process. The official agent can 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 local Chief Election Officer as soon as practicable after the appointment has been made.

### *Scrutineers*

Candidates may appoint scrutineers to observe voting procedures and the ballot-counting process. Candidates may appoint one scrutineer for each ballot box used at a voting place during general local elections – the local government may allow a candidate to have more than one scrutineer at each voting place. Candidates must appoint their scrutineers in writing and deliver the appointment (including the name and address of the person) to the local Chief Election Officer as soon as practicable after the appointment has been made.

### *Volunteers*

Candidates may retain volunteers to take on election campaign-related activities (such as preparing and distributing flyers, calling eligible voters and/or handling logistics). A volunteer who works on a candidate's campaign must not receive any payment or remuneration for their services.



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

### Elector Organizations

An elector organization is an organization that endorses or intends to endorse a candidate(s) in local elections and that files endorsement documents with the local Chief Election Officer. An elector organization may endorse candidates on the ballot by allowing its name, abbreviation or acronym to appear on the ballot beside the candidate's name and/or promote the candidate's election platform or the organization's viewpoints during its election campaign.

### Third Party Sponsors

Third party sponsors are individuals or organizations that sponsor election advertising independently from candidates and elector organizations during the campaign period. Third party advertising includes advertising for or against a candidate or elector organization and advertising on an issue with which a candidate or elector organization is associated. **Third party sponsors must register with Elections BC.**

Refer to Elections BC's *Guide for Local Elections Third Party Sponsors in B.C.* for detailed information regarding third party sponsors, available online at: [www.elections.bc.ca/lecf](http://www.elections.bc.ca/lecf)

### 2018 GENERAL LOCAL ELECTIONS KEY DATES

ACTION OR DEADLINE	DATE
Start of Election Period	January 1, 2018
Start of Nomination Period	September 4, 2018
End of Nomination Period	September 14, 2018
Declaration of Candidates	September 14, 2018
Candidate Nomination Withdrawal Deadline	September 21, 2018
End of Election Period (12:00 Midnight)	September 21, 2018
Start of Campaign Period (12:01 a.m.)	September 22, 2018
Required Advance Voting Opportunity	October 10, 2018
General Voting Day	October 20, 2018
End of Campaign Period	October 20, 2018
Determination of Official Election Results	October 22, 2018
Start of Period to Make Oath of Office	October 30, 2018
End of Period to Make Oath of Office (by Voting)	December 8, 2018
End of Period to Make Oath of Office (by Acclamation)	December 10, 2018
End of Period to File Campaign Financing Disclosure Statement with Elections BC	January 18, 2019
Start of Period for Late Filing of Campaign Financing Disclosure Statement with Elections BC	January 21, 2019
End of Period for Late Filing of Campaign Financing Disclosure Statement with Elections BC	February 19, 2019

## 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 and Housing**

Governance and Structure Branch

Phone: 250 387-4020

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

[www.gov.bc.ca/localelections](http://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: 1 855 952-0280 / TTY 1 888 456-5448

Fax: 250 387-3578

Toll-free Fax: 1 866 466-0665

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

[www.elections.bc.ca/lcef](http://www.elections.bc.ca/lcef)

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 will prevail.