

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA 2026:



General Local Elections

101





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, specified parks boards, local community commissions, 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

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

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

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.

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

How often are general local elections held?

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

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?

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 and planning, and parks and recreation.

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).

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?

How elected officials conduct themselves in their role and in relationships with each other, staff, and the public, directly impacts successful community governance. Effective governance requires dedicated, ethical and informed leaders who are committed to their communities. As part of that commitment, an effective elected official:

- holds themselves **accountable** in their decisions and conduct;
- is **respectful** of others as well as their role and the rules and responsibilities that come with holding local office;
- gives the time needed to become **knowledgeable** about local government roles, responsibilities, and legislative requirements;

- is **curious** about the perspectives and experiences of others to find solutions and inform decision-making; and,
- meaningfully **collaborates** with their colleagues, who share in the responsibility of representing the community interests.

How are general local elections for local governments administered?

Unlike provincial elections, local elections are not managed by one organization. Each local government is responsible for running its own local elections, including accepting candidate nominations, voting, counting ballots, and reporting results. [Elections BC](#) is responsible for administering the campaign financing and election advertising rules in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

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.

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 or board of education's election bylaw, as applicable.

ELECTION BYLAWS

A local government election bylaw enables the local government to make decisions about election administration, including whether: voting machines will be used; mail ballot, additional or special 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.

The elections legislation contains provisions that must be consistently applied to all general local elections; however, the legislation is also flexible enough that local jurisdictions are able to make choices about how to conduct some aspects of elections in a way that suits local circumstances.

Who are the key participants in local 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 (i.e., 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, specified parks board, local community commission or Islands Trust elections.

Further information about voter eligibility can be found in the [*Voter's Guide to Local Elections in B.C.*](#) or the [*Voter's Guide for Electors Living on Reserve*](#)

Candidates

A candidate is an individual seeking election as a mayor, councillor, electoral area director, 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.

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.

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

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

of the person) to the Chief Election Officer as soon as practicable after the appointment has been made. Scrutineers must carry a copy of their appointment documents while present at a voting place.

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.

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 are required to register with Elections BC to endorse candidates in an election, receive campaign contributions or incur election expenses. Elector organization registration information and forms are available from [**Elections BC's website**](#).

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

THIRD PARTY SPONSOR REGISTRATION

Third party sponsors must register with Elections BC before conducting advertising during the pre-campaign and campaign periods. Refer to Elections BC's [***Guide for Local Third Party Advertising Sponsors in B.C.***](#) for detailed information regarding third party sponsors.

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 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.

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 legislative **questions about school trustee elections** please contact:

Ministry of Education and Child Care

Governance and Legislation Branch

Email: EDUC.Governance.Legislation@gov.bc.ca

Website: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/school-trustee-election-procedures>

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.