

# Running for Local Office

Residents of B.C. interested in running for local government office in a general local election or by-election must meet certain eligibility requirements to be nominated. In addition, provincial legislation sets out how candidates may run and finance their election campaigns and advertise their candidacy.

## Candidate Eligibility

### Requirements

To be eligible to run for local government office in a general local election or a by-election, a person must have been a resident of B.C. at least six months before filing their nomination documents. They do not have to live or own property in the area where they are running for office.

In addition, a person must:

- Be 18 years of age or older on general voting day
- Be a Canadian citizen
- Not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act* or any other enactment from being nominated for, being elected to or holding office, or be otherwise disqualified by law

A person is ineligible to run for office in a general local election or by-election if they:

- Have been convicted of and sentenced for an indictable offence and are in custody
- Have been found guilty of an election offence, such as intimidation or vote-buying, and are prohibited from holding office
- Are judges of the Provincial Court, Supreme Court or Court of Appeal
- Are involuntarily confined to a psychiatric facility or other institution
- Have been disqualified for specified reasons such as failing to file a candidate disclosure statement in a previous election, failing to make an oath of office, or failing to attend local government meetings in the manner and frequency required by the *Community Charter*
- Have been otherwise disqualified from being nominated for, elected to or holding office under the *Local Government Act*, *Community Charter*, *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* or any other enactment or law

### Local Government Employees

Local government staff (officers and employees), who wish to run for office in the local government where they work must take a leave of absence in order to run and they must resign if elected.

People who provide contracted services to local governments may be eligible to be candidates in local government elections, depending on whether or not a contracted person is considered to be an "employee".

## Volunteers

Volunteers who receive monetary compensation (such as an hourly wage or call-out pay) for services provided to a local government are eligible to run for elected office if they take a leave of absence and resign when elected.

## B.C. Public Service Employees

B.C. Public Service employees may seek nomination as a candidate in local government elections. The duties of elected office must not affect the person's normal working hours and there must not be a conflict of interest between the employee's duties as an elected official and their duties as a B.C. Public Service employee.

## Federal Government Employees

Federal government employees require prior approval from the Public Service Commission of Canada to run for local government office. The Commission may grant permission when it is satisfied that being a candidate will not impair or be perceived to impair an employee's ability to perform their job-related duties in a politically impartial manner

## Candidate Nominations

Prospective candidates for local government office must be nominated by at least two eligible electors from the election area where the person is seeking election. Local governments may require 10 or as many as 25 nominators for each prospective candidate, in their election bylaw.

## Nomination Documents

Nomination packages can generally be obtained from a local government's local Chief Election Officer. The completed documents must be submitted back to the local Chief Election Officer by the end of the nomination period.

- [2018 general local election calendar of key election dates](#)

The completed nomination documents must include nominations from at least two eligible electors from the election area where the prospective candidate wishes to run for office. However, local governments with populations under 5,000 may require up to 10 nominators, and local governments with populations over 5,000 may require up to 25 nominators.

The completed nomination package must also include solemn declarations from the prospective candidate, including that the candidate fully intends to accept office if elected and is aware of, understands and intends to comply with the requirements and restrictions under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*. A prospective candidate may make the required solemn

declarations in advance with a Commissioner for Taking Affidavits for B.C. (such as a lawyer or notary public) or make a declaration before the local Chief Election Officer when submitting their nomination documents to the local Chief Election Office

A prospective candidate officially becomes a candidate when they have submitted all the required information in the nomination package and have been declared a candidate by the local Chief Election Officer.

### Nomination Deposits

Local governments may also require prospective candidates to pay a refundable nomination deposit of up to \$100 when submitting the nomination package. The deposit is refunded when the candidate files their campaign financing disclosure statement with Elections BC.

- [Contact the local Chief Election Officer to determine the number of nominators and see if a deposit is required](#)

### Access to Nomination Documents

The public may view a candidate's nomination documents at the local government's offices during regular office hours from the time they are submitted to the local government until 30 days following the declaration of the election results. A local government may also make nomination documents available by other means, such as on its website.

Any updates made to nomination documents after the general local election results have been declared must be sent directly to Elections BC.

An eligible elector, another nominee for office or the local Chief Election Officer can challenge a prospective candidate's nomination if they believe the nomination documents are incorrect or the person is not otherwise eligible to be nominated for office.

### Statements of Financial Disclosure

All candidates must complete a statement of financial disclosure in accordance with the *Financial Disclosure Act* at the time their nomination documents are filed with the local government.

If elected, local officials such as the mayor must also file annual financial disclosure statements between January 1 and 15 each year, as well as when they leave their elected office. These statements differ from campaign financing disclosure statements, which candidates are required to file with Elections BC following a general local election or by-election.

- [Learn more about financial disclosure for local government candidates and elected officials](#)

## Responsible Conduct

How elected officials conduct themselves in their relationships with elected colleagues, staff and the public is directly connected to how a community is governed.

- [Learn more about responsible conduct of locally elected officials](#)

## Election Campaigns

An election campaign is a connected series of actions (such as advertising, meetings and speeches) designed to elect a candidate or a group of candidates to an elected office such as a municipal council or regional district board. Typically, an election campaign involves communicating with the electorate, through:

- Public appearances and speeches
- Advertisements on television, radio, the Internet, social media (for example, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), in newspapers and magazines
- Brochures, signs, posters, billboards
- Mail inserts and newsletters
- Bumper stickers, buttons and displays and/or exhibits

An election campaign may be undertaken by a candidate or an elector organization during local elections. In some cases, candidates and elector organizations may work together on an election campaign endorsed by the elector organization; in other cases, a group of candidates who are not endorsed by an elector organization may choose to work together to share costs.

- [Learn more about elector organization election campaigns](#)

## Election Advertising

Advertising is a key component in most local election campaigns. Candidates and elector organizations may use print, radio, television, the Internet, social media or other forms of advertising to promote or oppose candidates, elector organizations or points of view during an election campaign.

Generally, candidates, elector organizations and third party sponsors must not sponsor (or agree to sponsor) or transmit election advertising on general voting day. Exceptions to this rule include:

- 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
- Distributing pamphlets

- Advertising encouraging people to "get out and vote"

Election advertising and campaigning of any sort is prohibited within 100 m of a voting place. This includes displaying signs, posters, flyers, bumper stickers on vehicles parked outside the voting place, badges worn by supporters, canvassing or soliciting votes, or otherwise trying to influence electors to vote for a particular candidate.

There are legislated election advertising requirements, such as requiring sponsorship information on all election advertising during the campaign period that apply to candidates, elector organizations and third party sponsors. Failure to comply could result in penalties.

- [Learn more about candidate, elector organization and third party sponsor advertising during the campaign period](#)

## Voters List

Each candidate is entitled to one free copy of a list of registered electors (voters list) if one is used by the local government. Before receiving a copy of the list, the candidate must agree in writing that the list will only be used for the purposes of the election, such as door-knocking, flyer distribution or calling eligible voters to remind them to vote. The list must be returned to the local government or destroyed following the general local election or by-election.

- [Learn more about voters lists in general local elections](#)

## The Election Period & Campaign Period

The election period for a general local election begins at the start of the calendar year (January 1) in which the general local election will be held and ends at the start of the campaign period (28 days before general voting day). There are a number of recording, reporting and disclosure requirements that apply to candidates, elector organizations and third party sponsors during the election period.

The campaign period for a general local election begins on the 28th day before the general voting day and ends on the close of general voting day. Campaign financing rules apply during the campaign period for candidates, elector organizations and third party sponsors.

- [Learn more about campaign financing rules during the election period and campaign period](#)

## Campaign Financing Disclosure

Candidates, elector organization and third party sponsors must file a campaign financing disclosure statement with Elections BC.

The *Local Election Campaign Financing Act* sets out what information the campaign financing disclosure statement must contain, including details about election expenses and campaign contributions related to an election campaign.

- [Learn more about campaign financing disclosure rules](#)

## Local Elections Legislation

- [Local Government Act](#)
- [Local Election Campaign Financing Act](#)
- [Community Charter](#)
- [Vancouver Charter](#)
- [School Act](#)
- [Offence Act](#)

Learn more about being a candidate for locally elected office.

- [Candidate's Guide to Local Elections in B.C. \(PDF\)](#)
- [Candidate's Guide to Local Elections in B.C. \(PDF\)](#)
- [CivicInfo BC - Local Election Results](#)
- [Elector Organization Guide to Local Elections in B.C. \(PDF\)](#)
- [Foundational Principles of Responsible Conduct \(PDF\)](#)
- [General Local Elections 101 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Thinking of Running for Local Office? \(PDF\)](#)
- [What Every Candidate Needs to Know \(PDF\)](#)



Contact Elections BC if you have questions about campaign financing, election advertising and third party sponsor rules.

- [Elections BC](#)

Elections BC 2018 General Local Elections Guides

- [Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Candidates and their Financial Agents \(PDF\)](#)
- [Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Elector Organizations and their Financial Agents \(PDF\)](#)

Contact us if you have legislative questions about general local elections.

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