

INFORMATION ON HOW TO CAMPAIGN SAFELY DURING COVID-19

Election related activities during a pandemic

There are many close contact activities during an election. These include rallies, canvassing voters, campaign events and fundraising. While the *Election Act* has rules around campaigning, it does not contemplate campaigning during a pandemic. This document has been developed in consultation with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) to share best practices with campaigns and help them campaign safely during COVID-19.

As with all businesses and organizations in the province, political parties and political campaigns should put together a COVID-19 safety plan. The safety plan should consider issues like minimizing face-to-face interactions by finding alternate ways to accomplish objectives, such as meeting in small physically distanced groups. You can find more information on creating a safety plan at the WorkSafe BC website.

It is important to note that Elections BC is responsible for regulating campaigning per the rules established by the *Election Act*. We are not responsible for public health or WorkSafe BC guidelines. However, in consultation with the PHO, the following provides suggested modifications for campaigning during the pandemic, with the goal of promoting a safe electoral process for voters and political campaigns.

In the event of a discrepancy with this document and the health guidelines issued by the PHO, individuals should adhere to the guidance provided by the PHO.

Canvassing

While canvassing voters door-to-door is permitted by the *Election Act*, be aware that there is heightened anxiety about in-person interactions. Some people will not take kindly to strangers knocking on their door. Be considerate and try to find alternate ways of communicating with voters. Individuals who are feeling unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms (i.e., fever, sore throat, shortness of breath) should refrain from canvassing activities.

Consider providing advance notice

You may wish to consult with local Medical Health Officers to help determine a safe canvassing strategy for your specific electoral district. Consider using social media or website messaging to share your safety plan with voters and provide advanced notice on when and how you will be canvassing in the community. Be mindful that there will be individuals that may support your campaign, but do not wish to have canvassers come to their door. In these cases, provide voters with the option to refrain from face-to-face contact, and consider other canvassing alternatives.

If you are canvassing in-person, you can keep a two metre (or six foot) distance by knocking and then taking two steps back before engaging. You may also reduce the number of canvassers in that community and provide all canvassers with facemasks, gloves and hand sanitizer.

Go paperless

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, candidates can record an oral declaration from their nominators instead of a written signature. See the [candidate nomination booklet](#) for more information.

Consider single use pens or pencils

For collecting signatures in person, encourage signatories to use their own pen or pencil, or have single use pencils available. Any shared equipment should be cleaned and sanitized before each use.

Minimize contact

Canvassers should minimize physical contact with doors, bells, hand rails, and all other fixtures of a dwelling. Physical distancing rules still apply in hallways and elevators.

Avoid Pets

While pets are not a risk for transmitting or being infected with the COVID-19 virus, canvassers should refrain from all physical interactions with any household pets that greet them.

Events

Campaign events need to be thought through carefully. While the *Election Act* does not restrict the kinds of events campaigns can hold, public health orders on mass gatherings apply. This means that campaign events are limited to a maximum of 50 individuals, but the smaller the number the better. This is especially true for indoor events where people will be in close contact for longer periods of time. For example, six people, physically distanced, is the maximum at a fundraising dinner table. Assigned seating is also helpful, and of course, no one who is ill should attend. For any indoor events, campaigns must gather the names and contact information for all attendees, per the PHO's requirements.

There are alternatives to in-person events campaigns should consider:

Go online

Consider hosting online fundraising events through platforms such as Skype or Zoom.

Enjoy the outdoors

Outdoor events provide more space and better ventilation. Ensure physical distancing of two metres (or six feet), and provide hand-washing stations with hand sanitizer, if possible.

Ask questions

Anyone who is ill should not attend in-person events. Be prepared to ask people who attend in person events if they have had a cough or fever in the last two weeks.

Keep your distance

Mark areas on the floor or ground to promote safe physical distancing of two metres (or six feet), consider one-way traffic, and make use of separate entrances and exits for attendees. Masks and physical barriers between attendees and or staff are encouraged where distancing is not possible. Having a seating plan can assist with these measures.

Protect your community

Consider those amongst us that may have a compromised health situation and the elderly.

Accepting political contributions

Consider accepting contributions electronically

There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 can be passed on through the handling of money, however accepting contributions online limits the need for person-to-person contact. An individual's full name and BC residential address will still need to be recorded for contributions accepted online. Anonymous online contributions are not acceptable.

Keep yourself and others safe

Individuals handling money, including processing debit and credit cards, should consider washing their hands frequently and refrain from touching their face. If physical distancing is not possible, wear a mask when engaging with others.

Additional resources for safe campaigning during the pandemic

Consult the resources below for the latest updates and information. For further specific guidance on public health and campaign workplace safety, contact the [Office of the Provincial Health Officer](#) or [WorkSafe BC](#).

- Provincial Health Officer's [order regarding gatherings and events](#)
- [Risk mitigation tool](#) for gatherings and events operating during the COVID-19 pandemic
- [BC Centre for Disease Control COVID-19 dashboard](#)
- [WorkSafe BC safety plan for employers](#)

These recommendations are guidelines that have been drafted in consultation with the BC Provincial Health Officer to facilitate a safe campaign experience for everyone during a pandemic.

For updated guidelines and safety protocols in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, please consult the PHO, WorkSafe BC or the BC Centre for Disease Control website.

Please note there are significant penalties for contravening the Provincial Health Officer's order in relation to COVID-19. Contraventions of the Provincial Health Officer's orders are not administered by Elections BC.

Contact

For more information around campaign financing and advertising rules, please contact Provincial Electoral Finance at:

Provincial Electoral Finance

Elections BC

1-800-661-8683

electoral.finance@elections.bc.ca