



ELECTOR

ORGANIZATION

GUIDE

TO LOCAL ELECTIONS IN B.C.

2022



Purpose of Elector Organizations

What are elector organizations?

Elector organizations are organizations that endorse or intend to endorse a candidate(s) in general local elections. Elector organizations may also be known as “civic political parties.”

In the 2018 general local elections, elector organizations operated in approximately 13 communities in B.C., primarily in the Lower Mainland.

What do elector organizations do?

Fundamentally, elector organizations endorse candidates. Elector organizations may have their name, abbreviation or acronym shown on the ballot beside their endorsed candidate(s) name and generally promote their endorsed candidate(s) or the organization’s viewpoints during an election campaign.

Elector Organizations Must be Registered

Only elector organizations registered with Elections BC can file endorsement documents, receive campaign contributions and incur election expenses. For more information visit [Elections BC online](#).

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 local trust committee.

Typically, an election campaign involves elector organizations and/or candidates communicating with the electorate through:

- public appearances and speeches;
- advertisements on television, radio, the Internet, in newspapers and magazines;
- social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube);
- brochures, signs, posters, billboards;
- mail inserts and newsletters; and,
- bumper stickers, buttons and displays and/or exhibitions.

Elector organizations and candidates each direct their own separate election campaign; however, an endorsed candidate may decide not to run their own election campaign and instead rely solely on the elector organization to run campaign activities on the candidate's behalf.

Alternatively, a candidate and an elector organization may agree to run complementary campaigns in which both the candidate and the elector organization undertake election campaign activities designed to elect that candidate within a specific jurisdiction.

Registration

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 a campaign contribution or incur an election expense. Only those elector organizations registered with Elections BC can endorse candidates, receive campaign contributions and incur election expenses.

For more information about how to register an elector organization read Elections BC's [*Guide to Elector Organization Registration*](#).

Membership

Who are the members of an elector organization?

Members of an elector organization are eligible resident and non-resident property electors of the jurisdiction where the general local election is being held. Members may also be subject to other requirements of the elector organization.

How many members are in an elector organization?

An elector organization must have a membership of at least 50-electors (resident and/or non-resident property electors) at the time it registers with Elections BC. The elector organization must not be disqualified from endorsing a candidate(s) under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

Resident Elector

A resident elector must: be 18 years of age or older on general voting day; be a Canadian citizen; have been a resident of British Columbia for at least six months immediately before registering to vote; be a resident of the municipality or electoral area, as determined in accordance with section 67 of the *Local Government Act*; and not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act* or any other enactment from voting in a local election, or be otherwise disqualified by law.

Non-Resident Property Elector

A non-resident property elector must: be 18 years of age or older on general voting day; be a Canadian citizen; have been a resident of British Columbia for at least six months immediately before registering to vote; have owned real property in the jurisdiction in which they intend to vote for at least 30 days before registering to vote; and, not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act* or any other enactment from voting in a local election, or be otherwise disqualified by law.

How does an elector organization determine membership?

Many elector organizations request that prospective members fill out a membership form and pay a one-time or monthly fee to the organization – although this is not a requirement under the *Local Government Act*.

Elector organizations typically use the information collected from membership forms to make a reasonable determination of which individuals are eligible electors in the jurisdiction where the general local election is being held.

At a minimum, the information elector organizations collect must include: the names and addresses of the members; and, for members who are non-resident property electors, the addresses of the properties in relation to which they are eligible to vote.

Privacy and Personal Information

Elector organizations are subject to the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA). Under PIPA, elector organizations must establish a policy regarding the use and disclosure of personal information and instruct any prospective members about that policy prior to collecting their personal information.

Are elector organizations required to provide a membership list to the Chief Election Officer?

No. However, an elector organization may be required to provide the list of its members when registering with Elections BC. An elector organization may also be required to provide the list of its members to the Provincial Court when the elector organization's endorsement of a candidate is challenged.

Qualifications and Structure

How are elector organizations qualified to endorse candidates?

Elector organizations that register with Elections BC and have a membership of 50 eligible electors at the time of endorsement are qualified to endorse a candidate(s).

How are elector organizations structured?

An elector organization tends to have a somewhat formalized structure because of the 50-elector membership requirement, the organization's ability to endorse a candidate on the ballot and because of the campaign financing disclosure requirements set out in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* that it must follow.

An elector organization may adopt any organizational structure or decision-making model that provides a basis upon which the members collectively agree how a candidate will be endorsed and how election campaigning will be conducted.

Representatives

What representatives are elector organizations required to have?

Elector organizations must appoint at least two responsible principal officials and a financial agent – an individual can fill the role of both the financial agent and a responsible principal official.

The responsible principal officials and the financial agent must be appointed prior to the elector organization submitting a registration application to Elections BC. The elector organization must also file the *Appointment of Financial Agent* form with Elections BC.

What duties do responsible principal officials have in an elector organization?

Responsible principal officials act as the elector organization's representatives – they are often the organization's president or chief officer. Under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*, one of these responsible principal officials must be designated to act as the *authorized principal official*.

Responsible principal officials, including the authorized principal official, can be held legally responsible and liable for the elector organization's actions. These officials' obligations continue after general local elections, whether the elector organization continues to exist or not.

What contact information are responsible principal officials required to provide?

Responsible principal officials must submit specific contact information to Elections BC upon registration as outlined in Elections BC's [elector organization registration forms](#).

An elector organization must file a notice with Elections BC within 60 days if its contact information changes after registration. A notice to update information must be made in writing and must be signed by the elector organization's authorized principal official.

What duties does the authorized principal official have in an elector organization?

The authorized principal official is the person who appoints the financial agent and makes candidate endorsements, on the elector organization's behalf. The authorized principal official is also responsible for retaining the elector organization's campaign financing records.

The authorized principal official must retain records of the elector organization's campaign financing transactions, including campaign contributions, permissible loans, election expenses and transfers, until five years after general voting day for the election to which the material and records relate.

What responsibilities does the financial agent have in an elector organization?

The financial agent is legally responsible for ensuring that the financial aspects of the elector organization comply with the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

An elector organization may not have more than one financial agent at a time. However, a financial agent can be the financial agent for more than one elector organization or candidate during general local elections.

A financial agent must be appointed before any campaign-related transactions occur and be in accordance with Elections BC's [elector organization registration requirements](#).

The financial agent has a wide range of financial responsibilities, including:

- opening and depositing contributions to, and paying election-related expenses from, an elector organization's campaign account;

- recording campaign contributions, permissible loans and election expenses;
- completing campaign financing arrangements;
- reviewing campaign contribution and permissible loan amounts in relation to an endorsed candidate's campaign;
- returning campaign contributions and amounts of permissible loans that exceed contribution limits; and,
- filing required financial reports and disclosure statements with Elections BC.

Financial Disclosure

An elector organization disclosure statement must be submitted to Elections BC. Even if the elector organization has no election expenses, receives no campaign contributions, withdraws its endorsement of a candidate or is declared by a court not to be qualified to endorse a candidate.

The financial agent must understand the scope of their responsibilities – failure to comply with the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* may result in a fine of up to \$20,000 for the elector organization or a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for up to two years for the financial agent and/or responsible principal officials.

For more information about the financial agent's role and campaign financing rules read Elections BC's *Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Elector Organizations and their Financial Agents*.

Are elector organizations allowed to appoint scrutineers?

No. Under the *Local Government Act*, only candidates are entitled to appoint scrutineers.

Candidate Endorsement

What is an endorsement on a ballot?

An endorsement on a ballot is when the elector organization's name, abbreviation or acronym is noted beside the endorsed candidate's name on the ballot. This is the only visible indication of elector organization support for a candidate that is permitted within a voting place.

How do elector organizations choose which candidate(s) to endorse?

There are no specific rules related to how an elector organization decides which candidate(s) to endorse – or who may be involved in planning campaign activities.

The process an elector organization uses to select its candidate(s) may be unique to that organization. Factors such as the elector organization's history, its central objectives or its guiding principles may influence which like-minded candidate(s) are endorsed by the elector organization.

How many candidates can an elector organization endorse?

An elector organization can endorse as many candidates as it deems appropriate to fulfill its objectives; however, it cannot endorse more candidates for a particular office than there are positions to be filled.

Can an elector organization endorse candidates in multiple elections at the same time?

Yes. For example, an elector organization can endorse candidates for municipal council elections and regional district board elections at the same time.

Can a candidate be endorsed by more than one elector organization?

No. A candidate may only be endorsed by one elector organization.

How do elector organizations choose a ballot endorsement mark?

There are no specific rules related to how an elector organization chooses its endorsement mark.

The *Local Government Act* and *Vancouver Charter* do not permit the ballot to show any indication of a candidate's current or prior experience as an elected official, their occupation or titles, honours, degrees or decorations received or held. This restriction extends to information contained in the elector organization's endorsement mark.

The Chief Election Officer has the discretion to accept or refuse an elector organization's endorsement mark. The Chief Election Officer is prohibited from allowing additional candidate information or endorsement marks from appearing on the ballot that may be confusing to the electors.

Elector organizations may use the same endorsement mark from one general local election to the next; however, a new elector organization must choose a mark that cannot be confused with the name, abbreviation or acronym of another elector organization whose candidate endorsement appeared on a ballot in a previous election or will appear in the upcoming election.

Does a candidate have to consent to be endorsed on the ballot?

Yes. The endorsed candidate's consent is required before the Chief Election Officer can place the endorsement mark on the ballot. Each endorsed candidate is required to give their signed consent to the endorsement on the elector organization's endorsement documents submitted to the Chief Election Officer and Elections BC.

How do elector organizations make an endorsement?

An elector organization may endorse a candidate(s) and have that endorsement included on the ballot when they submit endorsement documents in writing to the Chief Election Officer and Elections BC before the nomination period ends. The endorsement documents must include the following:

- the full name of the candidate to be endorsed by the elector organization and, if applicable, the usual name that is to be used on the ballot;
- the legal name of the organization, if applicable;
- the usual name of the organization, if this is different from its legal name or if it has no legal name;
- any abbreviations, acronyms and other names used by the elector organization;
- the contact information of the authorized principal official of the organization; and,
- the consent of the candidate to the endorsement.

The elector organization's name, abbreviation or acronym, will appear on the ballot beside their endorsed candidate's name.

Elector Organization Registration

The authorized principal official must provide the name of each jurisdiction for which the elector organization intends to endorse a candidate in an election when registering the elector organization with Elections BC.

Can an endorsement be withdrawn?

Yes. An elector organization or candidate may withdraw an endorsement up to 29 days before general voting day.

How is an endorsement withdrawn?

An elector organization may withdraw a candidate endorsement by delivering a written withdrawal signed by the authorized principal official to the Chief Election Officer.

A candidate may withdraw their consent to the elector organization's endorsement by delivering a signed withdrawal to the Chief Election Officer.

Can an endorsement by an elector organization be challenged?

Yes. An eligible elector, another candidate for office or the Chief Election Officer can challenge a candidate's endorsement by an elector organization. The basis for the challenge may happen when the endorsement documents are believed to be incorrect, or the elector organization is not otherwise qualified to make an endorsement on the ballot.

Challenges to a candidate's endorsement must be made through an application to the [Provincial Court](#).

Campaign Financing and Election Advertising

What campaign financing rules apply to elector organizations?

The *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* sets out the campaign financing rules for elector organizations.

These rules are administered and enforced by Elections BC and include recording and disclosing:

- campaign contributions;
- permissible loans;
- election expenses; and,
- transfers and other income and expenditures.

Elector organizations are also required to submit campaign financing disclosure statements and file annual financial reports with Elections BC.

For more information about the campaign financing disclosure process read Elections BC's *Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Elector Organizations and their Financial Agents*. This guide is intended to help elector organizations and their financial agents to understand their responsibilities and legal obligations under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

Do elector organizations have their own campaign period expense limits?

No. Under the required campaign financing arrangement, endorsed candidates may sign over a portion of their expense limit for the elector organization to spend during the campaign period.

An elector organization must attribute campaign period expenses to each endorsed candidate and

disclose the expenses separately for each endorsed candidate.

An elector organization must also file annual financial reports with Elections BC detailing its finances, including campaign contributions received and all expenditures incurred. For more information about expense limits and campaign financing arrangements read Elections BC's *Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Elector Organizations and their Financial Agents*.

Pre-campaign Period

The pre-campaign period set out in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* has been established to lengthen the time election advertising is regulated from 29 to 89 days. This means that during the pre-campaign period beginning on **July 18, 2022** and ending **September 16, 2022** election advertising, such as billboards or commercials, must include sponsorship information.

Campaign Period

The campaign period set out in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* starts on **September 17, 2022** and ends when voting closes at 8:00 p.m. local time on **October 15, 2022**. This means that during the campaign period, election advertising, such as billboards or commercials must include sponsorship information.

Do contribution limits apply to elector organization campaigns?

Yes. The *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* and the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Regulation* set contribution limits for the election campaigns of candidates and elector organizations.

Individuals who wish to contribute to a candidate or elector organization are legally obligated to follow the rules outlined in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*. For more information about [campaign contribution limits](#) visit Elections BC online.

What election advertising rules apply to elector organizations?

The *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* sets out the election advertising rules for elector organizations. These rules are administered and enforced by Elections BC.

Election advertising is any transmission of a communication to the public in the pre-campaign or campaign periods that directly or indirectly promotes or opposes a candidate or an elector organization.

In the campaign period, election advertising also includes a communication that takes a position on an issue associated with a candidate or elector organization.

For more information about what constitutes election advertising, sponsorship information, and campaign restrictions, read Elections BC's *Guide to Local Elections Campaign Financing in B.C. for Elector Organizations and their Financial Agents*.

Third Party Sponsors

Third party sponsors in general local elections must:

- register with Elections BC before conducting any advertising;
- include their name and contact information on all advertising during the pre-campaign period and the campaign period;
- be independent and not sponsor advertising on behalf of, or together with, a candidate or elector organization;
- not spend more than the allowable [expense limits](#); and,
- file a disclosure statement with Elections BC.

For the 2022 general local elections, third party advertising rules will apply during the pre-campaign period beginning on **July 18, 2022** and ending on **September 16, 2022** and the campaign period beginning on **September 17, 2022** and ending on **October 15, 2022**. Third party sponsors must disclose their advertising expenses within 90 days after general voting day.

Advertising Rules

New rules for third party sponsors are in effect for the 2022 general local elections. There are limits placed on sponsorship contributions made by eligible individuals to third party sponsors. For more information about [third party advertising rules](#) visit Elections BC online.

Elector Organizations vs. Third Party Sponsors

What are the differences between elector organizations and third party sponsors?

Elector organizations and third party sponsors are both subject to rules and requirements under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*. However, there are key differences between these two types of general local elections participants.

ELECTOR ORGANIZATIONS:

- file endorsement documents with the Chief Election Officer and Elections BC and endorse candidates by having the elector organization's name, abbreviation or acronym noted beside an endorsed candidate's name on the ballot;

- must have 50-members who are eligible electors of the jurisdiction where the election is being held to qualify as an elector organization and endorse a candidate(s) on the ballot;
- can work with candidates during their campaigns and undertake campaign activities, including advertising, on the candidate's behalf;
- may share their endorsed candidates' expense limits; and,
- receive campaign contributions.

THIRD PARTY SPONSORS:

- must ensure that all their activities and advertising are completely independent from candidates and elector organizations;
- cannot endorse a candidate(s) on the ballot;
- are not subject to specific membership requirements;
- are subject to different rules than candidates and elector organizations; and,
- must make a solemn declaration upon registration with Elections BC.

Further Information

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

www.civicinfo.bc.ca/directories

General Local Elections 101

For more information about general local elections in B.C. read: *General Local Elections 101* brochure. The brochure is available from local governments throughout B.C. and online at: www.gov.bc.ca/localelections.

For answers to legislative **questions about municipal or regional district elections**, please contact:

Ministry of Municipal Affairs

Governance and Structure Branch

Phone: 250 387-4020

Email: LGgovernance@gov.bc.ca

Website: 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

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

For answers to **questions about school trustee elections**, please contact:

Ministry of Education and Childcare

Education Policy Branch

Phone: 250 387-8037

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>

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.

