

VOTER'S GUIDE

TO LOCAL ELECTIONS IN B.C.



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This guide is designed to answer 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. **The next general local election is Saturday, November 19, 2011.**

Local elections are held for:

- municipalities;
- regional districts;
- school districts; and,
- the Islands Trust.

How do I know if I am eligible to vote?

You are eligible to vote in a local election as a **resident elector** if you:

- are 18 years of age or older on general voting day;
- are a Canadian citizen;
- have lived in British Columbia for at least six months before you register to vote;
- have lived in the municipality, regional district electoral area, school district, or Islands Trust area where you intend to vote for at least 30 days before you register to vote; and,
- are not disqualified by the *Local Government Act*, any other Act, or the Courts from voting in a local election.

You are eligible to vote as a **non-resident property elector** if you are 18 years of age or older on general voting day; are a Canadian citizen; have lived in British Columbia for at

least six months before you register to vote; are not disqualified by the *Local Government Act*, any other Act, or the Courts from voting in a local election; and, have owned property in the jurisdiction where you intend to vote for at least 30 days before you register to vote.

I live on a First Nation reserve – can I vote?

Yes. Eligible residents living on reserve can vote. Where you vote depends on whether the reserve is located within a municipality or a regional district electoral area. Contact the nearest local government office to determine within which boundary the reserve is located and where you can vote.

Who cannot vote in a local election?

You cannot vote in a local election (as either a resident elector or a non-resident property elector) if you:

- have been convicted of an indictable offence and are in custody; or
- have been found guilty of an election offence, such as intimidation or vote-buying; or,
- do not otherwise meet voter eligibility requirements.

Do I need identification in order to vote?

Identification is not required where a local government uses a list of electors (voter's list) and you are already on the list. Identification is required if you are not on the list of electors, or if the local government does not use a list of electors.

Where identification is required and you are eligible to vote as a resident elector, you must have two pieces of identification that prove who you are and where you live – one piece must have your signature on it. Where identification is required and you are eligible to vote as a non-resident property elector, you must also provide the address or legal description and the title (or other proof of ownership) of the property you own. If there is more than one owner of the property, only one owner can vote with the written consent of a majority of the other owners.

Contact your local government for information on whether or not you will require identification and what forms of identification are accepted.

I live in one local government jurisdiction and I own property in another – can I vote in both jurisdictions?

Yes. You may vote in the jurisdiction where you live if you qualify as a resident elector. You may also be eligible to vote as a non-resident property elector in another municipality, regional district electoral area, school district or Islands Trust area if you have owned property in the other jurisdiction in which you intend to vote for at least 30 days before you register to vote.

I own more than one piece of property – can I vote more than once?

You may only vote once if you are an eligible elector and own two pieces of property in one municipality or regional district electoral area.

You may vote in both jurisdictions, if you own one piece of property in one municipality or regional district electoral area and a second piece of property in another.

I live in one local government jurisdiction but attend university in a different city, can I vote in both?

No. If you establish residency in an area away from your usual place of residence to attend an educational institution, you may choose to vote in one area – not in both.

I own a piece of property with someone else – can both of us vote?

No. Only one non-resident property owner may vote for each property. If you own a piece of property with another person(s), the majority of owners must designate – in writing – one owner as the non-resident property elector for that property. If you own property through or with a corporation, then no one is eligible to vote in relation to that property.

I own property with someone else and that person is living in the house – can both of us vote?

Yes. The person living in the house may vote as a resident elector because they live there. You are also eligible to vote as a non-resident property elector; however, you will still need the written consent of the other owner.

I own a company – do I get an extra vote in a local election?

No. There is no corporate or business vote in local elections. Voting rights are granted to citizens, on the basis of residency or property ownership. You cannot vote on behalf of a corporation, or as a non-resident property elector on behalf of a property owned wholly or partially by a corporation.

How do I register to vote?

You are already registered to vote in a local election if your local government is one that uses a voter's list for voter registration, and your name appears on the voter's list. You will not be required to show identification in order to receive a ballot if your name appears on the voter's list used by the jurisdiction in which you are voting.

Some local governments offer advance voter registration if they use a voter's list. You can also register to vote at a voting place. You must provide identification that proves your identity and where you live – one piece of identification must include your signature. Contact your local government for more detailed information about their registration procedures.

Do non-resident property owners register the same way?

Yes. You may register to vote before the local election with the local government where you own property if advanced registration is offered – or you may register at the voting place. You must provide identification that proves

your identity and where you live – one piece of identification must include your signature. You must also provide the address or legal description and the title (or other proof of ownership) of the property you own.

If you are one of two or more owners, you must also demonstrate – in writing – that you have the consent of the majority of all owners to vote on their behalf in the election. Contact the local government where you own the property for more detailed information about their registration procedures.

When are general local elections held?

General local elections are held every three years. **General voting day in 2011 is November 19.**

Can I vote before general voting day?

Yes. At least one advance voting day will be held in every jurisdiction between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on Wednesday November 9, 2011 – ten days before general voting day. Many local governments hold more than one advance voting opportunity.

Local governments may also hold “special voting opportunities” for eligible electors who may not otherwise be able to attend an advance voting opportunity or cast a ballot on general voting day. Special voting opportunities are most often held in hospitals, long-term care facilities, or other places where an elector’s mobility may be impaired. Contact your local government or school district to find out how you can vote in advance of general voting day.

How can I vote if I am absent from my community on advance and general voting days?

Some local governments will allow you to vote using mail-in ballots if you cannot physically attend a voting place or are unable to vote on advance and general voting days. Contact your local government to see if this option is available to you.

What if I need assistance to vote?

All local governments are required to make voting places as accessible as reasonably possible.

- You may request an election official bring you a ballot if you can travel to a voting place and find it difficult to get into the building or room where voting is taking place. This is called “curb-side” voting.
- You may ask an election official, friend or relative to help you if you are unable to mark your own ballot.
- If you need a translator, you may bring someone to assist you. The translator must be capable of making a solemn declaration that they can and will make the translation to the best of their ability.

Can I vote on the Internet or by phone?

No. The legislation does not allow for voting on the Internet or by phone.

Are there penalties for not following elections laws?

Yes. If you commit an election offence, such as advertising on general voting day or placing a campaign sign within 100 metres of a voting place, you could be fined up to \$5,000 and/or sentenced to up to one year in prison. You may also be prohibited from holding office and/or voting in local elections for up to six years. If you are convicted of a more serious election offence – such as vote-buying or intimidation – you could be fined up to \$10,000 and/or sentenced to up to two years in prison.

What can I do if I believe someone has committed an election offence?

Contact your local police department if you believe someone has committed an election offence. The police are responsible for conducting an investigation and recommending to Crown counsel whether charges are to be laid. Election offences are prosecuted through the judicial system. The Chief Election Officer is not responsible for candidate conduct and does not investigate alleged election offences.

How can I get more information about voting in local elections in British Columbia?

Contact your local government or school district for questions about voting where you live or own property. Address and phone numbers are listed in the blue pages of your local phone book.

For general questions about municipal, regional district or Islands Trust elections please call or write:

**Ministry of Community, Sport
and Cultural Development
Local Government Department
PO Box 9839 Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC V8W 9T1
Phone 250-387-4020
[www.cscd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/elections_](http://www.cscd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/elections_home.htm)
[home.htm](http://www.cscd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/elections_home.htm)**

For general questions about voting for school board trustees, please call or write:

**Ministry of Education
Governance and Legislation
PO Box 9146 Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC V8W 9H1
Phone 250-356-1404
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/trustee_election/welcome.htm)
[trustee_election/welcome.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/trustee_election/welcome.htm)**

This information is also available in French, Chinese and Pubjabi.