

Harassment and Safety Resources

During the general local elections process candidates and elections staff may find themselves the targets of potentially threatening behaviour.

Harassment comes in many forms, and it can be a crime. Criminal harassment includes repeatedly communicating with someone, repeatedly following someone from place to place, or engaging in threatening behaviour that makes that person fear for their safety or the safety of a family member. Harassing behaviour can happen either in-person or online, is frequently ongoing, and does not always include explicit threats.

Harassment is often done with the intention to intimidate, but the offence of intimidation differs from criminal harassment. Criminal intimidation is performing a prohibited act for the purpose of compelling or preventing a person from doing something they are lawfully allowed to do or abstain from doing. The prohibited act may include the use or threat of violence, persistently following someone, or depriving someone of their property.

The Province recognizes the importance of protecting candidates for local office, and local elections staff, from intimidation, threats, harassment, and violence. This resource guide provides:

- general information on services and programs provided by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG) and the Ministry of Attorney General, and
- a list of tips and resources to help candidates and elections staff feel safe while running for elected office or administering general local elections.

Candidates and elections staff should secure their personal online information, and only use professional accounts for sharing elections and campaign communications. It is recommended that people experiencing online harassment monitor and document the harassment, to aid in:

- reporting incidents to social media platforms and/or to law enforcement, or
- engaging in other legal action where a record of harassment and abuse can be helpful.

All individuals involved in general local elections deserve a safe and harassment-free environment.

General Information on Provincial Services and Programs

- PSSG supports over 400 victim service and violence against women programs across the province, including community-based victim services programs; police-based victim service programs; Stopping the Violence counselling programs; VictimLinkBC; outreach services; multicultural outreach programs; and prevention, education, advocacy, counselling and empowerment (PEACE) programs.
- A range of services are delivered by PSSG, including the Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP); the Victim Safety Unit; Victim Court Support Programs; the Restitution Program; the Intimate Images Protection Service; and the BC Family Information Liaison Unit (BC FILU).
- CVAP assists victims, immediate family members and some witnesses in coping with the effects of violent crime, including providing financial benefits to help offset financial losses and assist in recovery. More information about CVAP can be found at:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/bcs-criminal-justice-system/if-you-are-a-victim-of-a-crime/victim-of-crime/financial-assistance-benefits>.
- The Ministry of Attorney General is leading anti-racism initiatives through the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives. Key strategies include engaging communities through the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network and Racist Incident Helpline to provide them with the information, supports, and training needed to respond to and prevent incidents of racism.

Tips and Resources

1. Resilience BC: Anti-Racism Network

<https://www.resiliencebc.ca/report-support/report-a-hate-incident/>

The Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network connects communities with information, supports and training they need to respond to, and prevent, incidents of racism and hate.

Topics Covered:

- How to report a hate crime or hate incident.
- Resources and supports for victims.

2. Racist Incident Helpline

<https://racistincidenthelpline.ca/>

The Racist Incident Helpline is a confidential, toll-free service offering support and referrals to anyone who has experienced or witnessed a racist incident. The Helpline offers: emotional and peer support, information about community resources, referrals to local support agencies, counselling services, and assistance in reporting incidents to law enforcement.

How to Contact:

- Available weekdays 9AM to 5PM Pacific Time (PT) at 1-833-457-5463 (1-833-HLP-LINE).
 - Outside these hours, callers can leave a voicemail and receive a callback the next business day.
- Support is available in over 240 languages.
- Not intended to replace emergency services.

3. Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment fact sheet

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/human-rights/human-rights-protection/sex-discrimination-harassment.pdf>

This fact sheet was developed to provide general information on sex discrimination.

Topics Covered:

- What is sex discrimination?
- What is sexual harassment?
- Resources such as the BC Human Rights Clinic.

4. BC Government

(Webpage)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/bcs-criminal-justice-system/reporting-a-crime/what-is-a-crime/crime-examples/criminal-harassment>

(Information pamphlet on stalking/criminal harassment)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/bc-criminal-justice-system/if-victim/publications/hsh-english-stalking.pdf>

These provincial resources were developed to help people identify and respond to criminal harassment.

Topics covered:

- What is stalking (i.e., criminal harassment)?
- Signs of criminal harassment.
- Reporting to police.
- Ways to increase personal safety (including at work, on transit, on the internet, etc.)
- How to contact VictimLinkBC, a confidential information and referral service for victims of crime.
 - Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling or texting 1-800-563-0808 or emailing 211-VictimLinkBC@uwbc.ca.
 - Provides service in up to 150 languages.
 - Call VictimLink BC to locate a victim service program in your area, for assistance in formulating a safety plan for you and your family, or information on legislation and the justice system.

5. Department of Justice Canada

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/stalk-harc/har.html>

This federal booklet provides information on criminal harassment in Canada and tips on how to respond.

Topics covered:

- What is criminal harassment?
- What to do if you are being stalked or harassed.
- How the police can help and what kinds of information they need.
- Legal options (e.g., laying charges, peace bonds, restraining orders, protection orders).
- Ways to increase personal safety, including telephone and internet safety.

6. Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms contain safety and security tools such as blocking, muting, restricting or reporting to respond to and prevent harassment. Below are links to some of the major social media platforms and their safety and security recommendations -- including instructions on how to use privacy settings, and information on how to report abusive behaviour.

Facebook: <https://www.meta.com/safety/topics/safety-basics/tools/stay-safe/>

X: <https://help.x.com/en/safety-and-security>

Instagram: <https://help.instagram.com/377830165708421>

TikTok: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc>

Reddit: <https://support.reddithelp.com/hc/en-us/articles/360043071072-Harassment>

Discord: <https://support.discord.com/hc/en-us/categories/115000168351-Safety-Privacy-and-Policy>

7. Email Service Providers

Similar to social media platforms, email service providers have blocking and reporting functions that allow users to address harassment. Links to policy and support guides for Microsoft, Yahoo and Gmail are listed below:

Microsoft Abuse and Spam Reporting Policy (Section 3, Additional Resources)
<https://substrate.office.com/ip-domain-management-snds/Postmaster/Policies>

How to Block or Unblock Senders in Outlook
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-US/Outlook/mail/block-or-unblock-senders-in-outlook>

Gmail Guide to Managing Unwanted or Suspicious Emails
<https://support.google.com/mail/topic/3394657>

Yahoo! Guide to Avoiding or Reporting Threatening or Harassing Emails
<https://ca.help.yahoo.com/kb/SLN3403.html>

8. Hosting Companies.

Hosting companies own the digital space that is rented by website owners to make their websites accessible online. Hosting companies often have acceptable use policies that restrict clients from using their services to harass third parties. You can find out which company hosts a website by entering their web address on the [“Who is hosting this?”](#) website.

9. Tech Safety Canada

<https://techsafety.ca/>

Tech Safety Canada provides tech safety resources to support people experiencing, or vulnerable to, Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV).

Topics covered:

- Legal remedies for responding to TFGBV.
- How to preserve digital evidence.
- Tech safety planning.
- Online privacy and safety tips.

10. Intimate Images Protection Service

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/intimate-images/intimate-images-support>

The Intimate Images Protection Service provides coordinated support to people in B.C. who have had someone share (or threaten to share) their intimate images without their consent. The service offers: emotional support and resources, information about your legal rights and options, help applying to the Civil Resolution Tribunal, and assistance sending Intimate Images Protection Orders to online platforms and people who have shared your image without consent.

How to Contact:

- Confidential support is available weekdays 8:30AM – 4:30PM Pacific Time (PT) at 1-833-688-43681 or by email at protectyourimages@gov.bc.ca.
 - Contact information for after-hours crisis support is available here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/intimate-images/image-removal-resources#intimateimagescrisissupport>.