

August 18, 2026

Reference: 190870

All Police Services in British Columbia

**Re: 2026 General Local Elections**

The purpose of this letter is to provide information to police services in British Columbia about the upcoming General Local Elections and the potential role of police in responding to incidents or issues arising during such elections. We have every expectation that the local elections will run smoothly and without incident, and trust that the following provides clarity on any questions that police services may have.

**What are General Local Elections**

On Saturday, October 17, 2026, general local elections will be held across British Columbia for positions such as municipal councillors and mayors, regional district electoral area directors, islands trust trustees, and school board trustees. General local elections in British Columbia are held every four years with general voting day always falling on the third Saturday in October. Local governments must also offer at least one advance voting opportunity 10 days (Wednesday, October 7, 2026) prior to general voting day. A list of key dates can be found in Appendix 1. Local governments may offer additional voting opportunities if permitted by their local election bylaw. Dates and details related to such opportunities can be obtained by contacting the local Chief Election Officer (CEO) in your area.

General local elections must be run in accordance with the *Local Government Act* (LGA), the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* (LECFA), the *Vancouver Charter* (VC), the *Community Charter*, the *School Act*, and the local government or board of education's election bylaw, as applicable.

**Who is Responsible for General Local Elections**

Unlike provincial elections, local elections are not managed by one organization. Each local government is responsible for running its own local elections. Each local government appoints a local CEO, who makes a solemn declaration that they will faithfully and impartially perform their duties. Local CEOs have the power to do all things necessary for the conduct of the elections, including the hiring and management of election officials, securing voting places, maintaining the secrecy of the ballot, counting the ballots, and enforcing some election rules.

Elections BC, an independent office of the Legislature, is responsible for administering the campaign financing and election advertising rules in LECFA. These rules include requiring candidates, elector organizations, and third party advertisers to file prescribed disclosure statements, and requiring those election participants to include sponsorship information on election advertising.

While the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Child Care have responsibility for the local election framework for local jurisdictions, these Ministries do not have role in enforcement of local elections rules.

### **When Police May Be Contacted**

When members of the public have concerns about the conduct of an election, they are first encouraged to contact a local government's CEO. Typically, local CEOs will be able to manage and address most concerns and complaints that may arise. This might include challenges to a candidate's nomination or voter eligibility, improper placement of election signs, and maintaining order at voting places. For the most part, general local elections will not need any police involvement. However, there may be some circumstances where a CEO, election officials, or the public may request the involvement of police.

Local police may have a role in investigating alleged election offences under the LGA (or the VC, for the City of Vancouver), or in managing public order challenges that might arise at or near a voting place. Based on a complaint, it would be up to local police to determine if an investigation is necessary.

During local elections, police may also be contacted regarding threats towards public figures, including candidates and local elected officials. Election participants may encounter verbal/written/online threats, and harassment. Such matters may need to be investigated by the police and forwarded to the BC Prosecution Service for charge approval.

Specific examples of police intervention in recent years have included:

- Responding to intimidation and physical threats against CEOs;
- Responding to a campaigner that had been asked to leave a voting place and refused to do so;
- Being posted at a municipal hall or regional district office after close of voting on general voting day to ensure security of election ballots/election documents and voter tabulation machines;
- Investigating allegations of criminal harassment of a candidate;
- Investigating allegations of voter manipulation and vote buying; and
- Investigating possible fraudulent mail ballot voting registration and ballot tampering.

### **What are Election Offences?**

The LGA and the VC outline specific election offences. Vote-buying, intimidation, providing or distributing false information, fraudulently voting, interfering with ballots or ballot boxes, and advertising within 100 metres of a voting place on voting days are all examples of election offences under the LGA and the VC.

The time limit for initiating the prosecution of an election offence under the LGA or VC is one year after the date on which the alleged offence occurred. A person convicted of such offences may be subject to penalties. If an organization commits an offence, an officer, director, employee or agent who authorizes, permits, or acquiesces in the offence commits the same offence. A list of election offences under the LGA and the VC, penalties and legislative references can be found in Appendix 2.

Campaign finance offences, such as failure to file financial disclosure statements, are covered by LECFA. Prosecution of a LECFA offence may only be commenced with the approval of the BC Chief Electoral Officer. If the BC Chief Electoral Officer believes there are reasonable grounds that an individual or organization has contravened that Act or the regulations, they may refer the matter to the Criminal Justice Branch of the Ministry of the Attorney General for a determination of whether to approve a prosecution.

The time limit for initiating the prosecution of an offence under LECFA is one year after the facts on which the information is based first came to the knowledge of the BC Chief Electoral Officer. If an organization commits an offence under LECFA, an officer, director, principal official, employee or agent who authorizes, permits, or acquiesces in the offence commits the same offence.

### **How Are Complaints About Election Offences Dealt With?**

Investigation, prosecution, and resolution of election offences involves local government officials, police, Crown counsel, and, when necessary, the courts. The process is illustrated in Appendix 3 of this letter.

### **How to Obtain Further Information**

If you have any questions regarding election offences, please contact the Governance and Structure Branch, Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs, by email at:

[lggovernance@gov.bc.ca](mailto:lggovernance@gov.bc.ca) or by telephone at: (250) 387-4020.

You can also find election information on our website at: [General local elections - Province of British Columbia](#).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Faganello', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tara Faganello  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Local Government Division  
Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs

Appendices (3)

bcc: Glen Lewis, Assistant Deputy Minister and Director of Policing and Law  
Enforcement Services, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Jacqueline Davies, Executive Director, Serious and Organized Crime, Policing and  
Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Local government Chief Election Officers and Corporate Officers

## **Appendix 1**

### **Key Dates for the 2026 General Local Elections**

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <b>September 1</b>  | Start of nomination period for candidates.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>September 11</b> | End of nomination period. Declaration of candidates (if nomination period is not extended).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>September 15</b> | End of period to challenge: a candidate's eligibility, whether they have met the nomination requirements, or if they have provided an accurate usual name in the nomination documents. A challenge is dealt with in Provincial Court and can only be made by an elector in the municipality or electoral area of which the election is being held, another nominee in the same election, or the CEO.                                                          |
| <b>September 19</b> | Campaign period begins. Expense limits apply to candidates, elector organizations, and third party advertisers (these are enforced by Elections BC).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>September 21</b> | Declaration of election by voting or acclamation. For elections by voting, special and additional advance voting opportunities may occur any time after the declaration up to general voting on day on October 17, 2026. Special voting opportunities may be held in places such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, or other locations where voters' mobility may be impaired. Only designated voters can cast ballots at special voting opportunities. |
| <b>October 7</b>    | Required advance voting opportunity for eligible voters who may not otherwise be able to vote on general voting day. Local governments with populations greater than 5,000 are required to hold at least two advance voting opportunities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>October 17</b>   | General voting day and end of campaign period.<br><br>The official election results may not necessarily be announced on general voting day—the local CEO may announce preliminary results after concluding the ballot                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

count on general voting day and announce the official results at a later date.

**October 21**

Deadline for local CEOs to declare official election results by voting.

**October 26**

Deadline to apply to the Provincial Court for a judicial recount (can only be made by an elector in the municipality or electoral area in question, another nominee in the same election, or the CEO).

**30 days after  
results declared  
by local CEO**

Deadline to apply to the Supreme Court of British Columbia to invalidate a local election (can only be made by a candidate in the election, the CEO, or at least four electors of the municipality or electoral area in question).

**One year after  
alleged offence**

Deadline for initiating prosecution of an election offence.

## Appendix 2 Election Offences and Penalties Under LGA and VC

Specific election procedure and election offence provisions are outlined in Part 3, Division 18 of the LGA (or Part 1, Division 17 of the VC). These contraventions also apply to school trustee elections under section 48 of the *School Act*, to local trustee elections under section 6(3) of the *Islands Trust Act* and, in some cases, assent voting.

Initial investigation of campaign financing and advertising offences found in LECFA are the responsibility of Elections BC, and as such are not covered in this Appendix. Nor are other potential offences (e.g., criminal harassment) that are not defined in the LGA or VC.

| <b><i>Offence</i></b> | <b><i>Legislative Section</i></b>                                     | <b><i>Description</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vote Buying           | <i>Local Government Act</i> s. 161<br><i>Vancouver Charter</i> s. 123 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To pay, give, or procure “inducements” to an elector to vote or not to vote, to vote or not to vote for a particular candidate, or as a reward for having voted or not voted in that way.</li> <li>To procure or induce a person to procure the election or defeat of a particular candidate, or a particular result in an election, as well as to procure or induce a person to attempt to procure an elector to vote or not to vote.</li> <li>To accept inducements to vote or not to vote, or to vote for a particular candidate, or to accept an inducement as a reward for having voted or not voted in that way.</li> <li>Inducement includes “money, gift, valuable consideration, refreshment, entertainment, office, placement, employment or any other benefit of any kind.”</li> <li>Examples of vote buying include buying coffee for an elector or volunteering to drive an elector to a voting place in exchange for their vote <i>for a particular candidate</i> (these activities may be permitted provided there is no subjective intent of influencing another person’s voting behaviour (e.g. food provided at a candidate information event). See: <a href="#">Michetti v. Veach</a>, 2023 BCCA 317.</li> </ul> |
| Intimidation          | <i>Local Government Act</i> s. 162<br><i>Vancouver Charter</i> s. 124 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To intimidate an elector, by action or threat, to compel the elector to vote, to vote for or against a particular candidate or to refrain from voting.</li> <li>Intimidation means to use force, violence or restraint against a person; inflict injury, harm,</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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|                          |                                                                                     | <p>damage or loss on a person or property; otherwise intimidate a person; or to threaten to do any of those actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is also an election offence to punish an elector for voting or refraining from voting generally, or for voting for a particular candidate(s).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Nomination               | <p><i>Local Government Act</i> s. 163(1)<br/><i>Vancouver Charter</i> s. 125(1)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Falsely withdrawing a candidate from an election, distributing a false statement that a candidate has withdrawn or falsely withdrawing an elector organization's candidate endorsement, or consenting to nomination knowing they are not qualified to be nominated.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Voting                   | <p><i>Local Government Act</i> s. 163(2)<br/><i>Vancouver Charter</i> s. 125(2)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating in fraudulently voting, including voting when not entitled to, voting more than once in an election, obtaining a ballot in the name of another person, or failing to preserve the secrecy of a ballot.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Ballots and Ballot Boxes | <p><i>Local Government Act</i> s. 163(3)<br/><i>Vancouver Charter</i> s. 125(3)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tampering with ballots or ballot boxes, including supplying a ballot to another person, printing or reproducing a ballot or paper capable of being used as a ballot, taking a ballot out of a place where voting proceedings are being conducted, putting a paper in a ballot box that is not a ballot the person is authorized to use, interfering with voting machines, or destroying, taking, opening, or otherwise interfering with a ballot box/ballots.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |
| Voting Proceedings       | <p><i>Local Government Act</i> s. 163(4)<br/><i>Vancouver Charter</i> s. 125(4)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The following activities are not allowed within 100 metres of a voting place during voting proceedings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>canvassing or soliciting votes</li> <li>attempting to influence how an elector votes</li> <li>displaying a representation of a ballot marked for a particular result</li> <li>posting or displaying election advertising or any material that identifies a candidate or elector organization (unless authorized by the CEO)</li> <li>wearing a flag, badge (e.g., campaign button), or other thing that indicates the person is a supporter of a particular</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |



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|       |                                                                                     | <p>candidate or elector organization or voting result (e.g., bumper sticker on a vehicle parked within 100m of the voting place).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For clarity, these activities are only prohibited at a voting place when voting proceedings are being conducted.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Other | <p><i>Local Government Act</i> s. 163(5)<br/><i>Vancouver Charter</i> s. 125(6)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing false or misleading information when the Act requires or authorizes the individual to provide it.</li> <li>• Making a false or misleading statement or declaration when required to make that statement or declaration under the Act.</li> <li>• Inspecting or accessing election materials unless authorized by the <i>Local Government Act</i> or the <i>Vancouver Charter</i> or using the information for purposes not authorized under the <i>Local Government Act</i> or the <i>Vancouver Charter</i>.</li> <li>• Being present at a place where voting or counting proceedings are taking place, unless authorized by the <i>Local Government Act</i> or the <i>Vancouver Charter</i>.</li> <li>• Interfering, hindering or obstructing an election official or other individual in the performance of their duties under the <i>Local Government Act</i>, the <i>Vancouver Charter</i> or the <i>Local Elections Campaign Financing Act</i>.</li> </ul> |

### **Penalties**

Penalties are set out under section 166 of the LGA and section 126 of the VC.

A person who commits an act of vote buying or intimidation is liable to penalties including fines of up to \$10,000, imprisonment for up to two years, and/or disqualification from holding elected office in a local government for up to seven years.

A person or unincorporated organization (e.g., elector organization) who commits any other election offence under section 163 of the LGA (or section 125 of the VC) is liable to penalties including fines of up to \$5,000 and/or imprisonment for up to one year.

Furthermore, a person or unincorporated organization is not guilty of an election offence if the person or organization exercised due diligence to prevent the commission of the offence.

**APPENDIX 3**  
**POSSIBLE PROCESS STEPS FOR LGA or VC ELECTION OFFENCES AND PROSECUTIONS**

