



ELECTIONS BC

A non-partisan Office of the Legislature

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GUIDE FOR SCRUTINEERS

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Information for Scrutineers

The purpose of this guide is to provide general information to scrutineers regarding their role in the electoral process.

Should any conflict arise between what appears in this document and what is written in the *Election Act*, the Act shall be deemed to be the exclusive authority with respect to the conduct of an election in British Columbia.

General Information

Appointment

A candidate or official agent may appoint scrutineers to represent the candidate at each voting station within the candidate's electoral district. This appointment must be in writing and all scrutineers must carry their appointment forms with them. Only one scrutineer may be present in a voting place for each voting station at any one time. One additional scrutineer per voting place is permitted to be present.

Other scrutineers can be appointed to act as a runner/messenger. These are candidate representatives temporarily present at voting places to convey information to and from scrutineers. The maximum number of runners entitled to be present at a voting place is one per voting station.

Declaration of secrecy

Scrutineers must make a Declaration of Secrecy when entering the voting place. This declaration is contained in the voting book at each voting station, and is required of all scrutineers and voting officials to ensure the secrecy of the vote is maintained.

Identification

Scrutineers must have their appointment forms with them when at the voting places. All scrutineers will be issued a lapel badge by the Voting Officer at their assigned voting station. Scrutineers may write their own name on the badge, but not the name of the political party or candidate they represent. No other visible identification may be worn in a voting place. No campaign materials are permitted in voting places, or within 100 metres of voting places. Scrutineers must report to the Voting Officer before their shift begins in order to be sworn in and receive the lapel badge.

Voting by scrutineers

It is strongly recommended that scrutineers, who will be working on General Voting Day, vote at Advance Voting.

Scrutineers who wish to vote on General Voting Day at the voting stations where they are working, instead of at their assigned voting places, may cast an absentee ballot under either section 99 or 100 using a certification envelope.

Voting hours

Advance Voting is available from 12 noon to 9 p.m. (local time) on the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the week preceding General Voting Day.

On General Voting Day, voting takes place from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Pacific time).

No one is allowed to vote prior to the official opening time or after closing time. When the voting places close, only those voters who entered the voting place prior to 8:00 p.m. are permitted to cast their ballots.

Alternative Absentee Voting, either at the office of the District Electoral Officer or by voting package, is available during regular office hours from the time the district electoral office is established. Voters may vote at the district electoral office up until 4 p.m. (Pacific time) on General Voting Day.

Applications for voting packages must be made prior to 4 p.m. (Pacific time) on General Voting Day, and completed Alternative Absentee Voting packages **MUST** be received in the district electoral office by 8 p.m. (Pacific time) on General Voting Day.

Voter qualifications

To register as a voter, a person must meet all the following qualifications:

- 18 years of age or older on General Voting Day;
- Canadian citizen;
- resident of British Columbia for the six month period immediately preceding registration; and
- resident of the electoral district in which registration is sought.

Eligible voters who are not already registered can register in conjunction with voting at any voting opportunity.

Duties and Responsibilities

Responsibilities

Scrutineers are appointed to observe the voting, to ensure that the requirements of the *Election Act* are followed and to observe the counting of ballots to ensure that the counting is consistent and fair.

If the candidate provides the scrutineer with a Voters List, the names of those persons voting should be marked on the list by the scrutineer. This will assist the candidate in assessing voter turnout and will enable the scrutineer to monitor the voting.

If a scrutineer, for any appropriate reason, objects to a ballot being cast, the Voting Clerk should be asked to note the objection in the voting book.

Conduct in voting places

Scrutineers are present in the voting place as observers. Other than when a scrutineer presents an official objection, communication between scrutineers and voting officials shall only occur when there are no voters at the voting station.

At no time are scrutineers to interfere with the voting officials in the performance of their duties. Scrutineers are **NOT** permitted to handle any election documents, including ballots.

Cellular phones **must not** be used in voting places, and scrutineers must not engage in conversations of a political nature in voting places.

Scrutineers are requested not to park their personal vehicles at the voting place in order to ensure ease of access for voters.

Duties before the start of voting

Scrutineers assigned to the first shift on General Voting Day should report to the Voting Officer no later than 7:45 a.m. in order to take a solemn declaration of secrecy and receive their lapel badges.

Prior to the voting place being opened, scrutineers should ensure that the ballot box is empty and that it is then sealed so that it cannot be opened without breaking the seal. Scrutineers may wish to sign or otherwise mark the seal. Scrutineers may inspect the voting screens to ensure that a pencil has been provided.

Scrutineers must be seated a reasonable distance from the voting screen and the voting officials' table. This is to ensure that no conversation occurs between the voters and scrutineers, that the marking of the ballots is completely private, and that a voter does not address a scrutineer instead of a voting official.

The ballot

Each ballot has a duplicate number on the counterfoil and stub. The stub remains in the book and the counterfoil remains attached to the ballot until after the voter has marked it. A number corresponding to the voter's number on the Voters List is marked on the face of the stub and the counterfoil by the Voting Officer. These numbers are to ensure that ballots are returned to the correct ballot box. No number or identifying mark is placed on the portion of the ballot which is put into the ballot box.

The names of the candidates on an ordinary ballot are listed alphabetically by their surnames.

Voting procedures

When a voter enters the voting place, the voting official establishes whether the voter is a registered voter assigned to vote at that voting place. If the voter is a registered voter and is assigned to that voting place, the voter should be directed to the appropriate voting station.

To vote at their assigned voting station, voters must:

- be listed on the Voters List or complete an Application for Voter Registration;
- not have previously voted;
- if required, take the appropriate declaration; and
- otherwise meet the requirements of the *Election Act*.

To obtain a ballot, eligible voters will approach the voting officials and identify themselves. The voting official will locate the voter on the Voters List, or enter the voter's name in the appropriate section of the voting book, and ask the voter to sign the voting book opposite their name, residential address and voter number.

The Voting Officer will:

- announce the name and the voter number of the individual;
- mark the voter number of the individual on the stub and counterfoil of the ballot;
- remove the stub, leaving the counterfoil attached to the ballot;
- fold the ballot; and
- give the folded ballot with its attached counterfoil to the voter.

The Voting Officer directs the voter to the voting screen to mark the ballot. Voters are instructed to mark their ballots by using the pencil provided in the voting screen, making an “x” or a tick mark in the blank circle opposite the name of the candidate for whom the person wishes to vote.

When the voter returns the folded, marked ballot to the Voting Officer, the Voting Officer must confirm that the ballot is the one given to the voter by examining the numbers on the counterfoil.

The Voting Officer removes and discards the counterfoil, and either the voter or the Voting Officer puts the folded ballot in the ballot box.

Special situations

A voter who accepts the ballot, but refuses to mark the ballot and returns it to the Voting Officer is deemed to have voted. The unmarked ballot shall be placed in the ballot box, and will be rejected upon counting as unmarked.

If a voter spoils a ballot, it may be returned to the Voting Officer and a replacement obtained. The spoiled ballot is then set aside in a separate envelope. Spoiled ballots are not placed in the ballot box.

Voters who are unable to vote in their own electoral district may vote in any other electoral district under the provisions of section 98 (Special Voting), section 100 (General Voting Day Absentee) or section 101 (Advance Absentee). A write-in ballot and a List of Candidates are provided to these voters. A ballot cast under one of these sections is placed in a certification envelope bearing the voter's affidavit, and is not counted until Final Count in the district electoral office for the electoral district in which the voter is registered.

Voters who are unable to attend their assigned voting place on General Voting Day may vote at any other voting place in their electoral district (section 99). These voters must sign an affidavit, and their ballots are placed in certification envelopes. These votes are counted during Final Count in the district electoral office. An ordinary ballot is provided to the voter.

Voters needing assistance

People who are unable to mark a ballot because of a physical disability or difficulties with reading or writing can be assisted in marking a ballot. Voters needing assistance to vote may be assisted by an election official or an individual accompanying the voter. Candidates and candidate representatives are prohibited from assisting in marking the ballot. A template is available for use by visually impaired voters who wish to mark their own ballots.

Other than election officials, an individual may only assist one voter in an election unless those being assisted are members of the individual's family, in which case they may assist more than one. In order to assist a voter in marking a ballot, the assistant must first take a "Solemn Declaration of Individual Assisting Voter to Mark Ballot".

Duties at close of voting

The Voting Officer, following the close of voting, has the sole authority to decide whether to accept or reject a ballot.

Ballots must be rejected if any of the following apply:

- the ballot used is not one officially supplied
- the ballot is unmarked or voided
- the voter has written on or marked the ballot so as to possibly identify himself or herself
- the voter has marked the ballot for more than one candidate
- the intention of the voter is not clear.

Scrutineers should watch the sorting and counting of the ballots and make note of any ballots they object to. Only Voting Officers are permitted to handle ballots and other election documents.

Certification envelopes are **NOT** opened at the close of voting. These ballots are counted by the District Electoral Officer at Final Count. In a general election, this is held in the district electoral office 12 days after General Voting Day.

Following the ballot count, each scrutineer shall receive, upon request, a ballot account showing the votes counted for each candidate. Scrutineers should be satisfied that the ballots are put in their proper parcel envelopes and sealed. These envelopes are then placed in the ballot box which is sealed for delivery to the District Electoral Officer.

Election Advertising and Campaigning Restrictions

Campaign restrictions

There are certain restrictions relating to advertising and campaigning during voting periods and near voting places.

While Advance Voting or General Voting is being conducted at a voting place, a candidate's campaign must not conduct election advertising by means of a public address system or loudspeaker that is within hearing distance of the voting place.

On General Voting Day, a candidate's campaign must not conduct election advertising by publishing it in a newspaper or magazine or on radio or television, or agree to sponsor such advertising.

100-metre no campaigning zones

District Electoral Officer offices

During a campaign period (Writ to the end of voting on General Voting Day), a candidate's campaign must not post, display or disseminate, in or within 100 metres of the building where the office of the District Electoral Officer is located, any election advertising or any material that identifies a candidate, their party or their constituency association. An exception is made for materials authorized by the District Electoral Officer.

If any contravening material is posted or displayed, etc., within the 100 metre no-campaigning zone, the District Electoral Officer or another election official authorized by the District Electoral Officer may enter on the property where the materials are located and remove or cover or otherwise obscure them from view.

As Alternative Absentee Voting is being conducted at the District Electoral Officer's office, it is important that this 100-metre no-campaigning zone be enforced to ensure that voters are provided with a neutral environment in which to vote.

Advance and General Voting places

While Advance Voting or General Voting is being conducted at a voting place, there is a 100 metre no-campaigning zone around the building where the voting is being conducted.

Candidates are not permitted to be present at any place while voting is being conducted — except to vote. This means that candidates cannot visit voting places to thank their representatives, etc. Candidates must not be present at a District Electoral Officer's office while Alternative Absentee Voting is being conducted, unless there to conduct business with the District Electoral Officer.

Reminders

Scrutineers must not wear or carry any badge or insignia, that would identify them as a supporter of a candidate or a political party, other than that provided by the Voting Officer.

Scrutineers must be seated a reasonable distance away from the voting screen and the voting officials' table.

Scrutineers must not interfere with the voting process.

No campaign materials are permitted in voting places, or within 100 metres of voting places during voting hours.

Note: Should any difference of opinion arise between a voting official and a scrutineer, the matter may be directed to the District Electoral Officer for resolution. The resulting decision of the District Electoral Officer shall be final.

Questions?

For more information
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