

# Safe Voting Places - Communicable Disease Prevention Plan

August 4, 2022

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## Introduction

Voting places are staffed by election officials and are workplaces that operate for one day, with advance voting places being open for up to six days, and are open to the public to provide electoral services. Critical to Elections BC's ability to administer a safe election is this *Safe Voting Places Communicable Disease Plan* that outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures necessary to maintain business continuity while reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases in voting places.

This safety plan is aligned with the WorkSafe BC requirement for employers to have communicable disease prevention plans in place. This plan includes workplace policies to address:

- A description of the minimum safety measures that must be in place in each respective voting place and how workers can be kept safe in adjusted working conditions,
- who can be at the voting place, and,
- how to address illness that arises at the voting place.

This safety plan includes work protocols that minimize the impact of a potential positive case of COVID-19, and mean that if the protocols are followed the voting place does not need to be closed. These protocols ensure business continuity for the essential services provided in voting places during the administration of an election.

Voting places must be established and operate in accordance with current public health guidelines. At a minimum, this means the following measures must be in place:

- Identifying and **managing areas of crowding and congestion** in the workplace. Primary controls are ensuring adequate physical distancing throughout the voting place, adequate ventilation and indoor air circulation and barriers where physical distance is not possible.
- Staff must make an **oral declaration of health** to their supervisor each day based on [symptom criteria set by the BC CDC](#). Staff members who have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or [other](#)

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[communicable diseases](#), who have tested positive for COVID-19, or are required to [self-isolate](#) must not attend the workplace.

- **Appropriate signage** (supplied by Elections BC) must be placed at the entryway informing staff and visitors of the safety protocols in place and that entry is prohibited if a person is showing [symptoms of COVID-19](#). Additional signage should be placed as necessary in other work areas.
- **Physical distancing** of 2-metres/6-feet between individuals in the voting place is recommended and must be marked out in the voting place and in queuing areas outside.
- Election officials are required to **wear masks at all times** while working.
- **Hand sanitizer** is available for use by voters and election officials. Voters will be asked to sanitize their hands upon entry and exit, and election officials will sanitize their hands regularly throughout the workday.

## Risk Identification

Risks for the transmission of communicable diseases such as COVID-19 in traditional voting places include the following:

- **Direct transmission** via respiratory droplets in the air between:
  - voters standing in line
  - voters and the election officials who are serving them
  - election officials working in the voting place
  - scrutineers and election officials in the voting place
- **Indirect transmission** via respiratory droplets that collect in enclosed spaces when there is not enough fresh air or that have landed on high touch points.

The risk mitigation protocols set out below either modify procedures to eliminate the risk scenarios, or mitigate the risk of transmission through a hierarchy of protections.

## Risk Mitigation Protocols

This safety plan uses the hierarchy of protections recommended by the B.C. government and WorkSafeBC.

### **First-level protection (elimination/substitution): Avoid crowding and congestion at the voting place and ensure physical distance wherever possible**

Voting places perform functions that require staff to be present in the voting place and that the voting place be open to the public. Because voting is a constitutional right, the number of individuals voting at a voting place cannot be reduced. Rather, Elections BC's first-level protections for voting places focus on avoiding crowding and congestion at voting places, including measures to facilitate physical distancing in the voting place.

Elections BC's first-level protections are as follows:

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- Voting place selection criteria prioritizes locations with high occupancy limits, to maximize the amount of space within a voting place. High-ceilings (i.e., large volumes) are also prioritized.
- Voting place occupancy limits are calculated on a location-by-location basis. To avoid crowding and congestion, voters may at times be required to line up outside.
- Candidate representatives will be limited to observing voting processes from a designated area and may not move freely within the voting place.
- 2-metre/6-foot physical distancing markings are set out on the voting place floor using tape, and sufficient staff should be working at the voting place to assist with enforcing physical distancing.
- Capacity for mail-in voting has been increased, with a public information campaign to inform voters of this option.

## Second-level protection (engineering controls): Barriers, partitions and ventilation

Elections BC's second-level protections are as follows:

- After prioritizing physical space, voting place selection criteria prioritize locations with HVAC systems that maximize fresh air intake/exhaust of inside air.
- Sites with doors and windows that can be opened to ventilate the voting space are also prioritized.

## Third level protection (administrative controls): Rules and guidelines

Rules are in place to prevent infected individuals from entering the voting place, and to reduce the contact intensity of interactions within the voting place.

Elections BC's third-level protections are as follows:

- Staff must make an oral declaration of health to their supervisor each day based on symptom criteria set by the BC CDC.
- Staff and voters experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, who have tested positive for COVID-19, or who are required to self-isolate are not permitted to enter the voting place. Other voting arrangements will be available to these voters.
- Signage will be in place reminding voters of the above entry rules, as well as distancing requirements, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene requirements.
- All election officials must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Washrooms will be reserved for election official use; alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be available for voters.
- Sanitizing wipes are provided to staff to periodically sanitize their work stations and other high-touch surfaces in the voting place.

## Fourth-level protection: Personal protective equipment

Elections BC's fourth-level protections are as follows:

- Election officials are required to wear masks while working in the voting place.

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- Election officials may remove their masks temporarily to assist voters (e.g., for voters who read lips in order to communicate) if 2-metre/6-foot distancing can be maintained throughout the interaction.
- Elections officials must wear masks during in-person training.
- When choosing what mask to wear, staff must choose a mask with appropriate fit and filtration. This means that the mask:
  - fits tightly with no gaps
  - is made of three layers of fabric, including two layers of tightly-woven fabric, with a filter or filter fabric between layers.
- Election officials are not permitted to wear homemade or cloth masks on their own because these masks may not have adequate fit or filtration.
- Election officials must wear, at a minimum, a certified 3-layer medical mask when at work. Elections BC will provide a supply of certified 3-layer medical masks in the voting place. Election officials can also choose to wear their own equivalent mask.
- Elections BC strongly recommends that staff exceed the standard 3-layer medical mask by wearing a respirator mask such as a N95. Elections BC will provide a supply of N95 to election officials. Election officials can also choose to wear their own equivalent N95 masks.
- Candidate representative are strongly encouraged to wear masks while observing the conduct of voting in voting places.
- Voters may choose to wear their own masks when they come to vote and will not be asked to remove their masks while voting.
- Disposable masks are made available for voters to use in the voting place. Information Officers recommend but do not require voters to use masks.
- Gloves will be available in the voting place for election officials who choose to use them for certain tasks (e.g. sanitization routines).

## Cleaning and hygiene practices:

Elections BC's cleaning and hygiene practices are as follows:

- Hand sanitizer pump bottles are available at the voting place entrance and exit, and at voting stations. Voters are asked to sanitize their hands upon entering and before leaving.
- Election officials are instructed to sanitize their hands regularly throughout the day. Sanitizing instructions are included in training materials and quick reference guides.

## Training plan

Election official training will be updated to include information on communicable disease prevention, and the risk mitigation protocols set out above to ensure that staff administer voting safely within the voting place.

Orientation for election officials will cover the contents of this safety plan including:

- Cough and sneeze etiquette, hand washing

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- Physical distancing
- Staying home when sick
- Cleaning and hygiene requirements
- Use of masks
- Employee responsibility to follow safe work procedures and report any areas where protocols are not effective to their supervisor

Supervisory Voting Officers will provide a site-specific walk-through of the voting place in the morning before voting starts to identify:

- Entrances, exits, pathways
- Hazards
- COVID-specific protocols for common areas such as stairwells or hallways
- Location of signage and hygiene supplies