



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

2017 Elections

Guidance for Public Servants

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The time leading up to general elections can raise a number of questions for public servants:

- What are the key periods?
- Are the actions of government constrained?
- Are the actions of public servants constrained?
- What considerations govern these decisions?



Introduction

- Elections in BC are governed by a number of written and 'unwritten' rules.
- The landscape can be complex - diligence and caution are warranted leading up to a general election and, particularly, during the campaign, election and transition periods.
- We believe that if you understand and appreciate the requirements for each of the key periods, you can act with confidence to continue contributing to the proper functioning of government prior to and during the election.



Key Periods During the Election

- the 'pre-writ' period leading up to the election before the writs of election are issued;
- the 'writ' period – once the writs are issued commencing the campaign and election periods; and
- the transition to the incoming government.



Key dates for the 2017 elections

- 'Pre-writ' period – period preceding April 11, 2017;
- The 'writ' period begins on April 11, 2017 when the writs of election must be issued;
- The **campaign period** runs from April 11, 2017 to voting day on May 9, 2017;
- The **election period** runs from April 11, 2017 and ends on the date set for the return of the writ; and
- **Transition** to the incoming Cabinet begins after the election results are finalized.



1. The Pre-Writ Period

- The government of the day must :
 - plan for the constraints that apply in the election period; and
 - takes necessary action to ensure that necessary government operations – both routine and urgent can continue during the election period



2. The writ period

- Begins with the issuance of writs of election for each electoral districts. Writs issued on April 11, 2017 (Day 0).
- General election day set under the *BC Constitution Act*– May 9, 2017 (Day 28).
- Campaign period ends on Day 28 – general voting day.
- Election period generally 51 days long – ends after the date set for return of the writs – once results are confirmed.



3. Transition Period

- LGinC asks the leader of the political party that holds the confidence of the majority of the Legislative Assembly to form a government and become the Premier.
- Executive Council (Cabinet) established by OIC under the *BC Constitution Act*, made on the recommendation of the Premier.
- No specific time limit for forming the new Executive Council, but there is an expectation that the new Cabinet will be formed 'without unnecessary delay'.



Governing Principles

- Canada's Constitution – The Constitution Acts 1867 & 1982
- *BC Constitution Act*, RSBC 1996, c. 66
- Constitutional Conventions
- *Election Act*, RSBC 1996, c. 106
- *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* SBC 2000 c. 23



The 'Caretaker' Period

- Constitutional convention of 'responsible government'.
- Legislative Assembly is dissolved once writs are issued.
- Cabinet continues as executive government with the election in progress – in 'caretaker' role.
- The rationale for this convention is that, following dissolution of the government, there is no elected chamber to which government can be held accountable and the government cannot assume that it will command the confidence in the next Legislature.



Issues to Consider during the 'Caretaker' Period

- Specific issues arise including:
 - records management;
 - appointments and recruitment;
 - entering contracts and agreements;
 - government spending;
 - government communication; and
 - use of internet and social media.



Issues to Consider during the 'Caretaker' Period

- Government facilities and resources continue to be used only for official government business.
- Public servants continue to carry out their responsibilities in a non-partisan manner.
- If there is doubt, questions should be directed through supervisors to Ministry Executive.



What happens to the Legislative Assembly, Cabinet, Ministers, MLAs and ministerial staff during the election period:

- Cabinet continues in caretaker role – Ministers continue to hold portfolios.
- MLAs no longer hold office.
- Executive and ministerial assistants on leave without pay.
- Minister's administrative coordinators and support staff remain.



Deputy Ministers' roles

- During the 'caretaker' period, Deputy Ministers have a key role in ensuring the continuance of necessary government business.
- Deputy Ministers are accountable for ensuring that government facilities and resources continue are used only for official government business and that the public servants in their ministries carry out their responsibilities in a non-partisan manner during the 'caretaker' period.



What government can and cannot do during the election period

- Government operations continue – confined to necessary public business – either routine or urgent.
- Constitutional conventions require government to avoid implementing major initiatives that would bind an incoming government.
- Cabinet members are legally able to make ministerial decisions, in practice major actions and decisions are deferred.



Records and Information Transfer

- Deputy Ministers are responsible for the proper management of government records during the interregnum.
- Refer to the Recorded Information Management (RIM) manual and the RIM glossary for definitions of government records, non-government records, and MLA records.
- Three categories of records to consider:
 - Cabinet Records;
 - Personal and MLA records; and
 - Non-Cabinet government records.



Cabinet Documents

- Particular care must be taken to ensure Cabinet confidence is retained.
- Basic rule : Cabinet records must be kept confidential – they are not automatically accessible to a succeeding government of a different party.
- Control of Cabinet records is with the Cabinet Secretary during the interregnum and transition periods.
- Deputy Ministers in each Ministry are accountable for the proper management of Cabinet records during these periods.



Personal and MLA documents

- Ministers' administrative staff are responsible, under the direction of the Deputy Minister, for ensuring that government records are separated from the Minister's personal and MLA records prior to the interregnum.
- Personal and MLA records - personal in nature - not received or created as part of daily ministry business activities.
- MLA records include records created by a Minister while acting as an MLA.



Non-Cabinet Government Records

- Government information is defined in the new *Information Management Act*.
- The primary consideration in the management of government records during the caretaking period is ensuring confidentiality and security.
- Consider *FOIPPA*, the *Information Management Act*, Core Policy, and approved information schedules.



Contracts and Appointments

- Routine contracts can be entered and routine decisions made. No major contracts or 'milestone' decisions (those with significant cost or schedule implications).
- Non-OIC staff recruitment and placement within the public service continues as normal, within spending restrictions.
- Government appointments to boards, agencies and commissions that would normally be made after the date of dissolution of the Legislature are deferred until after the interregnum and transition periods.



Correspondence and FOIPPA

- Normal correspondence continues.
- References to post-election action are in terms of the 'incoming government'.
- Access to Information requests continue to be processed.



Advertising

- Government is permitted to continue to inform the public of available services during the campaign period.
- Be aware that there can be perception issues regarding what does and does not constitute election advertising.
- All communications requests must be approved by ministry GCPE Communications Director.



Use of Logo, Internet and Social Media

- Use of BCID is permitted in some circumstances. Logo affiliated with government programs may not be used during campaign period.
- Websites, except BC Laws, are generally frozen during interregnum – except to make corrections.
- Websites and social media accounts considered critical to public health and safety will continue during interregnum.
- Other postings must be considered on a case by cases basis and must be approved by the ministry GCPE Communications Director.



Policy decisions

- By convention new policy changes or projects are deferred.
- Major actions or decisions are deferred.
- No new policy initiatives, new contracts or undertakings to bind the incoming government are made.
- Ministers remain legally capable should urgent circumstances or matters in the public interest arise.



Policy decisions and appointments cont.

- Ordinary meetings of Cabinet, Treasury Board and Cabinet Committees are not held during the interregnum.
- Senior government executive plan for this period and identify issues that may unavoidably arise during the caretaker period.
- If issues arise unexpectedly, senior government executive will seek direction from the Cabinet Secretary.



Routine matters

- Officials and departmental resources continue to be at the disposal of Ministers for the purpose of their government duties.
- Ministers and staff must ensure that government resources are not used for campaign purposes.
- Vigilance as to the distinction between *official government business* supported by government resources, and *partisan political activities*.



Routine matters – in practice:

- In the election period, government should restrict itself – in matters of policy, expenditure and appointments – to activities that are:
 - Routine;
 - Non-controversial;
 - Urgent;
 - Reversible by a new government without undue cost or disruption; or
 - Agreed to by opposition parties (if consultation is appropriate).



What public servants can and cannot do during an election.

- Public servants are generally, depending on their role in government, not precluded from political participation.
- However, the impartiality of the public service is a cornerstone of Canadian democracy.
- This means that care is necessary in order to ensure that the public servant's rights to freedom of expression and association are exercised in harmony with the duties of employment and the standards of conduct for public servants.



Standards of Conduct provide guidance:

- Duty of loyalty – serve the government of the day to the best of one's ability
- Impartiality – must not introduce partisan politics into workplace or use their position to lend weight to expression of opinions
- Government resources must not be used in support of political activities – including confidential government information
- Employees must not engage in political activities during work hours or using government resources
- Conflicts of interest must be avoided



Standards of Conduct provide guidance:

- Employees may hold jobs outside government, carry on a business, receive remuneration from public funds for activities outside their position, or engage in volunteer activities provided it does not:
 - interfere with the performance of their employment duties
 - bring the government into disrepute;
 - represent a conflict of interest or create the reasonable perception of a conflict of interest;
 - appear to be an official act or to represent government opinion or policy;
 - involve the unauthorized use of work time or government premises, services, equipment, or supplies; or
 - gain an advantage that is derived from their employment.



Standards of Conduct provide guidance:

- Public servants can, outside of work and on their own time engage in political activity without compromising their neutrality.
- Care should be taken in use of personal social media not to blur the lines between professional and private lives.
- Public servants should not identify themselves as public servants or wear their uniforms or I.D. cards when canvassing, soliciting donations or attending public events.



Running as a Candidate

- Under s. 67 of the *BC Election Act*, an employee is entitled to leave without pay from employment to run as a candidate in an election.
- The candidate's employer must grant the individual a leave without pay in accordance with this section.
- Deputy Ministers review requests to ensure conflicts of interest do not exist between the employee's work and duties for the office to which nomination is sought.



Voting

- Employees are entitled to have 4 consecutive clear hours in order to vote.
- Leave from work only if there are less than 4 clear hours outside of working hours available to vote.
- Operational requirements must be considered in scheduling.
- If operational issues arise, employees may also take advantage of early polling opportunities prior to the date of election.



Conclusion

- If you have any doubt, don't hesitate to seek guidance from your Ministry Executive through your supervisor.
- We are confident that with the support of supervisors and senior ministry executive, you will be able to continue to act with integrity and support the proper functioning of government through the various periods leading up to the next general election in British Columbia and the transition to the incoming government.

For further information on legal issues arising in relation to the 2017 general elections, contact:

James N. Harvey, Legal Services Branch
Assistant Deputy Attorney General

Phone: 250 356 8800

E-mail: James.Harvey@gov.bc.ca

Privileged and Confidential

This document is confidential and contains information that is protected by solicitor client privilege. It is intended only for the use internally by the Government of British Columbia. Prior to any disclosure of this document outside of government, including in response to a request under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the Ministry in possession of this document must consult with the lawyer responsible for the matter to determine whether information contained in the document is subject to solicitor client privilege.

Cabinet Sworn In

Teaser

Premier Christy Clark and the Executive Council were sworn in today at Government House. Read the news release to learn more.

Article

The Premier and Executive Council were formally sworn in today at Government House. [Details about the Cabinet have been released](#), including:

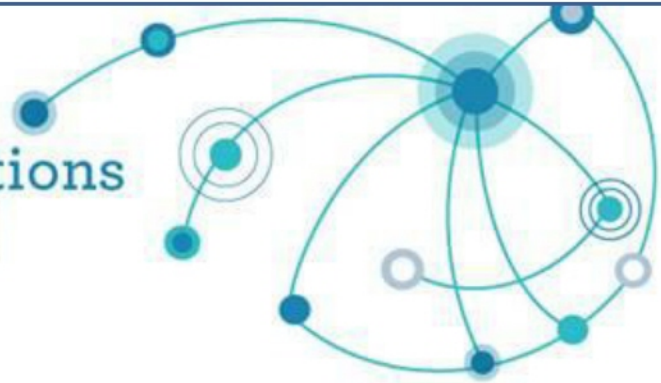
- Cabinet Ministers
- Parliamentary Secretaries
- Ministry responsibilities

Tags: Office of the Premier, Election, Gov 101

Sidebar: Insert hp image



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Post-Election Update – Coming Soon

Hello,

We've received a few questions about communications related to the election and what it means for employees. We are in the process of drafting an article that will be posted to @Work shortly (hopefully later today) – so stay tuned! We'll email you again once this is posted, and would appreciate you sharing this out.

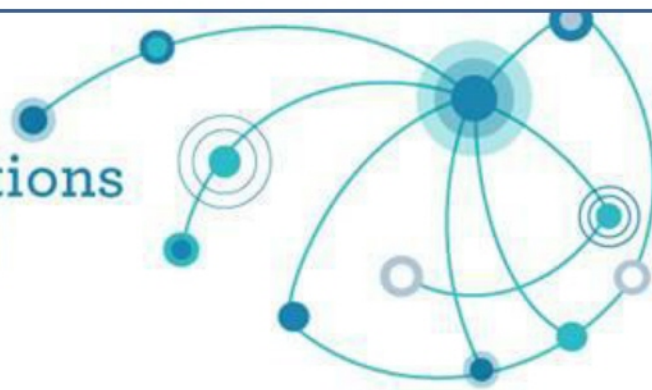
Thank you,
Susan



Where ideas work



Communications
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Post-Election Update – Now Live on @Work

Good morning,

Further to our note yesterday, you can now find the [post-election update article](#) on @Work. Please share with your ministry employees.

Thank you,

Susan



Where ideas work

Election 2017: Your Guide

Teaser:

British Columbia's 41st provincial general election is on May 9. Learn what this means for you as a BC Public Service employee.

Article:

On May 9, British Columbia will hold its 41st provincial general election. For BC Public Service employees, this is a time of increased diligence and sensitivity in terms of our day-to-day work, whether it's how we manage records, run hiring competitions, enter into contracts and much more.

Use the infographic below to explore how the election process and timeline works, and to find what you need to know about your role and responsibilities both before and after General Voting Day. Click on a term to read about it in the right-hand scroll bar, or use the scrolling bar to browse all the relevant information.

Insert infographic.

Sidebar:

The Voice of the Public Servant

The election period is also a time of increased awareness in terms of how we communicate, both in person and online. Look out for our next Election 2017 article concerning impartiality, social media, and how these tie in to the [Standards of Conduct](#).

Tags: Election, Gov 101

Election 2017: Corporate Communications

Key Dates:

- March 31: Government communications blackout begins
- April 11: Writs are issued
- May 9: General Voting Day
- May 10: Government communications blackout ends
- May 31: Return of the writs

The incoming government will be sworn in “without unnecessary delay,” i.e. as soon as possible following return of the writs and confirmation of MLAs.

Key Tactics:

February 17: @Work launch article featuring interactive infographic



- Employees will be able to explore the different periods, timeline events and responsibilities by clicking on the corresponding term or image.
- Information concerning responsibilities will include video excerpts to nicely capture a summary in 2-3 minutes, and keep things engaging and interactive.

Key Tactics (cont'd):

March 10: @Work Election quiz

- A quick and fun re-cap of the information found in the infographic

Late March/early April: @Work Video article featuring DM Lori Halls

- How the Standards of Conduct and oath of employment tie in to the election
- What it means to be non-partisan
- How use of social media, in particular, should be executed with care

Early June: Executive Message from Deputy to the Premier

- Acknowledges the election result and offers clarification concerning any changes or actions required once government is transitioned

Corporate Communications during the Election Period

Things to note:

- Activity on the @Work site will be minimal
- Focus will be on “lighter” content such as our Take 2 series
- Nothing can be posted that could be perceived to be a promotion or commentary on government’s programs or policies
- The BC Public Service Twitter account will remain inactive during this time
- As usual, all employee comments and posts on the site will be monitored to ensure they adhere to the Standards of Conduct and @Work Terms of Use
- Group admins will receive guidelines to help them monitor and plan content

High-level Summary of “Dos and Don’ts”

DO...	DON'T...
Ensure you consider the communications activities you have planned between now and March 31, and plan to have anything essential completed before this date.	Have any new websites or web pages go live after March 31. No new content should be added to existing pages - correcting spelling or misinformation is permitted.
Let all employees who might be responsible for posting or maintaining online content know about the blackout/limitations that apply from March 31. Put a procedure in place for any queries/approvals re. new content.	Add items such as a new button to a web page. Even this is considered outside the scope of “exceptions” when it comes to updating web content.
Get approval from your ministry GCPE Communications Director before posting anything you feel is exempt from the blackout.	Post, publish, display or announce anything that could be perceived as a promotion of government priorities, services, etc.
Remind employees about the @Work Terms of Use and BC Public Service Standards of Conduct, to be kept top of mind when using the site.	Withhold information critical to public health and safety. This type of information is exempt from the communications blackout and can proceed, with the appropriate approvals.



Questions?

Thank You

Election Infographic – Pop-up Content

Timeline pop-ups:

The Speech from the Throne

- Read by the Lieutenant Governor, the [Speech from the Throne](#) introduces a new session of parliament.
- The speech typically takes place in February, one week prior to Budget Day. In 2017, the Speech from the Throne will be February 14.
- The speech offers a broad overview of the government's agenda for this session of the Legislative Assembly.

Budget Day

- [Budget Day](#) is legislated to occur on the third Tuesday in February each year. In 2017, this will be February 21.
- The Minister of Finance presents the budget, outlining the financial plan for the province over the next three years.
- [Estimates](#) are also presented at the same time, but are debated over a longer period.

Pre-Writ Period

- This is the period leading up to the issuing of the writs, or election day 0, on April 11.
- This is a time of increased diligence, when action is taken to ensure routine government operations will be able to continue during the Interregnum Period.
- Major items that could arise after the issuing of the writs are anticipated and brought forward for consideration by Cabinet before the Writ Period begins.

Government Communications Blackout

- As of March 31, government communications activities will be limited to public health and safety, statutory items, and responses to the public.
- This blackout applies to advertising, social media, websites, public engagement, publications and informational materials.
- The blackout continues throughout the Interregnum Period until the post-election transition period is complete. For more information, [view GCPE's guidelines].

Day 0: Writs are Issued

- A writ is a formal order calling for an election to be held in an electoral district. The writs are issued on day 0 of the 51-day election period.
- There are multiple writs, since a writ has to be issued for each electoral district in the province. In 2017, this means 87 writs will be issued and, subsequently, returned.
- The issuing of the writs signifies the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly. Cabinet members cease to be MLAs, but do not cease to be ministers since the executive branch must continue to function even during an election period.

Campaign Period

- The Campaign Period begins with the issuing of the writs on April 11.
- The Campaign Period runs until the close of voting on General Voting Day (May 9).
- Certain rules apply for candidates during the Campaign Period, concerning advertising, expenditure, and how and where campaign activities can be held.

Election Period

- The Election Period begins with the issuing of the writs on day 0 (April 11).
- The Election Period is typically 51 days long, running until the return of the writs on day 50 (May 31).

Interregnum Period

- The Interregnum Period is the “gap between governments” – the period from when the Legislative Assembly is dissolved until the incoming government is established.
- It typically runs from the day the writs are issued until the day the writs are returned. In 2017, this will mean the Interregnum Period runs from April 11 to May 31.
- It cannot be assumed that the same government will still be in office following the election, so during the Interregnum Period, the outgoing government acts in “caretaker mode,” avoiding any major decisions or changes that would bind the next government.
- There are a number of issues to be aware of in terms of what government can and can’t do during this time. As a public service employee, you must ensure you maintain the [standards of conduct](#) and fulfil your responsibilities in a non-partisan manner. More information about your specific responsibilities can be found in this infographic.
- These responsibilities do not disappear as soon as the new government is announced. Public service employees must continue to exercise extra diligence and caution during the period of transition to the incoming government.

Advance Voting

- Advance voting at physical advance voting locations is available for anyone wishing to cast their vote ahead of General Voting Day (May 9).
- Advance voting takes place on the Saturday and Sunday two weeks before General Voting Day, and also on the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the week before General Voting Day. In 2017, these dates are April 29 and 30, and May 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- There are also options available for absentee voting and special voting. See the [Elections BC site](#) for more information.

Day 28: General Voting Day

- General Voting Day takes place on day 28. In 2017, this is Tuesday, May 9.
- This is the day on which most people will vote for the MLA in their electoral district.
- Once the polling stations close at 8 p.m., the ballots are counted to determine preliminary results.

Preliminary Results Announced

- General voting is closed at 8 p.m. on General Voting Day. Once voting is closed, an initial count of the ballots in each electoral district is completed.
- Preliminary results for each electoral district are released later the same evening.
- These preliminary results include ballots cast from within the electoral district in question, for both advance and general voting.

Final Count

- The final count takes place over three days, beginning 13 days after General Voting Day. In 2017, this will be May 22-24.
- The final count includes all of the ballots not considered as part of the initial count, including those that were cast by voters who voted outside of their electoral district, or by mail.

Judicial Recounts

- After the results from the final count for each district are announced, there are six days in which an application can be made for a judicial recount.

- If there are no judicial recounts, the writs of election are returned on day 50 (May 31).

Day 50: Return of the Writs

- Following the count of all votes, including any judicial recounts, the writ of election for each district is returned to the Chief Electoral Officer.
- There is one writ for each electoral district – in 2017, there will be 87 writs returned.
- The date set for the return of the writs is day 50 (May 31).

MLAs Confirmed

- Following the final count and any judicial recounts, the writs are returned to the Chief Electoral Officer.
- As soon as possible after the writs have been returned, the Chief Electoral Officer prepares a report that outlines the individuals elected to serve as MLAs and delivers this to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.
- This process effectively confirms which MLAs have been elected.

Transition Period

- Following the confirmation of the election results, it is time to transition the incoming government into office.
- The Lieutenant Governor asks the leader of the political party that holds the majority to form a government and take on the role of Premier.
- The Premier then recommends the make-up of the Cabinet, which is established via Order in Council.
- There is no time limit for forming the new Executive Council, but the expectation is that it will be formed without “unnecessary delay” – it happens pretty quickly following the election.

Responsibilities pop-ups:

During the election period, government should not conduct any activities that are controversial, non-routine, and that could not be reversed by a new government without undue cost or disruption.

Key areas of focus:

Records Management

- Deputy Ministers have custody of all the records in the ministry, including those from the Minister’s office.

- No BC Public Service employee other than Deputies, Associate Deputies and Cabinet Operations should be in possession of Cabinet documents at the point the writs are issued.
- Non-Cabinet records must be diligently managed, and government must still respond to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) requests.
- Check out this excerpt of Bobbi Plecas discussing care of records during an election:
[Timecode: 10:07 to 13:16]

Contracts

- No major new contracts are to be signed during the election period.
- Routine contracts and rollovers can still be entered into, and routine decisions made.
- Ministries may put extra checks or approvals in place to manage contracts during this period of increased scrutiny.
- Check out this excerpt of Bobbi Plecas discussing contracts in relation to the election:
[Timecode: 13:30 to 14:58]

Appointments and Hiring

- No appointments are made to agencies, boards or commissions during the election period. Forward planning should take place to renew appointments before the writs are issued
- Routine hiring can still continue, whether you are mid-competition at the point the writs are issued or needing to fill a new/vacant position.
- Check out this excerpt of Bobbi Plecas discussing appointments and hiring during an election:
[Timecode: 15:01 to 16:08]

Correspondence and FOIPPA

- Normal correspondence continues, although the Minister won't be signing anything.
- This is a time of heightened sensitivity, so you should notify your supervisor if you are contacted by an MLA's office, a Ministerial Assistant, or receive any other contact that is out of the ordinary.
- During this period, you must continue to respond to FOI requests as you normally would.
- Check out this excerpt of Bobbi Plecas discussing care of records during an election:
[Timecode: 16:12 to 17:14]

Advertising, Internet and Social Media

- All of these activities should "go silent" insofar as possible during an election period.
- Statutory advertising, and internet and social media activity relating to public health and safety, are the exception and may continue.

- Social media feeds must be approached with extreme caution. Nothing that could be perceived as partisan can be posted – this includes posting information about a government program.
- No new websites or web pages should go live during the election period. Updating web content is restricted to fixing spelling errors or correcting information already posted.
- Check out this excerpt of Bobbi Plecas discussing advertising, internet and social media during an election:
[Timecode: 17:16 to 19:32]

Policy Decisions

- No new policy decisions are to be announced during the election period.
- Policy decisions can be made until the point that the writs are issued, but even during the pre-writ period leading up to this, extra caution must be exercised.
- Forward planning should take place to ensure major policy changes or decisions are handled well before the election, or deferred until the incoming government has transitioned in.
- Check out this excerpt of Bobbi Plecas discussing policy decisions during an election:
[Timecode: 19:43 (but use image available from 19:47) to 20:38]

How Elections Work: <http://www.elections.bc.ca/index.php/youth-participation/how-elections-work/>

Time Off to Vote: <https://gwww.gov.bc.ca/reference/gov101/elections> (with anchor to General Voting Day information on this page)

How Government Works: <https://gwww.gov.bc.ca/reference/gov101>

[*add link to pre-election article before sending**](#)

Dear group admins:

As you know, the election campaign period is quickly approaching.

Traditionally, all government communications are shut down or severely limited during the election period, and this year is no exception.

Between March 31 and May 10, all Government of B.C. advertising, communications, internet/web updates and social media and public engagements will be limited to public health and safety, responding to the public regarding services and statutory advertising.

Because @Work is an internal employee-only intranet, it will continue to publish, and your blogs and group content are still welcome. However, community content may not be moved to the front page as often, and your content must not include anything that could be perceived as a promotion of government priorities, programs, services, policies, etc.

It is important to remember the [@Work Terms of Use](#) when posting and commenting on the site, and to remember that all posts must be in keeping with the Standards of Conduct, particularly with regard to impartiality and political activity. For more information on impartiality, see [this article](#) from @Work.

Please get in touch with me directly if you have questions or concerns.

Many thanks,

Jill Bryant

Community Manager

GCPE Directors and Managers

Election Communications Guidelines for Government Communicators

The campaign period of an election lasts 29 days including General Voting Day. The campaign period runs from April 11, 2017 to May 10, 2017 (the day after General Voting Day May 9, 2017) (Elections BC).

Based on previous practice, and to ensure strict compliance with guidelines, all Government of B.C. advertising, communications, internet/web updates and social media and public engagements will be limited to public health and safety, responding to the public regarding services and statutory advertising as of **March 31st, 2017**. All other communications requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Advertising:

Advertising is any paid or in-kind informational activity including print, radio, TV, outdoor displays or internet. All advertising falls into two categories—"Informational" or "Statutory":

- "Informational" advertising provides information about government priorities, programs, services or policies which are *not* required by statute, regulation or policy. Out of an abundance of caution, "Informational" advertising is not permitted during the election period.
- "Statutory" advertising is required by statute, regulation or policy. "Statutory" advertising is permitted during the above period.

Distribution of advertising materials during the election period must be approved by the ministry GCPE Communications Director and Executive Director, Marketing and Communications Support Services.

Communications Materials:

Communications materials are also divided into two categories, "Informational" and "Statutory." "Informational" materials and services are any activities or products that are used to inform audiences, or raise awareness about a particular program, service, policy or issue. These may include (but are not limited to) publications, presentations, brochures, posters, videos, pins, buttons, coffee mugs, flags, signs or services, including those provided by a media relations or public relations contractor such as strategic planning, media relations, graphic design, video production, etc.

Generally, distribution of "Informational" material is not permitted during the election period.

Distribution of communications materials during the election period must be approved by the ministry GCPE Communications Director.

Internet:

New internet websites /web-pages should either go live **before 1:30 p.m., March 31, 2017** or after May 10, 2017. The only exception for website changes is for fixing spelling errors or correcting information.

Any other postings to internet websites during the election period must be approved by the ministry GCPE Communications Director.

Social Media/ Public Engagements:

If your ministry has a program area that uses social media or is conducting a public engagement, we ask that you communicate these guidelines to them and inform them that they are not allowed to publish content that may be perceived as promotion of government priorities, programs, services, policies, etc. This includes all consultation be it multi-year or ongoing.

However, public feedback can still be accepted, but no new promotion or engagement can occur. The only exception is for emergency or public health or safety purposes, which must be coordinated with the respective GCPE Communications Director and the Executive Director, Communications Support Services, with Government Communications and Public Engagement.

Please note: Websites and social media accounts considered critical to public health and safety will continue during the election period. These accounts are: Drive BC, Emergency Info BC (including PreparedBC and emergency preparation accounts) and Wildfire Info. All other accounts will be considered on a case-by-case basis via the ministry Communications Director.

FAQ's:

In the case of the Ministry of Health / Health authorities – how do these rules impact ongoing marketing efforts to create awareness about the Opioid crisis?

This is a public health emergency – and ongoing efforts to communicate a broader public health message may continue up to, and through the writ period. However, all marketing materials must be service/program focused – and in no way convey broader support of the government.

What about logo recognition with partner programs?

The BCID may be used to recognize a partnership with the Government of B.C. for programs run by third parties provided that the logo recognition is required to fulfill a contractual agreement that was in place prior to the election period. Logos affiliated with government programs may not be used. Logo recognition with the BCID is permitted where other partners/sponsors are recognized, such as signage or collateral material, however the BCID should not be included in any advertising activities.

What about international marketing? I'm scheduled to attend a trade event in Asia, can I bring my usual promotional materials? What should I avoid?

Advertising during the election period is not permitted. However, due to the timing and logistics of these events, please contact Mary Dila for review on a case by case basis.

What about news releases, Information Bulletins, photos and video?

Communications is suspended during the election period. There will be no news releases, IBs etc. Any photos or video collected cannot be distributed. The only exception is for messaging related to the **health and safety of the public**.

My ministry would like to have a button added to our ministry homepage, can we do that?

Unfortunately, no. Websites are "frozen" during the election period. The only exception is for spelling errors and fixing incorrect information.

A program area in my ministry would like to launch a new section on the website. It's a great project with positive benefits to the community and won't be controversial. Can we quietly launch it?

The same applies as above. Even if a project is very worthy and has good ramifications for BC, it can't be launched via a website or using communications materials, social media or advertising until after the election period.

A program area in my ministry has a social media account with a campaign for engagement that ends May 1. They've been promoting that date and the engagement quite heavily and they feel it will impact their effectiveness. Can they continue to communicate using social media?

Unfortunately, no. In a case like this, we advise telling program areas to have a plan in place to let their followers know that the election period is coming up and they will be unavailable to communicate at that time. However, if they receive a direct question during that time (e.g. dollar amount, request for help/services) they are able to respond. In all other instances, they are asked to refrain from using social media to promote an idea/issue/engagement, etc.

What happens if there is an emergency or natural disaster?

The only exception for use of social media during the election period is for public health and safety. For that reason, Drive BC, Emergency Info BC (including the PreparedBC and emergency preparation accounts) and Wildfire Info will remain active. If a natural disaster or emergency situation were to occur, BCGovNews and the above mentioned social media accounts will actively respond. Other government social media accounts assist by retweeting the emergency related information only.

GCPE Directors and Managers

Election Communications Guidelines for Government Communicators

The campaign period of an election lasts 29 days including General Voting Day. The campaign period runs from April 11, 2017 to May 10, 2017 (the day after General Voting Day May 9, 2017) (Elections BC).

Based on previous practice, and to ensure strict compliance with guidelines, non-paid communications including events, news releases and social media may continue until the issuance of the writs, **April 11th, 2017**. In taking an abundance of caution, Government of B.C. advertising (informational) will cease **March 31st, 2017**.

After April 11, 2017, public communication will be limited to public health and safety and statutory advertising. All other communications requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Advertising:

Advertising is any paid or in-kind informational activity including print, radio, TV, outdoor displays or internet. All advertising falls into two categories—"Informational" or "Statutory":

- "Informational" advertising provides information about government priorities, programs, services or policies which are *not* required by statute, regulation or policy. Out of an abundance of caution, "Informational" advertising is not permitted during the election period.
- "Statutory" advertising is required by statute, regulation or policy. "Statutory" advertising is permitted during the above period.

Distribution of advertising materials during the election period must be approved by the ministry GCPE Communications Director and Executive Director, Marketing and Communications Support Services.

Communications Materials:

Communications materials are also divided into two categories, "Informational" and "Statutory." "Informational" materials and services are any activities or products that are used to inform audiences, or raise awareness about a particular program, service, policy or issue. These may include (but are not limited to) publications, presentations, brochures, posters, videos, pins, buttons, coffee mugs, flags, signs or services, including those provided by a media relations or public relations contractor such as strategic planning, media relations, graphic design, video production, etc.

Generally, distribution of "Informational" material is not permitted during the election period.

Distribution of communications materials during the election period must be approved by the ministry GCPE Communications Director.

Internet:

New internet websites /web-pages should either go live **before 1:30 p.m., April 11, 2017** or after May 10, 2017. The only exception for website changes is for fixing spelling errors or correcting information.

Any other postings to internet websites during the election period must be approved by the ministry GCPE Communications Director.

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If your ministry has a program area that uses social media or is conducting a public engagement, we ask that you communicate these guidelines to them and inform them that they are not allowed to publish content that may be perceived as promotion of government priorities, programs, services, policies, etc. This includes all consultation be it multi-year or ongoing.

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Memorandum

Government Communications and
Public Engagement
Communications Support Services

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Post-Election Update

Teaser

Now that general voting day has been and gone, learn more about the preliminary results and what they mean.

Article

The provincial general election took place on Tuesday, May 9th and now the rest of the electoral process unfolds. According to the preliminary results released by Elections BC for each of B.C.'s 87 ridings (or electoral districts), the counts are:

- BC Liberals elected in 43 ridings
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- BC Green Party elected in three ridings

Finalizing the election results

The preliminary results are based on the [initial count](#) and do not include [absentee ballots](#), which Elections BC last counted at 176,104. The process for conducting the final count and confirming who will be forming a government is as follows:

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For more information about the preliminary voting results, visit [Elections BC](#).

What happens in the meantime?

During the time period before final election results are confirmed by Elections BC, the executive council of government continues. Cabinet ministers (including those that did not seek re-election or who were not re-elected) remain in their positions as caretakers until a new executive council is sworn in.

Government activity is typically very limited during this time as new policy and legislative work awaits the new executive council. However, on issues such as public and environmental health and emergency management, the public can expect the government's full attention to such matters.

To learn more about the general provincial election process and how it affects the public service, check out [Election 2017: Your Guide](#).

Tags: Election, Gov 101

Sidebar:

Insert hp image

Election 2017: Conduct

Teaser

In the run-up to the election, Deputy Minister Lori Halls reminds us why it's important to keep the Standards of Conduct top of mind.

Article

The [2017 provincial general election](#) takes place on May 9. Chances are that you'll have some questions about your role as a BC Public Service employee, and how to effectively interpret the [Standards of Conduct](#) when you're trying to take an active interest in the political landscape. Can we have political discussions with our colleagues in the workplace? What should we bear in mind when using social media? And what if we want to be actively involved in a political campaign, or even run as a candidate?

In the video below, Deputy Minister Lori Halls discusses some of the key considerations when balancing our personal and professional conduct and viewpoints, including:

- Understanding what it means to be impartial and non-partisan.
- Keeping the expression of political views separate from work.
- Upholding the Standards of Conduct while participating in political activities.

Embed video: <https://youtu.be/HUANopCE7nw>

Tags: Election, Standards of Conduct, ethics, integrity

Sidebar:

Insert hp image

Did You Know?

Impartiality in your role as a BC Public Service employee means serving the government of the day in a neutral and unbiased manner. It means putting the interests of the government as your employer ahead of your own private interests in relation to your duties and responsibilities as a public servant.

Being **non-partisan** means exercising that same neutrality and objectivity when it comes to politics, conducting yourself while in the workplace, or while representing the BC Public Service, without affiliation or bias towards a particular political party or opinion.

Related Content:

[Election 2017: Your Guide](#)
[@Work Terms of Use](#)
[Gov 101: Impartiality](#)

Time Off to Vote

Teaser

If you're working on general voting day (May 9), make sure you understand the provisions in place for you to get out and vote.

Article

On **Tuesday, May 9**, British Columbia will hold its 41st general election. If you're a Canadian citizen, over the age of 18, and have been a resident of B.C. for the past six months, you're entitled to cast your ballot and have your voice heard!

Casting your vote

So how do you go about casting your vote if you're working on May 9? Well, under the provincial *Election Act* and our collective agreements, employees are entitled to have sufficient time off in order to vote. Specifically, employees are allowed four consecutive hours while polls are open (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) in which to go and vote.

It's important to understand that in most cases, this won't mean four hours of paid leave. The amount of paid leave depends on an employee's work schedule in relation to when the polls open and close. Employees will be allowed the necessary paid time off so that four consecutive hours are available to go and vote either before or after work. For instance, an employee whose shift ends at 4:30 p.m. may take up to a half hour of paid leave to have four consecutive hours to vote before the polls close at 8 p.m.

An employee who has already voted at an advance poll, or whose schedule allows them four consecutive hours to vote without taking time off work while polls are open, is not entitled to a paid leave of absence.

Talk to your supervisor

Scheduling time off to vote will need to take operational requirements into account. If you need to take time off work in order to vote, discuss this with your supervisor in advance of general voting day.

For more information about the voting process, including locations, dates and times, visit [Elections BC](#). If you have questions concerning time off to vote, contact [MyHR](#).

Tags: Election, Gov 101

Sidebar:

Insert hp image

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Time Off to Vote

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Voting results

Posted: May 5, 2017 - 2:30pm by Employee News

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Tags: Election Gov 101



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- > [Election 2017: Your Guide](#)
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Posted: April 5, 2017 - 1:00pm by Employee News

The 2017 provincial general election takes place on May 9. Chances are that you'll have some questions about your role as a BC Public Service employee, and how to effectively interpret the [Standards of Conduct](#) when you're trying to take an active interest in the political landscape. Can we have political discussions with our colleagues in the workplace? What should we bear in mind when using social media? And what if we want to be actively involved in a political campaign, or even run as a candidate?

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- > Gov 101: Impartiality

Tags: Election standards of conduct ethics integrity

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Post-Election Update

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Posted: May 12, 2017 - 10:15am by Employee News

The provincial general election took place on Tuesday, May 9 and now the rest of the electoral process unfolds. According to the preliminary results released by Elections BC for each of B.C.'s 87 ridings (or electoral districts), the counts are:

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Tags: [Election](#) [Gov 101](#)

Election 2017: Your Guide

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Posted: March 17, 2017 - 9:00am by Employee News

On May 9, British Columbia will hold its 41st provincial general election. For BC Public Service employees, this is a time of increased diligence and sensitivity in terms of our day-to-day work, whether it's how we manage records, run hiring competitions, enter into contracts and much more.

Use the infographic below to explore how the election process and timeline works, and to find what you need to know about your role and responsibilities both before and after General Voting Day. Click on a term in the infographic to read about it in the right-hand scroll bar, or use the scrolling bar to browse all the relevant information.

ELECTION 2017

PRE-WRIT PERIOD

- SPEECH FROM THE THRONE
FEBRUARY 14
- BUDGET DAY
FEBRUARY 21
- GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUT
MARCH 31

CAMPAIGN PERIOD

- WRITS ARE ISSUED (DAY 0)
APRIL 11
- ADVANCE VOTING
APRIL 29, 30
MAY 3, 4, 5, 6
- GENERAL VOTING DAY (DAY 28)
MAY 9

ELECTION / INTERREGNUM PERIOD

- PRELIMINARY RESULTS ANNOUNCED
MAY 9
- FINAL COUNT
MAY 22 - 24
- JUDICIAL RECOUNTS
MAY 25 - 30
- RETURN OF THE WRITS (DAY 50)
MAY 31
- MLAs CONFIRMED
- POST-ELECTION TRANSITION PERIOD
- INCOMING GOVERNMENT IN PLACE

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- RECORDS MANAGEMENT
- CORRESPONDENCE AND FOIPPA
- CONTRACTS
- ADVERTISING, INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA
- APPOINTMENTS AND HIRING
- POLICY DECISIONS

HOW ELECTIONS WORK

TIME OFF TO VOTE

HOW GOVERNMENT WORKS

APPOINTMENTS AND HIRING

- No appointments are made to agencies, boards or commissions during the election period. Forward planning should take place to renew appointments before the writs are issued
- Routine hiring can still continue, whether you are mid-competition at the point the writs are issued or needing to fill a new/vacant position.

CORRESPONDENCE AND FOIPPA

- Normal correspondence continues, although the Minister won't be signing anything.
- This is a time of heightened sensitivity, so you should notify your supervisor if you are contacted by an MLA's office, a ministerial assistant, or receive any other contact that is out of the ordinary.
- During this period, you must continue to respond to FOI requests as you normally would.

ADVERTISING, INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- All of these activities should "go silent" insofar as possible during an election period.
- Statutory advertising, and internet and social media activity relating to public health and safety, are the exception and may continue.
- Social media feeds must be approached with extreme caution. Nothing that could be perceived as partisan can be posted - this includes posting information about a government program.
- No new websites or web pages should go live during the election period. Updating web content is restricted to fixing spelling errors or correcting information already posted.

POLICY DECISIONS

- No new policy decisions are to be announced during the election period.
- Policy decisions can be made until the point that the writs are issued, but even during the pre-writ period leading up to this, extra caution must be exercised.
- Forward planning should take place to ensure major policy changes or decisions are handled well before the election, or deferred until the incoming government has transitioned in.

The Voice of the Public Servant

The election period is also a time of increased awareness in terms of how we communicate, both in person and online. Look out for our next Election 2017 article concerning impartiality, social media, and how these relate to the Standards of Conduct.

Tags: Election Gov 101

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Posted: March 17, 2017 - 9:00am by Employee News

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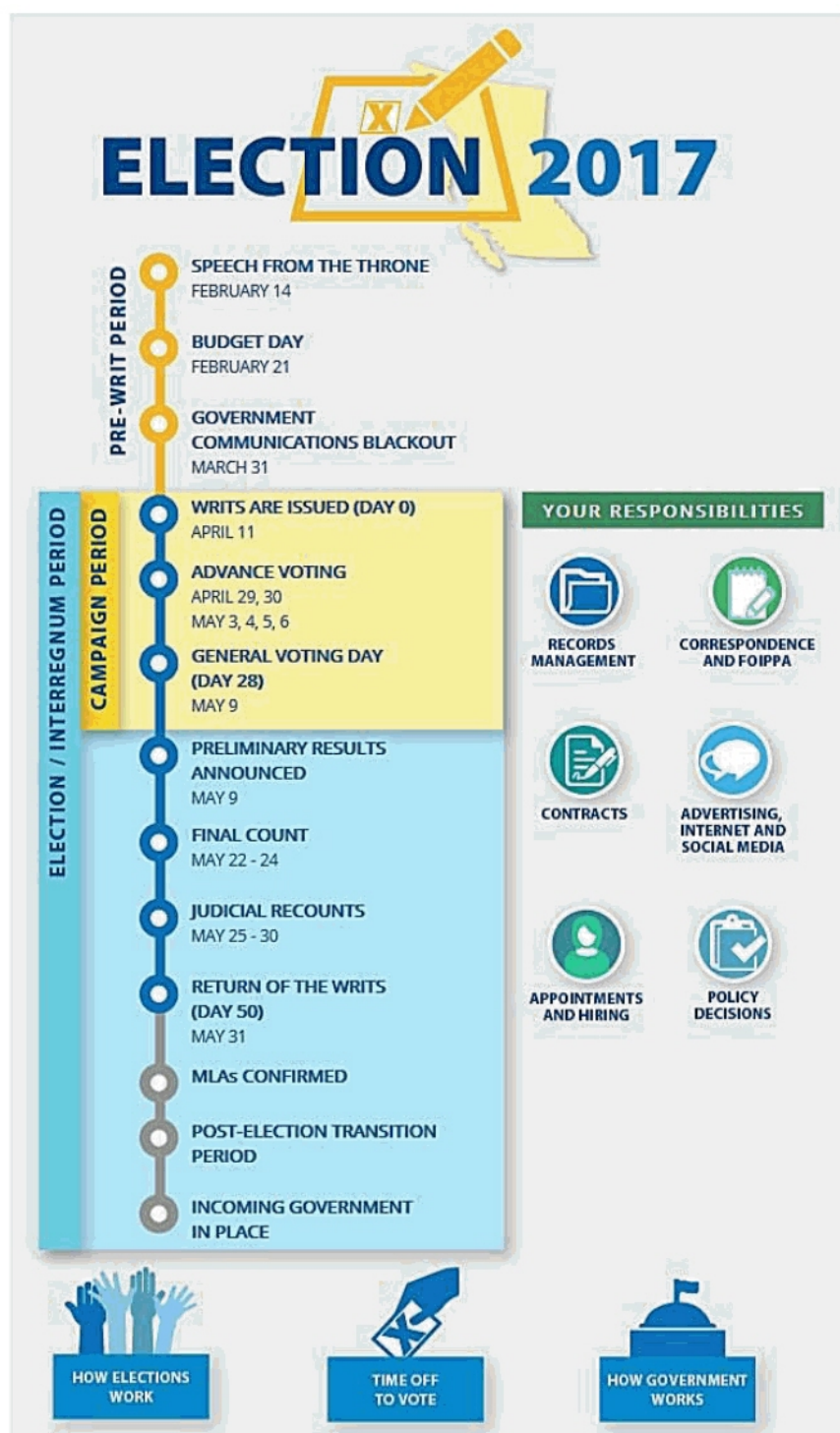
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for both advance and general voting.

FINAL COUNT

- > The final count takes place over three days, beginning 13 days after General Voting Day. In 2017, this will be May 22-24.
- > The final count includes all of the ballots not considered as part of the initial count, including those that were cast by voters who voted outside of their electoral district, or by mail.

JUDICIAL RECOUNTS

- > After the results from the final count for each district are announced, there are six days in which an application can be made for a judicial recount.
- > If there are no judicial recounts, the writs of election are returned on day 50 (May 31).

RETURN OF THE WRITS (DAY 50)

- > Following the count of all votes, including any judicial recounts, the writ of election for each district is returned to the Chief Electoral Officer.
- > There is one writ for each electoral district – in 2017, there will be 87 writs returned.
- > The date set for the return of the writs is day 50 (May 31).

MLAs CONFIRMED

- > Following the final count and any judicial recounts, the writs are returned to the Chief Electoral Officer.
- > As soon as possible after the writs have been returned, the Chief Electoral Officer prepares a report that outlines the individuals elected to serve as MLAs and delivers this to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.
- > This process effectively confirms which MLAs have been elected.

POST-ELECTION TRANSITION PERIOD

- > Following the confirmation of the election results, it is time to transition the incoming government into office.
- > The Lieutenant Governor asks the leader of the political party that holds the majority to form a government and take on the role of Premier.
- > The Premier then recommends the make-up of the Cabinet, which is established via Order in Council.
- > There is no time limit for forming the new Executive Council, but the expectation is that it will be formed without “unnecessary delay” – it happens pretty quickly following the

The Voice of the Public Servant

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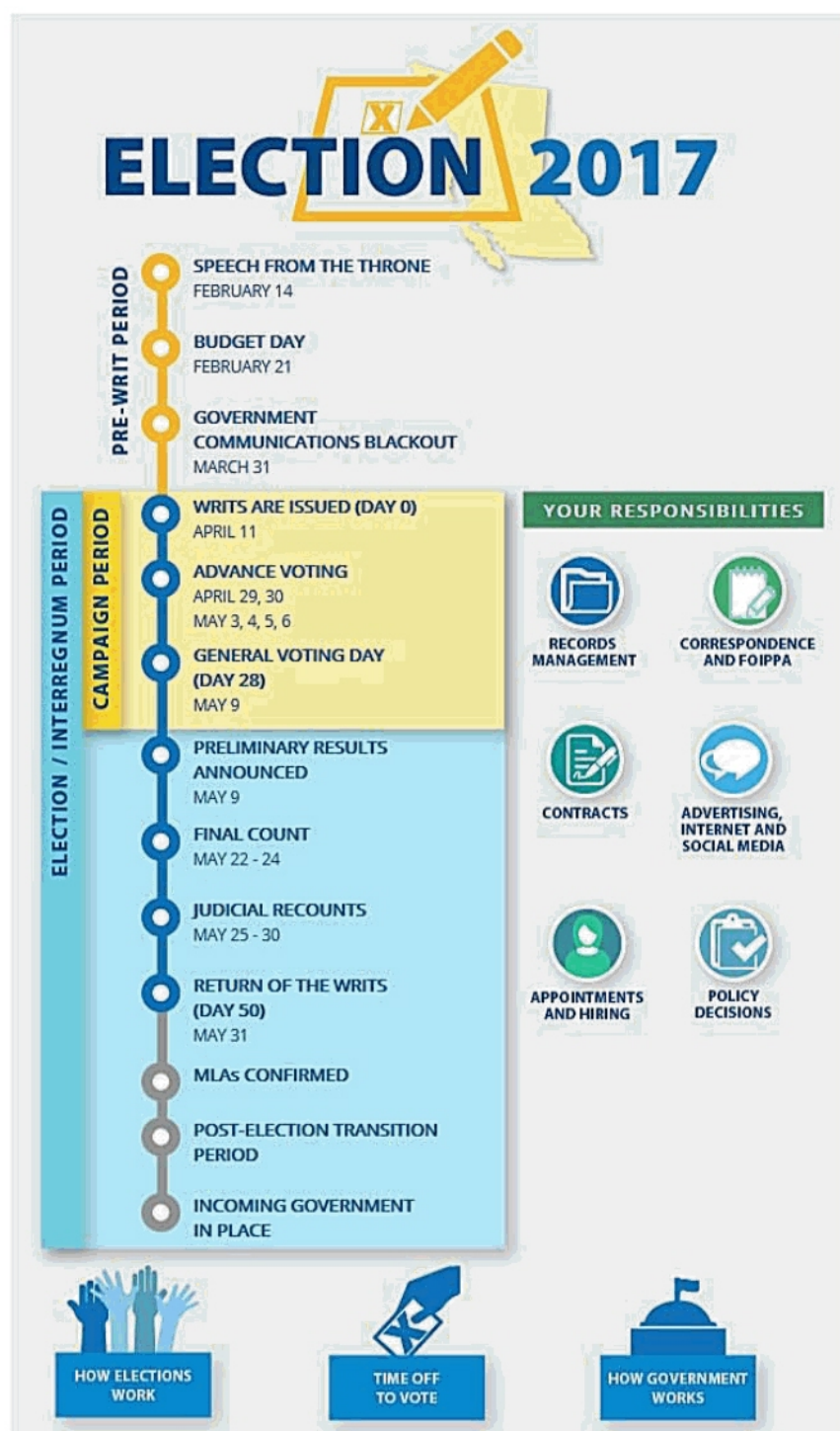
Engagement & Recognition

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- > There are a number of issues to be aware of in terms of what government can and can't do during this time. As a public service employee, you must ensure you maintain the Standards of Conduct and fulfil your responsibilities in a non-partisan manner. More information about your specific responsibilities can be found in this infographic.
- > These responsibilities do not disappear as soon as the new government is announced. Public service employees must continue to exercise extra diligence and caution during the period of transition to the incoming government.

ADVANCE VOTING

- > Advance voting at physical advance voting locations is available for anyone wishing to cast their vote ahead of General Voting Day (May 9).
- > Advance voting takes place on the Saturday and Sunday two weeks before General Voting Day, and also on the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the week before General Voting Day. In 2017, these dates are April 29 and 30, and May 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- > There are also options available for absentee voting and special voting. See the Elections BC site for more information.

GENERAL VOTING DAY (DAY 28)

- > General Voting Day takes place on day 28. In 2017, this is Tuesday, May 9.
- > This is the day on which most people will vote for the MLA in their electoral district.
- > Once the polling stations close at 8 p.m., the ballots are counted to determine preliminary results.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS ANNOUNCED

- > General voting is closed at 8 p.m. on General Voting Day. Once voting is closed, an initial count of the ballots in each electoral district is completed.
- > Preliminary results for each electoral district are released later the same evening.
- > These preliminary results include ballots cast from within the electoral district in question, for both advance and general voting.

FINAL COUNT

- > The final count takes place over three days, beginning 13 days after General Voting Day. In 2017, this will be May 22-24.
- > The final count includes all of the ballots not considered as part of the initial count.

The Voice of the Public Servant

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Tags: Election Gov 101

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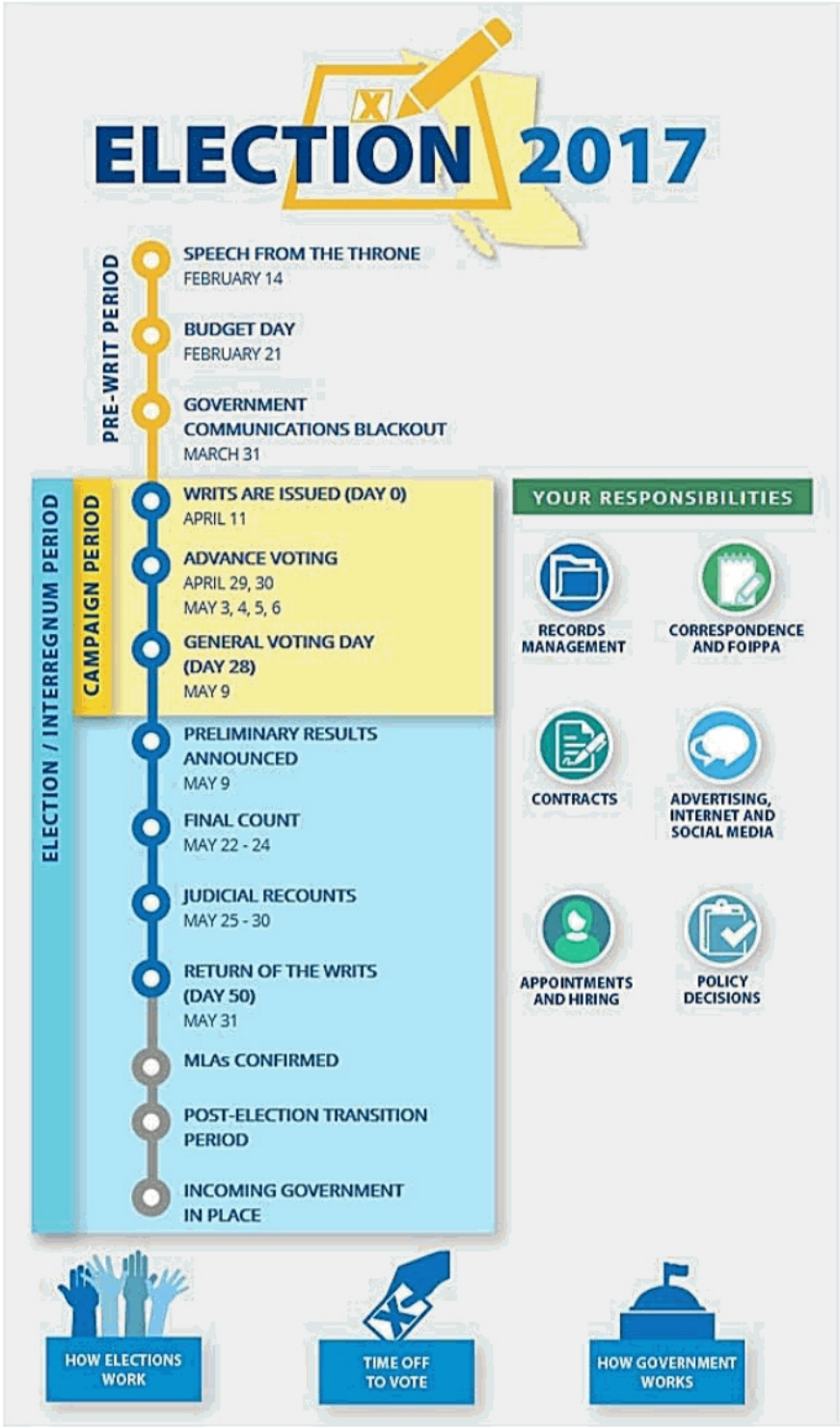
Election 2017: Your Guide

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Posted: March 17, 2017 - 9:00am by Employee News

On May 9, British Columbia will hold its 41st provincial general election. For BC Public Service employees, this is a time of increased diligence and sensitivity in terms of our day-to-day work, whether it's how we manage records, run hiring competitions, enter into contracts and much more.

Use the infographic below to explore how the election process and timeline works, and to find what you need to know about your role and responsibilities both before and after General Voting Day. Click on a term in the infographic to read about it in the right-hand scroll bar, or use the scrolling bar to browse all the relevant information.



WRITS ARE ISSUED (DAY 0)

- > A writ is a formal order calling for an election to be held in an electoral district. The writs are issued on day 0 of the 51-day election period.
- > There are multiple writs, since a writ has to be issued for each electoral district in the province. In 2017, this means 87 writs will be issued and, subsequently, returned.
- > The issuing of the writs signifies the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly. Cabinet members cease to be MLAs, but do not cease to be ministers since the executive branch must continue to function even during an election period.

CAMPAIGN PERIOD

- > The Campaign Period begins with the issuing of the writs on April 11.
- > The Campaign Period runs until the close of voting on General Voting Day (May 9).
- > Certain rules apply for candidates during the Campaign Period, concerning advertising, expenditure, and how and where campaign activities can be held.

ELECTION PERIOD

- > The Election Period begins with the issuing of the writs on day 0 (April 11).
- > The Election Period is typically 51 days long, running until the return of the writs on day 50 (May 31).

INTERREGNUM PERIOD

- > The Interregnum Period is the "gap between governments" – the period from when the Legislative Assembly is dissolved until the incoming government is established.
- > It typically runs from the day the writs are issued until the day the writs are returned. In 2017, this will mean the Interregnum Period runs from April 11 to May 31.
- > It cannot be assumed that the same government will still be in office following the election, so during the Interregnum Period, the outgoing government acts in "caretaker mode," avoiding any major decisions or changes that would bind the next government.
- > There are a number of issues to be aware of in terms of what government can and can't do during this time. As a public service employee, you must ensure you maintain the Standards of Conduct and fulfil your responsibilities in a non-partisan manner. More information about your specific

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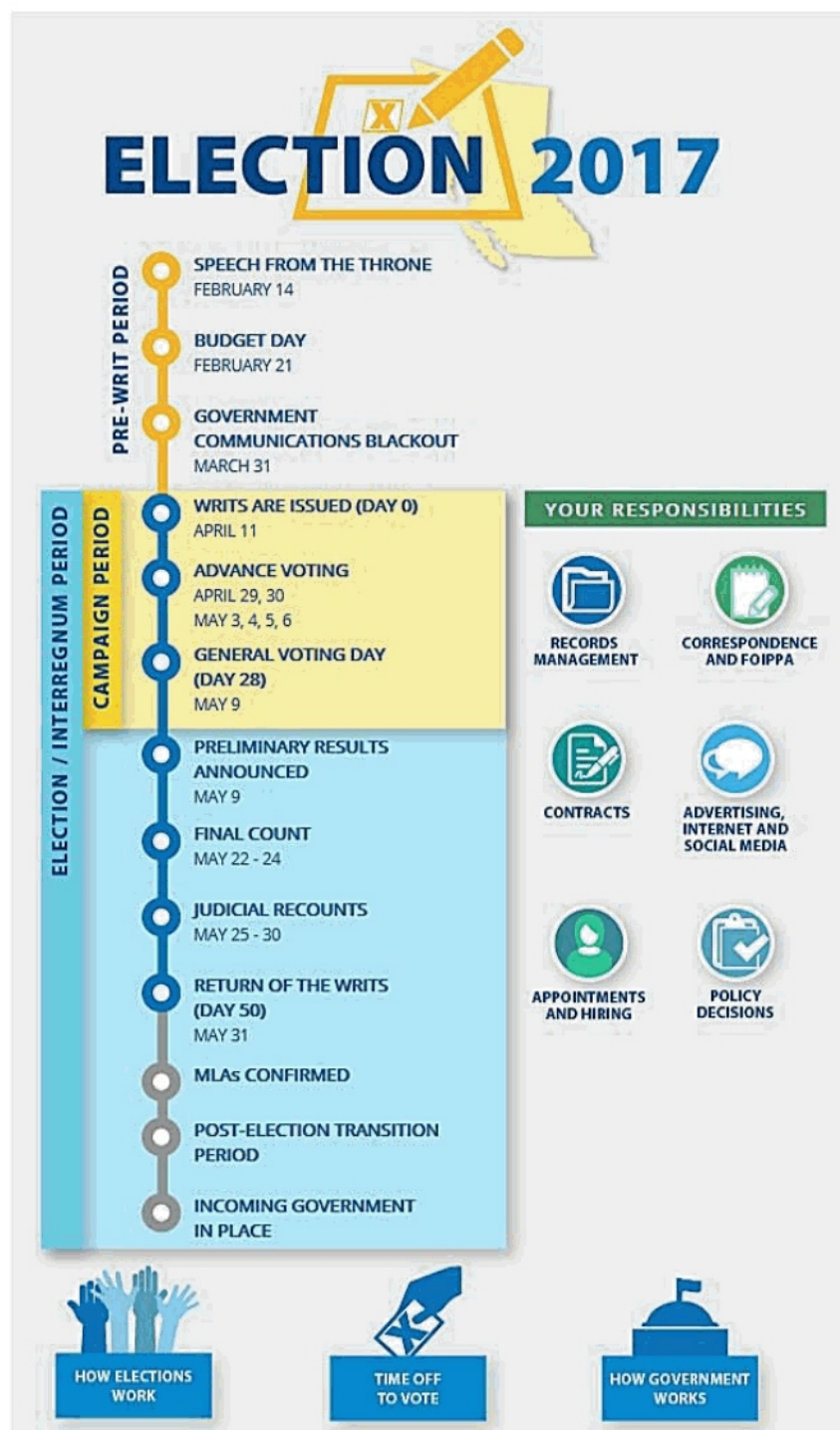
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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

- > Read by the Lieutenant Governor, the *Speech from the Throne* introduces a new session of parliament.
- > The speech typically takes place in February, one week prior to Budget Day. In 2017, the *Speech from the Throne* was on February 14.
- > The speech offers a broad overview of the government's agenda for this session of the Legislative Assembly.

BUDGET DAY

- > *Budget Day* is legislated to occur on the third Tuesday in February each year. In 2017, this took place on February 21.
- > The Minister of Finance presents the budget, outlining the financial plan for the province over the next three years.
- > Estimates are also presented at the same time, but are debated over a longer period.

PRE-WRIT PERIOD

- > This is the period leading up to the issuing of the writs, or election day 0, on April 11.
- > This is a time of increased diligence, when action is taken to ensure routine government operations will be able to continue during the Interregnum Period.
- > Major items that could arise after the issuing of the writs are anticipated and brought forward for consideration by Cabinet before the Writ Period begins.

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUT (UPDATED MARCH 23)

- > As of March 31, government **advertising** will be limited to public health and safety, statutory items, and responses to the public.
- > As of April 11, **all communications activities** will be limited to public health and safety, statutory items, and responses to the public. This includes social media, websites, public engagement, publications and informational materials.
- > The blackout continues throughout the Interregnum Period until the post-election transition period is complete.

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Posted: June 12, 2017 - 3:00pm by Employee News

The Premier and Executive Council were formally sworn in today at Government House. [Details about the Cabinet have been released](#), including:

- > Cabinet Ministers
- > Parliamentary Secretaries
- > Ministry responsibilities

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