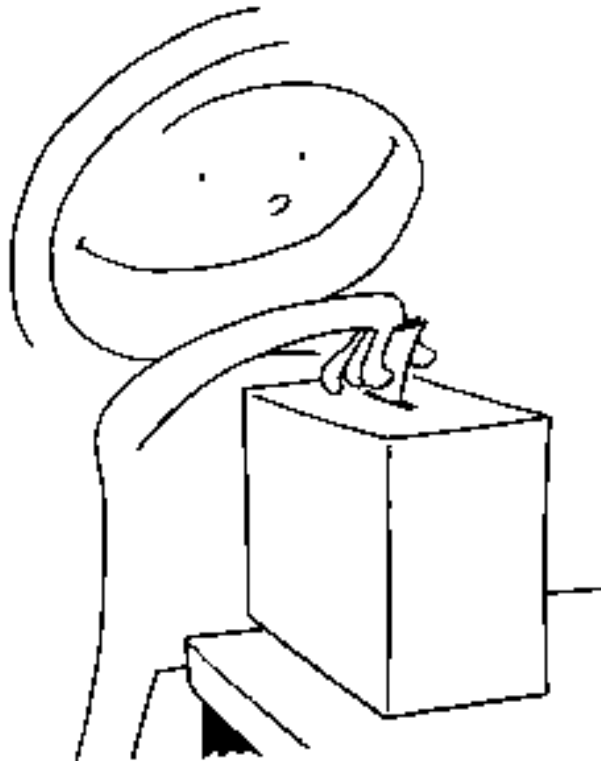


**You
have
the
right
to
vote!**

GET THE VOTE OUT

**British Columbia's
Provincial Election 2009**

Information and Participation Guide



**If you have a
question about
voting you can call:
Elections BC
1-800-661-8683**

This call is free.

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- **Attached to this package: BCACL election package with 5 fact sheets.**

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Election 2009

This spring there will be a Provincial Election for the Government of British Columbia. The election will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2009.

During the election, each party can put forward a candidate in every voting region (called ridings).



You vote for the candidate you want.

The candidate that gets the most votes becomes a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). That MLA represents the people in your riding. The party that gets the most MLA's elected forms the Government. The party with less MLA's elected forms the Opposition.

In this election, you will also be asked to vote on a referendum. A referendum is a question that is answered by voters, and then whatever people vote for becomes the law. There is more information on the referendum in this package.

Everyone who is a Canadian citizen, who is 18 years of age or older, and who has lived in BC for six months has the right to vote in this election.

This package gives you some ideas about how to get involved in the election. It explains some things about how an election works. This package has:

- Information about who can vote and how to vote
- Information on how to learn more about the referendum
- Fact sheets that talk about 5 key issues and include questions for the candidates.

Please make copies of this information and give it to your friends.



Voting allows you to choose who you think will best represent you and your community. Your choice helps decide who will form the government in BC.

Voting for the first time can be intimidating because often people do not know what to expect. This guide will help you understand what voting is about.

We hope this information will help make your voting experience a good one.

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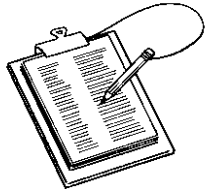
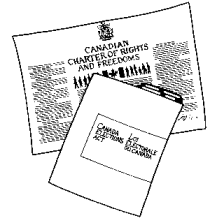
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1-800-661-8683**

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Questions & Answers About Voting

Who can vote?

Every person who is a Canadian citizen, who is 18 years or older, and who has lived in BC for six months can vote in this election if they are on the voters' list.



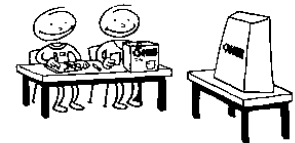
How do I get on the voters' list?

If you are already on the voters' list you will receive a voting card in the mail. If you do not receive a voting card, call Elections BC. They will tell you how to get on the voters' list. The number for Elections BC is 1-800-661-8683.

If I am not on the voters' list can I still vote on Election Day?

Yes. If you do not get on the voters' list before the Election, you can register to vote at the polling station on Election Day.

However, there will likely be line-ups and you will need two pieces of I.D. with your name, address, and signature. They will accept Hydro bills, rent receipts, health cards, etc.



Where do I vote on Election Day?



On Election Day you vote at a place called a "polling station". The address of the polling station will be sent to you in the mail along with your voters' card. Polling stations can be schools, town halls, or other places in your community where people gather. If you don't get this information, call your Elections BC office and ask them where you should vote.

What if I need a ride?

- Ask a friend or person you trust to take you.
- Phone one of your local candidates and tell them you need a ride. You don't have to vote for the person who gave you a ride.

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What if I live in a hospital or a group home?

All people who live in hospitals or group homes have the right to vote. Sometimes they send a “mobile polling station” to places like group homes and hospitals. Ask the staff if this is going to happen where you live.

How do I vote?

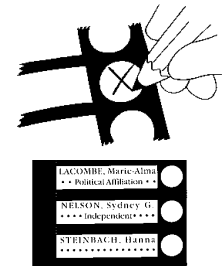
In this election you will be asked to vote on two different things:



1. You will vote for the candidate you want to win.
2. You will vote either yes or no for a new system of voting (this is the referendum)

How to vote for your candidate:

1. Take your I.D., or your voters' card, to the polling station.
2. Someone will give you a piece of paper with the names of all the people you can vote for. This is called a “ballot”.
3. Pick one person you want to vote for and put a mark (X) inside the circle beside their name. If you have a visual impairment or if you are blind, you can get a special cardboard ballot with holes on it to make voting easier for you.
4. After you mark your ballot put it in the box.



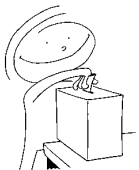
What if I cannot make it to the voting station on May 12?

- You can vote at any advance voting place in B.C. on Wednesday, May 6; Thursday, May 7; Friday, May 8; or Saturday May 9, 2009. OR:
- You can vote by mail by requesting a voting package.

You can only vote by mail if you will not be here on May 12, or if you have a physical disability, illness or injury or if you have trouble with transportation.

Call Elections BC (1-800-661-8683) to request a voting package for mailing.

*** Remember, you can only vote for one person. ***



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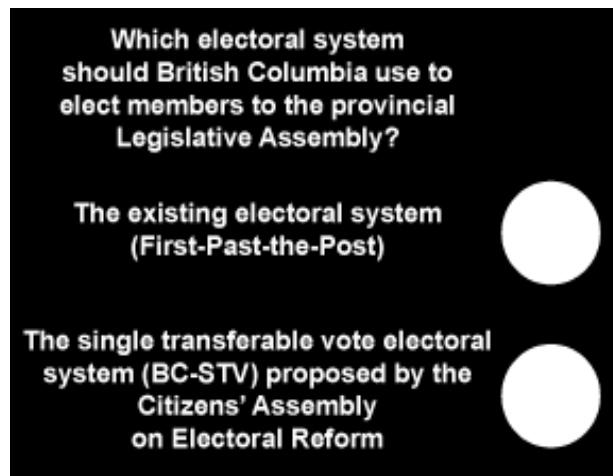
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How to vote on the Referendum:

When you go to vote on May 12, you will also be asked to vote on a special issue. This process is called a referendum. You will be asked to vote on which election system you want to use in the future. You can either vote to keep the electoral system we have right now (called First-Past-the-Post, where you put an x beside the candidate you want), or you can vote for a new system. This new system is called BC-STV. Many people think it is a good thing, and others think it is a bad thing. This guide does not take either view.

This is what the referendum ballot will look like:



You mark an X beside the system that you want.

The BC-STV system can be hard to understand. For this reason, Elections Canada has given money to two groups to help explain it. One group wants you to vote for the BC-STV system. The other group is against it.

British Columbians for BC-STV (www.stv.ca) supports the change, and **No STV** (www.nostv.org) does not support the change. You can visit their websites for more information about the systems.

The Ministry of Attorney General also provides a **Referendum Information Office** that you can call for information about the new system. For more information, phone the Referendum Information Office at 1-800-668-2800 (604-775-2800 in Vancouver) or visit their website at BCreferendum2009.ca.

If you still do not understand the new system, and you are voting in person, **you have the right not to vote on the referendum**. But if you are voting in advance poll or by mail, you must vote on both ballots.

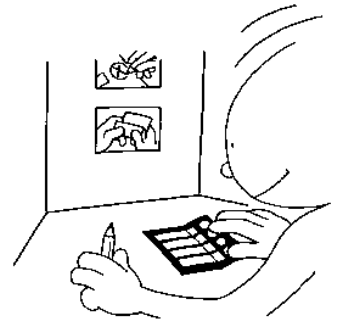
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What if I need help when I vote?

You can bring someone you trust with you to help you vote. The person you choose has to sign a declaration that they are there to assist the voter with a disability. Or, you can ask one of the staff at the polling station to help you. This person can read you the names or help you mark your ballot.

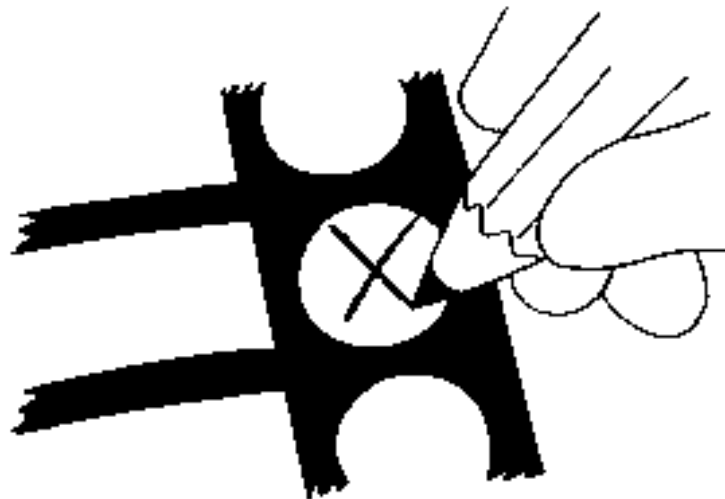


How do I get information about voting?

Phone Elections BC and ask them to send you information. Tell them if you want: LARGE PRINT, Audio-cassette, Videotape, or Computer Diskette.



If you have a visual impairment you can get a special "Braille Template" (a special cardboard with holes on it to make voting easier for you). Also, you can get information on TV by watching the news. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, phone TDD/TTY: 1-888-456-5448.



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Political Parties & Their Leaders

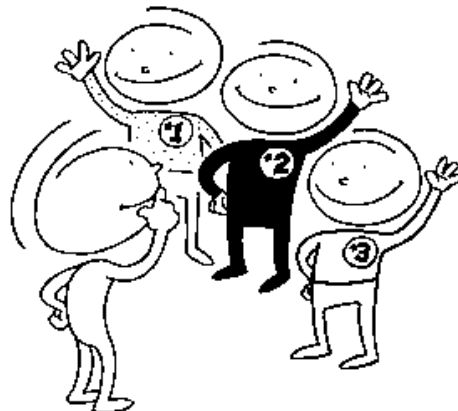
In this election, people vote for the person they want to speak for them in the Government of British Columbia. This person usually belongs to a political party.

Every political party has a leader, but **the leader's name is not on the ballot**. The ballot only has the name of the local person who is a candidate in your area and the name of the political party they are with.

Political Parties	Leaders	Website
New Democratic Party	Carole James	www.bcndp.ca
Liberal Party	Gordon Campbell	www.bcliberals.com
Green Party	Jane Sterk	www.greenparty.bc.ca

There may be other parties with candidates running in your area. These parties could be the: Christian Heritage Party, Communist Party, etc; or an independent candidate.

If you want to know more about the candidates who are running for election in your community, visit their campaign offices or go to an all candidates meeting. If you have access to the internet you can go to the websites for each party. These websites will have information on each party's platform. A platform talks about what the party believes and the things that they will do if they are elected.



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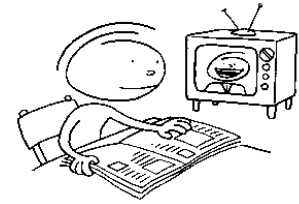
This call is free.

Participating in the Election

There are lots of ways to learn about voting and how the election works. Here are some ideas you can do on your own or with a group.

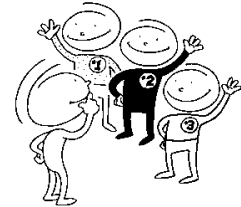
1. You can ask someone to give you a workshop on voting. Or you can get together with a friend who you trust to explain how it all works.

2. Pay attention to the local TV news, radio stations and newspapers. They will have updates on the election campaign. They will also have regular election specials.



3. Self-advocates can get together and invite all the candidates to come and attend a “Question and Answer” meeting on your issues.

4. You and your friends can go to an “All Candidates Meeting” in your area to meet the candidates and ask questions on issues that are important to you.



5. You can practice voting by role-playing with practice ballots.

6. You can call Elections BC and ask them for an election kit.

7. You can phone your candidate and get him or her to answer your questions.

8. You can visit all the candidates’ offices in your area to see how they are running their campaigns; you can learn a lot and meet new people.

9. If you know who you want to vote for, you can volunteer to help them at their campaign office.

10. You can check out where your polling place is before Election Day.

11. The candidates and their helpers may come to your place to give you information and talk to you about why you should vote for them. This is OK, BUT you don’t have to talk to anyone you do not want to. And you do not have to let anyone into your house who you don’t want to talk with.

12. Be a letter writer. Tell candidates, and newspapers about the issues that are important to you.



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Rights & Responsibilities

Why should you vote?

Your right to vote is one of the most important rights you have. It is the way you help choose who will represent you in BC's government. When you vote you are participating as a full citizen in Canadian society.

Your Rights

1. You have the right to get on the voters' list.
2. You have the right to vote.
3. Your vote is your own personal choice.
4. Your vote is a **secret** - you don't have to tell anyone who you vote for if you don't want to.
5. You have the right to talk to the candidates and ask them questions.
6. You have the right to put a sign on your lawn or window for the candidate of your choice. You also have the right to refuse.
7. No one can tell you who to vote for.

Your Responsibilities

1. Get your name on the voters' list.
2. Find out who the candidates are.
3. Know the issues. Get the information you need.
4. Make arrangements to get to the place where you vote.
5. Bring your voter's card (or I.D.) with you when you go to vote.
6. Bring a friend who you trust to help you vote if you need it.
7. Try to get the candidates to talk to you and your friends - phone calls, meetings, etc.
8. Keep informed after the election is over. Find out if the person who got elected in your area is keeping the promises they made during the election.

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What does it mean?

Voting:



Choosing the person you want to speak for you in the legislature.

Provincial Election:

Voting for the Government of British Columbia.

Referendum:

A direct vote in which all voters are asked to either accept or reject a proposal.

Returning Officer:

The person in your community who is in charge of making sure the election is fair and everyone gets to vote.

Ballot:



The piece of paper with the names of all the people who are trying to get elected in your area.

Provincial Government: The people who are elected to run the province of BC.

Riding:

The area you live and vote in.

Polling Station:



The place where you go to vote on Election Day.

Candidate:



A person who is trying to get elected.

Political Party:

An organization which has certain ideas about how to run the country. A candidate usually belongs to a political party. for example, NDP, Liberal, Green, etc.

All Candidates Meeting:



A meeting where all the people who want to be elected come together to talk about the issues.

MLA:

or Member of the Legislative Assembly: the person who represents your Riding.

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Questions to Ask Your Candidates

BCACL has decided to ask the candidates questions about 5 key issues:

- Disability Supports
- Income Security
- Employment
- Inclusive Education
- Supports to Children and Families

BCACL has developed 5 fact sheets that talk about these issues and include questions for the candidates. If you agree with these issues, you can use these materials. The 5 fact sheets are included at the back of this package.

If you meet with a candidate, please contact BCACL and tell us about it. Call Cindy at 604-777-9100 or email us at cchapman@bcacl.org.

Other information about the election and a feedback form for meetings with the candidate can be found on the BCACL website at www.bcacl.org.

Vote Your Values

Compare your own values with the values of the candidates

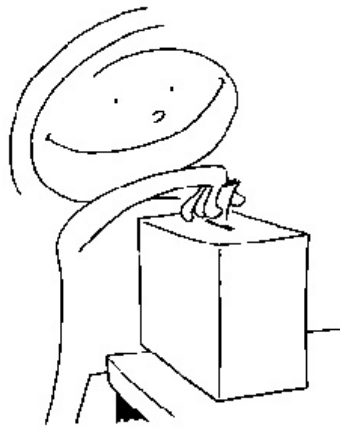
Issue	What I think	What the candidate thinks	Match
• Disability Supports			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Income Security			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Employment			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Support to Children and Families			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Inclusive Education			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Housing			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Transportation			<input type="checkbox"/>
• other_____			<input type="checkbox"/>

Credit for "Vote Your Values" worksheet: © 2004 by ACT Advocating Change Together
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1-800-641-0059 · fax 651-641-4053 · www.selfadvocacy.org · act@selfadvocacy.org

ELECTION 2009

You *can* **Vote**



Tuesday
May 12, 2009

It's Your Right
It's Your Choice

Phone Elections BC for more information:

1-800-661-8683

This call is free