

ISC-AB Guidance on Holding Elections During COVID-19

This guidance is intended to provide recommendations to communities regarding public health measures to take when holding elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. For further information regarding this guidance please contact your community Environmental Public Health Officer. In addition, questions around this guidance, as well as questions concerning funding, can be emailed to: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

Before the election

Considerations:

- Be aware of current COVID-19 activity in your area.

Contact your local Health Centre for information on COVID-19 activity in your community and/or refer to the Alberta Health COVID-19 status map to view the level of risk in regions and information about local health measures. It also shows the rate of COVID-19 cases and the number of active cases. <https://www.alberta.ca/maps/covid-19-status-map.htm>
- Follow all current public health restrictions.
Resource: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-public-health-actions.aspx>
- Offer longer voting periods (i.e. more hours) and/or more polling stations to spread out the number of people in the building at one time.
- Inform voters of specific preventative measures being taken through social media, radio announcements, posters, or other means.

Location Selection and Setup:

- When selecting a venue, determine the number of staff/volunteers and members of the public that will be on site in a given time period. The mandatory physical distancing requirement of two metres must be considered when choosing a suitable venue.
- Ensure facility ventilation systems are operating properly. To improve ventilation, consider opening windows in the facility – weather permitting.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the facility prior to election day. Refer to Appendix 1 for information on cleaning and disinfecting.
- Ensure that cleaning and disinfection supplies are available for the duration of the election.



- Have one-way traffic flow, with a separate entrance and exit if possible.
- Traffic flow and physical distancing markers can be placed on the floor to help people navigate the venue safely, and to ensure they remain 2 metres apart.
(Note: Individuals from the same household are not required to physically distance).
- Barriers/rope/pylons/stanchions can be used to help guide people through the venue.
- Provide hand sanitizer or hand washing facilities at the entrance and exit of the venue, as well as throughout the facility, such as at election official desks/booths.
- If washrooms are available, ensure that they are well stocked with paper towels, liquid hand soap, and toilet paper.
- Place election booths, registration tables, etc. a minimum of two metres (6 feet) apart.
- Consider the use of a physical barriers (such as Plexiglass) at election official desks/booths.
- Signage/posters should be displayed at the entrance and throughout the venue. Examples of signage can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-public-health-actions.aspx> and <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17000.aspx>
Signage should direct individuals entering the building to:
 - Not enter if they have any COVID-19 symptoms, or were instructed to isolate/quarantine,
 - Use hand sanitizer when entering.
 - Wear a mask.
 - Practice respiratory etiquette.
 - Maintain physical distancing of two metres.
 - Follow the directional signage.
- Seating for the public is not recommended – remove or block off any seating areas.

If a limited number of seats are required for individuals with limited mobility, the seats must be spaced apart to maintain a two metre (6 feet) separation and high touch surfaces should be cleaned between uses (e.g., chair arms). Seats should be made of a smooth, non-porous, wipeable material that is free from breaks, cracks, and ripped seams.

During the election

Screening:

Individuals must not report for work or enter the facility if they have symptoms of COVID-19, were instructed to isolate or quarantine, or are awaiting COVID-19 test results

- Staff and volunteers should complete a COVID-19 self assessment before participating in an election-related activity.
- Organizers should remind any staff or volunteer who is experiencing symptoms that they must remain in their place of isolation and not attend any public location
- Voters should be encouraged to screen themselves for COVID-19 symptoms prior to going to the polling place. An example of a screening checklist can be found here:
<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/covid-19-information-alberta-health-daily-checklist>

Masks and Personal Protective Equipment:

- Everyone entering the building must wear a non-medical mask/face covering. Consider providing masks for those who come without (as opposed to turning them away).
- Consider the use of eye protection (face shields/goggles) for staff/volunteers.
- If gloves are used, they do not replace hand hygiene. Gloves that touch anything unclean, e.g., surfaces, objects, face, pockets, are contaminated and become a means for spreading micro-organisms. Remove contaminated gloves, discard and perform hand hygiene.

Physical Distancing/Gathering:

- Have staff available to manage queues, direct traffic flow, and discourage individuals from gathering/socializing.
- Remind staff/volunteers to continue to maintain 2 metres of physical distancing during break and meal periods.
- Food and drink should not be shared. Staff/volunteers should be encouraged to bring their own food and drink.

Cleaning and Disinfection:

- Voting booths, including pens/pencils, should be cleaned and disinfected between users. An alternative to cleaning/disinfecting pens or pencils is to encourage voters to bring their own, or to provide a new one to each voter.

- Clean and disinfect remaining high touch surfaces on a regular basis throughout the day. Refer to Appendix 1 (Cleaning and Disinfection) for more detailed information. High touch surfaces can include, but are not limited to:
 - Table tops
 - Door handles
 - Push plates/automatic door openers
 - Faucet handles
 - Toilet handles
 - Switches

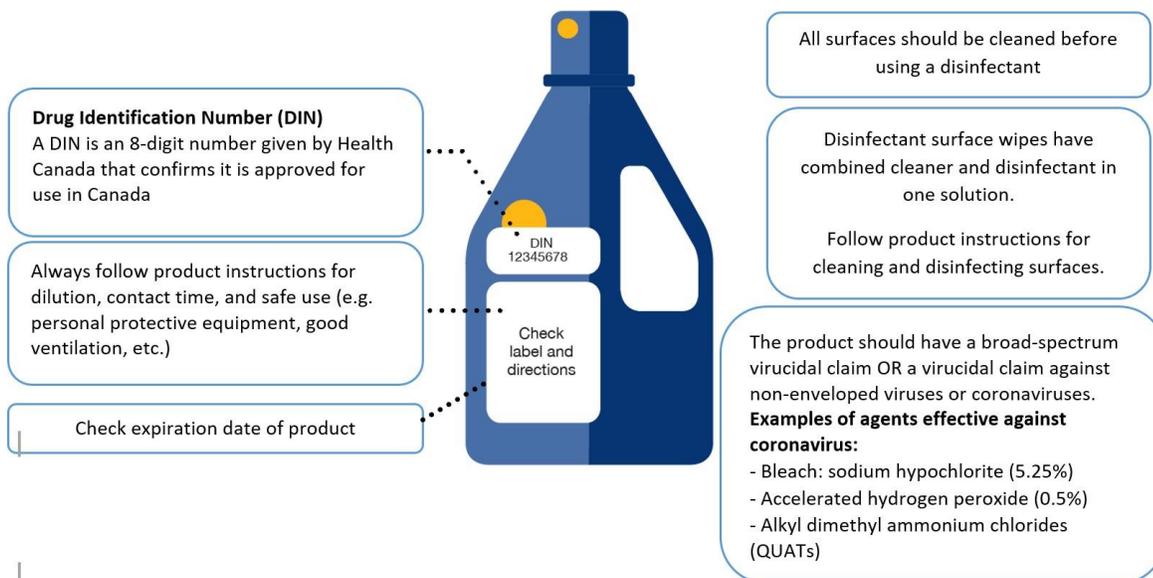
Appendix 1: Cleaning and Disinfection

Cleaning refers to the removal of visible dirt, grime and impurities. Cleaning does not kill germs but helps remove them from the surface. Clean all frequently touched surfaces to remove visible dirt; use regular household soap or detergent and water.

Disinfecting refers to using a chemical to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces are cleaned. Both steps are important to reduce the spread of infection. Disinfect all frequently touched surfaces to kill germs and viruses on surfaces; most effective after surfaces are cleaned.

- Refer to the product label to ensure that the disinfectant is effective against COVID-19. See Figure 1.
- Commercial disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a virucidal claim (removes 99.9 % of viruses, bacteria). Follow the instructions on the label; or
- Bleach water solution: mix 20 mL (4 teaspoons) unscented bleach and 1000 mL (4 cups) water in a labelled spray bottle. Prepare a new solution daily. Increase this concentration to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water (ex. 100 mL bleach and 900 mL water), if blood or body fluids are present.
- Alternatively, a combined cleaner/disinfectant product could be used.

Figure 1: What to look for on a disinfectant label



Steps for Cleaning and Disinfection:

1. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth.
2. Avoid direct contact with body fluids. If body fluids are present (nose/mouth excretions, blood, vomit, diarrhea, etc.) use paper towels to absorb prior to cleaning.
3. Clean visibly soiled surfaces with detergent/cleaner. Use only disposable cloths (paper towels or wipes).
- 4. Clean all frequently touched surfaces.**
5. Place used paper towels in non-touch garbage bin.
6. Apply disinfectant to the surface as per manufacturers' instructions. Surface should be moist. Allow to air dry.
7. Dispose of waste daily.
8. Perform hand hygiene after removal of PPE. Washing with soap and water or hand sanitizer (60% alcohol content or higher).

Examples of Frequently touched surfaces:

- Door handles
- Chairs
- Table tops
- Plexiglass barrier
- Light switches
- Pens/pencils
- Taps/faucets
- Toilets
- Etc