



Document: Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation (SBAR)
Topic: Federal election campaign
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Submitted by: CoVaRR-Net
To: Federal political candidates and their respective parties/teams

Recommendations

- **Political Parties:**
 - Mandate vaccinations among political candidates and their respective teams/parties.
 - Parties should conduct ongoing community stakeholder engagement to ensure communities feel safe throughout campaign activities.
 - All parties should develop a COVID-19 safety plan during the campaign and transparently communicate it to Canadians.
- **Campaigns:**
 - Host online or outdoor campaign events. Use physical distancing and masks. Avoid handshakes.
- **Canvassing:**
 - Give notice to communities when/if canvassing. Use physical distancing (2 meters / 6 ft apart) and avoid handshakes.

Situation

A federal election has been called for September 20, 2021 in Canada amidst a pandemic and the fourth wave of COVID-19. This SBAR along with an accompanying one entitled “Federal election voting” explores approaches taken during provincial elections, as well as other national elections (e.g., US), during the pandemic, and make policy recommendations to ensure the safety of the public and the candidates. This first SBAR of this two-part series focuses on how political parties can campaign safely across the country throughout the month of September. The second SBAR focuses on how Elections Canada can safely collect ballots from Canadians during a pandemic.

Background

- On August 12, 2021, Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam declared a fourth wave of COVID-19 driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant (1).
- Several elections have been held during the COVID-19 pandemic including provincial elections in Nova Scotia, Yukon, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and New Brunswick, as well as federal elections in countries such as the United States.
- The COVID-19 pandemic poses challenges when participating in federal elections. The traditional way in which electoral candidates engage with the population (e.g., debates, rallies, community meals, appearances, and canvassing) currently present health risks (2).
- Resources have been developed by several jurisdictions regarding a safe pandemic election. Resources and guidelines have also been developed by Elections Canada.



- All active political parties have committed to following existing provincial/regional public health measures. See Appendix A for publicly available details on each party's COVID-19 safety protocols.
- There are three areas political parties should consider planning to ensure a safe campaign: campaign events, community engagement, and campaign offices (3).
- COVID-19 has changed approaches to traditional campaigning on the international stage. Of the over fifty national elections that occurred during the pandemic in 2020, over half had limitations on traditional campaigning, dependent on the existing public health restrictions at the time.
 - Political events ranged from a full absence of rallies in Singapore, Montenegro, and Jordan to restricted numbers for gatherings in Jamaica (20 people gatherings) and time restrictions on gatherings in Sri Lanka.
 - Additional campaign changes include modified door-to-door campaigning in Singapore and Jamaica which limited the number of people per campaign group and social distancing (4).
 - Of note, a large portion of these political parties pivoted to remote and virtual campaigns through e-rallies, online party conventions, and drive-in events (4).
 - Election rallies held by Donald Trump in the US federal election included a large number of people without masks (5). These rallies were found to have led to more than 30,000 incremental confirmed cases of COVID-19 (5).
- Some evidence suggests an increase in COVID-19 transmission due to elections held prior during the pandemic (4). In contrast, some evidence also contradicts these findings, and they should be interpreted with caution (4). Countries have variations in data and different methods are used amongst studies making it difficult to draw general conclusions (4).

Assessment

- It is important to note that masks are not mandatory in all jurisdictions across Canada at present. Therefore, the political party's team, as well as community's engaging in campaign activities, should be encouraged to wear masks in large group settings indoors (ex. greater than five people) if distancing cannot be maintained.
- Some political parties have not made statements regarding vaccines, rapid testing, masks, and gatherings during their campaigns in publicly available documents. COVID-19 safety plans are not available to the public from all political parties with the exception of the Liberal party.

Appendix A: Summary of Political Parties' COVID-19 Campaign Protocols

- *The Liberal Party was the lone party who had campaign COVID-19 protocols publicly available in one [comprehensive document](#) (6).
- The rest of the information was pulled from media articles (7-10).



Party	Vaccines (candidates)	Vaccines (staff on tour)	Testing (Rapid)	Masks	Gatherings
*Liberal (6)	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily for boarding bus/plane Twice weekly for headquarters staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory for indoor and outdoor when physical distancing cannot be maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor events encouraged 25-person indoor and 100-person outdoor limit – (although media reports suggest this has not been adhered to thus far)
Conservative	Not mandatory Daily rapid test if unvaccinated	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily for boarding bus/plane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally avoiding in-person appearances (focus on online and telephone)
NDP	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor events encouraged
Green	Not mandatory	No statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement
Bloc	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statement

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About CoVaRR-Net

Coronavirus Variants Rapid Response Network (CoVaRR-Net) is a network of interdisciplinary researchers from institutions across the country created to assist in the Government of Canada's overall strategy to address the potential threat of emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants. Pillar Six of CoVaRR-Net studies the impacts of Coronavirus variants on public health, our healthcare system, and on social policy, and reports these findings to decision-makers and government officials.

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