

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR ELECTORAL CANDIDATES – STEP 3

Last revised: September 1, 2021

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is currently at Step 3 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). The following recommendations are intended to assist candidates in keeping themselves, their campaign volunteers, and fellow residents safe while canvassing and campaigning during the current COVID-19 pandemic. This information is meant to supplement any advice or recommendations provided by the organization or community governing the election, such as [Elections Canada](#). This document provides additional guidance and clarity at Step 3, by following [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas at Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#) (O. Reg. 364/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Approach to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

All businesses and organizations in the County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka must also adhere to the SMDHU's medical officer of health's [letter of instruction](#) (amended September 1, 2021).

These recommendations have been adapted with permission from Ottawa Public Health and were developed in conjunction with the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control's Considerations for Election Polling Locations and Voters](#) and Elections Canada's [Campaign Guidance for Canvassing during COVID-19](#) and [Impact of COVID-19](#).

GENERAL INFORMATION

With community transmission of COVID-19 still occurring within Simcoe County, the District of Muskoka and the surrounding areas, there is a risk of transmission from one individual to another, particularly if they are not fully vaccinated. While measures that attempt to control these risks may be implemented in community settings, it is important that candidates and their teams be made aware of and understand the risks.

The risk of serious COVID-19 infection increases with age and for those who have chronic medical conditions, including being immunocompromised. Anyone participating in campaign-related activities should consider the risk to themselves personally, particularly if participating in activities that could potentially expose them to numerous people.

In-person campaign-related activities must incorporate public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and adhere to the COVID-19 guidance and recommendations put forth by the Province of Ontario, local municipalities, and SMDHU.

SCREENING

- Encourage campaign staff/volunteers to conduct a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before coming to work or participating in campaign activities and follow the direction provided.
- All campaign staff/volunteers must also be [actively screened](#) before attending work /campaign gatherings and follow the directions provided.
- If individuals have COVID-19 [symptoms](#), they should stay home, seek testing and [self-isolate](#).
- If individuals develop [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 while engaged in campaign activities, they should stop immediately, go home, seek testing, and [self-isolate](#).
- It is highly recommended that all members of the campaign teams download the [COVID Alert Mobile App](#).

HAND HYGIENE AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- All candidates and their teams should [wash their hands](#) and/or use [alcohol-based hand sanitizer](#) containing 60-90% alcohol content before, during and after participating in campaign activities, including contact with high touch surfaces such as doorbells.
- Do not engage in any physical contact, including handshaking.

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- Avoid sharing or distributing pamphlets, buttons, and other materials.
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. It is important to continue to follow infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, appropriate cleaning and disinfection, and immunization.

CAMPAIGN EVENTS

- At Step 3, campaign gatherings are permitted for up to 25 people indoors and are limited to no more than 100 people outdoors. Physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) must also be maintained.
- Consider alternative ways to campaign that do not require in-person interactions, such as virtual town halls and online communication platforms.
- It is recommended that attendance records be maintained for staff, volunteers and attendees, including name, contact information (name, telephone number/email) and assignment.
- When accessing public spaces during your campaign, be aware that the Province of Ontario has [mandated](#) the use of a mask or face covering in all public indoor settings. There are some situations when a mask or face covering is not required. A full list of these situations can be found [here](#).
- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection, surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition, as well as when visibly dirty.
 - Examples of frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, restrooms, taps, baby change tables, and meeting rooms.
- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection is provided by [Government of Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).

CANVASSING

- If candidates choose to participate in door-to-door canvassing, please consider the health and safety of voters. Some voters might not feel comfortable answering their door to speak with you.
- Avoid touching surfaces such as doorbells, doorknobs, and handles.
- Ensure that masks or [face coverings](#) are worn and invite residents to put on their mask before engaging in discussions with them at their doorway.
- Ensure that at least 2 metres (6 feet) of physical distance is maintained between yourself, members of your campaign team, and voters.
- Avoid carpooling to canvassing areas or implement measures to reduce the risk when carpooling (e.g., wear a mask, open car windows, limit capacity).
- Remember that wearing a mask or face covering is not an alternative to physical distancing. Every effort should be made to keep at least a 2 metre (6 feet) distance even when wearing a mask.
- It is recommended that campaigns maintain records of canvassing activities (canvasser name and contact information, canvassing locations and times, etc.).

CANDIDATE DEBATES

Whenever possible during the pandemic, SMDHU recommends alternate means to engage the public in candidate debates to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission indoors. Please consider proceeding with candidate debates using alternate means or settings. Should an in-person debate proceed, organizers should ensure adherence with the public health measures outlined in [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Organizers of Candidate Debates and Electoral Polling Places](#).

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SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We appreciate all the efforts you are taking to help protect the community.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Health Connection line if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

While the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit aims to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to, nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional. No one should act, or refrain from acting, based solely upon the materials provided in this guidance, any hypertext links or other general information without first seeking appropriate legal or other professional advice. Please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website regularly for updates and additional guidance.