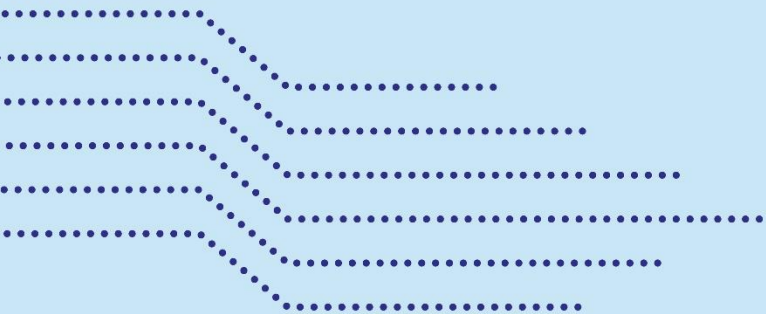




HEALTH PROTOCOL TO REDUCE THE RISK OF SPREADING COVID-19 DURING ANY MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Translated from the original French

This document was produced by the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation (MAMH).
It is available electronically at the following address: www.Quebec.ca

Translated from the original French text bearing the ISBN number 978-2-550-87377-8 (PDF) (First Edition)
978-2-550-80520-5 (PDF)

All rights reserved. The reproduction of this document by any process whatsoever and its translation, even in part, is prohibited without the permission of the Publications du Québec.

© Gouvernement du Québec, 2022.

Presentation

1. Presentation of the approach

The ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation (MAMH)¹ and Élections Québec² collaborated with the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) to establish a "Health Protocol to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 during any municipal election". This protocol includes a set of measures for the lead-up to the election and up to the vote.

This protocol deals with voting instructions. It complements the regulatory measures established by the Chief Electoral Officer³ in order to allow the holding of safe elections. It is established according to the guidelines set by the public health authorities. The instructions contained in this protocol are therefore **mandatory**.

2. Composition of the document

This document consists of two sections:

- The health instructions in force (section *General health measures*)
 - These guidelines may change as public health authorities issue new guidance. Therefore, caution should be exercised when planning your election and procurement. We encourage you to consult this protocol frequently and ensure that you have the most current latest version. **Check the date of the update** on each page of the document.
- The voting measures, along with examples, recommendations and best practices that you can draw on depending on the particularities of your municipality (section *Measures specific to elections*).

¹ The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is responsible for the application of the *Act respecting elections and referendums in municipalities* (RLRQ, c. E-2.2, s. 887) which governs, among other things, the holding and conduct of municipal elections.

² Élections Québec is a neutral and independent institution that reports directly to the National Assembly. It supports municipalities in the organization of their elections and ensures the application of the rules on political financing.

³ *Regulation to amend certain municipal provisions to facilitate the conduct of the November 7, 2021 municipal general election in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic on May 15, 2021 (Règlement modifiant certaines dispositions en matière municipale afin de faciliter le déroulement de l'élection générale municipale du 7 novembre 2021 dans le contexte de la pandémie de la COVID-19 (2021) 153 G.O.Q. II, 2109, p.2111B*, also applicable to by-elections under Order 2021-082 of November 17, 2021

3. Persons covered by the health protocol

As long as this protocol is in force, it must be applied by all persons concerned, regardless of the size of the municipality and the status of COVID-19 in Quebec. The persons concerned are all the stakeholders in the electoral process, namely:

- The returning officers and their close team;
- Election Officials;
- Candidates, representatives and list collectors;
- Voters.

For any questions relating to the organization and conduct of the vote, the returning officer is invited to contact the Service des scrutins municipaux et scolaires d'Élections Québec at the following numbers: 581 628-8138 or 1 888 478-5923.

General health measures

This section contains the **mandatory sanitary measures** that must be followed in all circumstances, regardless of the activity carried out, and regardless of who carries it out.

They are established by the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. These are the conditions that allow for the holding of municipal elections in the context of a COVID-19 pandemic.

Health Instructions

Applicable to **all**: Disinfect hands frequently, and mandatorily at the entrance of the premises and at the indicated places.

Applicable to **election workers**: Disinfect work surfaces and furniture regularly, in addition to disinfecting them upon your arrival and departure.

Applicable to the **returning officer**: As an employer, the returning officer has the obligation to protect the health and safety of his workers. He must therefore, at all times, ensure that the [general health measures in force](#) are respected. He is also responsible for respecting the standards set out in the [Workplace Guide to Sanitary Standards – COVID-19 \(Guide de normes sanitaires en milieu de travail – COVID-19\)](#) of the CNESST.

Vaccination Passport

Note that there is no requirement for a [vaccination passport](#) for activities related to the 2021 Municipal General Election. No proof of immunization can be requested during training activities, board of revisors or in-person voting, whether the premises are public or private. Private room operators are also encouraged to work with the returning officer to make their rooms available and safe. However, in accordance with [Order in Council 1276-2021](#) issued on September 24, 2010, election officers working at polling stations in Private Seniors' Residences (résidences privées pour ainés) (RPA) will be required to have adequate immunization coverage. Their entry in these residences is therefore conditional on the presentation of the vaccine passport.

It should be noted that mobile polling stations are currently prohibited for municipal elections.

Although it is not recommended, municipalities that nevertheless decide to hold regular or advance polling in an RPA must do so by agreement with the persons responsible for the RPA. Only residents of the RPA will be able to vote, which means that no electors domiciled outside the RPA will be admitted.

However, these requirements may be different for political activities. For more information, please refer to [Questions and Answers on Health Guidelines for Political Financing](#) (available soon) (voir la section [Questions et réponses sur les consignes sanitaires applicables en matière de financement politique](#)).

Distancing and personal protective equipment

In the absence of voters:

- Indoors and when moving around, one of the following measures should be applied, with preference given to measures in the following order:
 - Minimum distance of one metre between election officers; OR
 - Physical barrier (solid partitions, e.g. Plexiglas); OR
 - Wearing the procedural mask.

In the presence of electors:

- In the presence of electors, the wearing of a procedural mask is mandatory at all times for election officers, candidates and their representatives.
 - The mask must be changed if it is wet, soiled or damaged, or at the end of a shift, or as directed by the returning officer.
- Electors must wear a face covering to enter the polling places, the revision board or the office of the electoral officer.
 - Voters will be required to remove their face coverings momentarily for identification purposes at the polling place. After identifying themselves, they must put it back on and disinfect their hands again. The voter will then be given their ballots so they can vote.

A minimum of one metre of physical distancing must be maintained between electors at all times.

- Additional safeguards are recommended when physical distancing cannot be met.
 - Physical barriers (solid partitions, e.g., Plexiglas) are recommended between poll workers. They are not required between poll officials and voters if the situation lasts less than 15 minutes (e.g., the time it takes for the voter to identify himself or herself and vote). However, the wearing of a procedural mask remains mandatory during this time.
 - Eye protection (visor, goggles) may be used, but is not mandatory.

Meeting the maximum capacity of the premises

In accordance with Ministerial Order 2021-090, the maximum capacity of any place to accommodate voters to exercise their electoral rights is set at 50% of its usual capacity, without exceeding a maximum of 250 persons.

Note that this limit excludes:

- election officers;
- candidates and their representatives;
- the queue outside.

Election Specific Measures

N° 1 : Measures relating to election staff		
	Electoral activities	Description and application
1.1	Hiring and training of election officers	In the process of hiring and training election officers, the returning officer is asked to: • Consider job interviews and training at a distance, using the telephone or video conferencing applications ⁴; • Encourage job interviews by appointment; • Promote the electronic transmission of documents and not the paper transmission; • Prioritize small group training sessions to allow a physical distance of 2 meters at all times; • Warn election workers who may have symptoms of COVID-19 or who may have been in contact with infected individuals not to attend a face-to-face training session; • Provide protective equipment (procedural masks and eye protection) to election officers; • Make available to each person the necessary supplies (pencil, paper, etc.) in order to avoid the loan of supplies; • Maintain a record of attendance at each meeting; • Train election staff on current health guidelines and recognized symptoms of COVID-19.
1.2	Provision of work for election officers	On polling days and when the board of revisors is in session, the returning officer is asked to: • Warn election officers who may have received isolation recommendations (e.g., individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to report for their shift; • Ensure that each election officer is aware of his or her role in ensuring compliance with health measures; • Provide protective equipment (procedural masks) to election officers, including, where possible, a procedural mask with a clear window to support the deaf or hard of hearing; • Make available to each person the necessary supplies (pencil, paper, etc.) to avoid the loan of equipment; • Pay particular attention to maintaining hygiene measures for tools, equipment and frequently touched surfaces. • Ask election officers not to touch voter ID; • Provide election officers with information about the voter's detailed journey when the voter comes to vote; • Inform election officers at polling stations on polling days about how to safely eat their meals, snacks and beverages: • Eat or drink at the polling station, during lulls, while momentarily removing their procedural mask; • Move away so as not to eat or drink directly at the table where the urn is located;

⁴ The swearing-in of election officers may also be done remotely in accordance with the requirements of the [Interpretation Act](#) (Loi d'interprétation RLRQ c I-16), CQLR c I-16.

		• Disinfect hands and furniture before eating and before greeting voters and handling ballots; • Staff assigned to the same polling station should take turns eating or drinking to avoid removing their masks at the same time.
--	--	--

N° 2 Measures relating to voters		
	Electoral activities	Description and application
2.1	Information to the elector	To limit the risk of spreading COVID-19, the returning officer is required, by all means available to him or her, to inform electors of the health rules in effect for the election and the measures in place to ensure the safety of election officers and electors: • Possibility to vote by mail if they are in one of the following situations: • Eligible electors for mobile voting, even those who would be able to travel; • Electors who are unable to travel for health reasons and their caregivers who live at the same address as them; • Electors whose isolation is recommended or ordered by public health authorities ⁵, namely : ▪ who have returned from a trip abroad for less than 14 days; ▪ who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are still considered carriers of the disease; ▪ have symptoms of COVID-19; ▪ have been in contact with a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 for less than 14 days; ▪ are waiting for a COVID-19 test result. • Electors who will be 70 years of age or older on election day (if the municipality has passed a resolution allowing such persons to vote by mail). • Possibility of sending a written application for entry, removal or correction to the list of electors if they are in one of the situations that allow voting by mail; • When visiting any of the election-related sites (including the returning officer's office, the board of revisors and the polling station), they are required to bring a face covering and to respect the general health measures in force; • Possibility to bring his or her own pen (black, blue or lead pencil) to vote.
2.2	Revision days	In order to ensure the protection of the electors who will appear before the board of revisors as well as the revisors, the returning officer is asked to: • Remind them that they are not allowed to do this if they have tested positive for COVID-19 and are in lockdown or have returned from travel and are quarantined; • Provide a safe place for electors who wish to apply to the board of revisors to wait their turn in safety; • Put up posters explaining current health regulations; • Post signage to promote safe movement within the premises; • Encourage electors wishing to apply for a revision to make an appointment before appearing before the board ⁶; • Encourage electors to bring their own pen to sign the revision form; • Provide the necessary number of pens to avoid lending pens between people;

⁵ These are individuals whose seclusion was recommended or ordered by public health authorities at the time *the Regulation to amend certain municipal provisions to facilitate the conduct of the November 7, 2021 municipal general election in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic on May 15, 2021* (*Règlement modifiant certaines dispositions en matière municipale afin de faciliter le déroulement de l'élection générale municipale du 7 novembre 2021 dans le contexte de la pandémie de la COVID-19*, le 15 mai 2021).

⁶ The revisors may not, however, refuse an elector who wishes to make an application and has not made an appointment in advance.

		• Ensure that electors do not manipulate the public list of electors: a revisor should do it for them.
2.3	Indoor voting days	When electors go to the polls to vote, the returning officer must be vigilant to ensure the safety of electors, electoral officers and candidates. The returning officer is therefore asked to: • Identify a member of the election staff who will be responsible for ensuring compliance with sanitation measures (e.g., an assistant to the officer in charge of information and order) • This person is responsible for counting the number of electors present to ensure that the maximum number of people allowed is respected; Note: ▪ Voters who have tested positive and are currently in self-isolation, as well as those who have returned from travel and are under quarantine, will not be allowed to go to a polling station to vote in person; ▪ Of those constituents recommended for self-isolation by public health authorities, those who present symptoms of COVID-19; have been in contact with a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the previous 14 days, and those who are awaiting a COVID-19 test result will be allowed to vote in person as long as they comply with the health rules in effect; ▪ Mail-in voting remains the preferred method for these people. • Provide sufficient space so that electors waiting to vote can do so safely ⁷; • Install signage explaining current health instructions in strategic, clearly visible locations; • Identify mandatory hand sanitizing stations (at the entrance and exit of the polling place, at identity verification panel and at the voting table); • Ensure that hand sanitizing stations are not empty; • Inform electors of safe voting procedures ⁸; • Post signage to promote safe traffic flow within the polling locations; • Provide additional quality masks for voters who have forgotten theirs; • Encourage electors to bring their own pencil (blue pen, black pen or lead pencil) to mark their ballots; • Provide more pencils than usual or disinfect them between each use; • Provide a separate template for anyone with a visual impairment or use a plastic template and disinfect it between uses; • Frequently disinfect surfaces touched by electors.

⁷ This applies to both inside and outside polling places.

⁸ [Guidelines for safe voting poster \(L'affiche Consignes pour voter en toute sécurité\)](#) available in the returning officer's library provides electors with this information.

N° 3 Measures relating to candidates		
	Electoral activities	Description and application
3.1	Election campaign and collection of supporting signatures	It is the responsibility of the candidate to comply with all applicable health measures throughout the campaign. Before filing a nomination paper, the person wishing to do so shall obtain a nomination paper from the returning officer. The returning officer is requested to: - Remind candidates that they are responsible for ensuring compliance with health measures during their campaign and when collecting supporting signatures and provide them with the checklist for candidates on compliance with health measures. Candidates shall: - Avoid handshakes; - Respect distancing; - Wear the face covering; - Avoid hand-delivered materials (flyer, form, pen). - Provide remote support to answer questions from prospective candidates; - Prefer electronic transmission of the form and documentation for those wishing to apply; - If electronic transmission is not possible, make arrangements with the candidate to make the documentation available in an easily accessible location.
3.2	Filing of the nomination paper	When a person wishes to file his or her nomination papers for an elected office, he or she must go to the office of the returning officer. During this activity, the returning officer is asked to: - Suggest to the person who wishes to become a candidate that he or she make an appointment to meet with the returning officer when the time comes to file his or her nomination papers ⁹; - Comply with the general health measures in force during the filing of a nomination paper; - Provide disinfectant at the entrance to his or her office; - Book a spacious waiting room to accommodate people waiting for their nomination papers to be analyzed; - Post signage on existing sanitary instructions; - Inform the person wishing to apply that a third party may apply on their behalf in the event that they are in ordered or recommended confinement.
3.3	Meeting with the candidates	The meeting with the candidates is essential to the smooth running of the election. The returning officer is asked to: - Prefer that this meeting be held remotely by ensuring that the relevant documents are transmitted before the meeting and the minutes following the meeting; - Remind candidates and their representatives of the rules to be followed on voting days, including the wearing of the same personal protective equipment as election officers when present at the polling place; - Take the opportunity to propose agreements with candidates to limit the number of people at the polling sites:

⁹ However, the returning officer may not refuse a person who comes to the office during the hours of operation set out in the public notice of election.

		• The returning officer may propose that the poll clerk prepare the list of electors who have voted on polling day; • The officer in charge of information and order gives the list of electors who have voted to the poll runners or the returning officer sends it directly by e-mail (use elector line number only to avoid transmitting personal information by e-mail); • In return, candidates agree to delegate only one representative per voting location.
--	--	---

N° 4 Measures related to traffic at locations frequented during the election		
	Voting and revision management	Description and application
4.1	Selection of management locations	To limit the traffic in the premises where the board of revisors and the voting days will be held, it is suggested to the returning officer to consider: • Provide larger than usual space for the board of revisors; • Establish more boards of revisors than usual to distribute traffic across multiple locations; • Encourage persons wishing to apply for a revision to make an appointment before appearing before the board of revisors ¹⁰. • Prioritize larger, even unconventional voting rooms such as arenas or amphitheaters; • Provide more voting locations than usual; • Select accessible locations that allow for safe circulation of electors (e.g., wide hallways, separate entrance from exit). The counting of votes is open to the public. However, in order to limit the number of people present at this activity, the returning officer is asked to: • Choose a spacious, even unconventional room; • Broadcast the addition of the votes virtually ¹¹.
4.2	Schedule of activities	In order to limit the amount of traffic in the premises where the board of revisors and voting days will be held, the returning officer is advised to consider the following criteria when planning the schedule: • Schedule more board of revisors sittings than usual; • Increase the length of the board of revisors' time slots; • Plan more advance polling days than usual; • Offer one or more days of poll at the returning officer's office.
4.3	Presence at voting sites	The returning officer shall ensure that the number of persons present at the polling place is limited. In order to do so, the returning officer is requested to: • Ensure fewer polling stations per polling place; • Provide for a smaller number of electors per polling division; • Ensure that there are a smaller number of polling subdivisions per advance polling station; • Assign an election officer to count the number of electors present to meet maximum site capacity standards; • Make agreements with candidates regarding the presence of political staff at polling places (see activity 3.3).

¹⁰ However, revisors may not refuse to process a request from a person who has not made an appointment.

¹¹ However, the returning officer may not refuse access to persons who would like to attend the on-site addition of the vote.

References

Legislation

Interpretation Act (Loi d'interprétation, RLRQ, c. I-16).

Act on elections and referendums in municipalities RLRQ, c. E -2.2. (Loi sur les élections et les référendums dans les municipalités, RLRQ, c. E -2.2.)

Regulation to amend certain municipal provisions to facilitate the conduct of the November 7, 2021 municipal general election in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic on May 15, 2021 (Règlement modifiant certaines dispositions en matière municipale afin de faciliter le déroulement de l'élection générale municipale du 7 novembre 2021 dans le contexte de la pandémie de la COVID-19 (2021) 153 G.O.Q. II, 2109, p.2111B.)

Government publications

Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST), *Workplace Guide to Sanitary Standards – COVID-19 (Guide de normes sanitaires en milieu de travail – COVID-19 : La SST, c'est l'affaire de tous! (Guide)*, Québec, CNESST, 2021. https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/dc100-2146a-4_guide-prevention-covid19.pdf.

