

Covid-19 Risk Mitigation During Municipal Election Campaigns

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that spreads easily from person to person, unless measures are used to reduce transmission. To protect our communities, all candidates must follow the public health safety protocols that are in place for the province, as well as any specific public health measures that may be in affect for the health region in which they are campaigning.

At times, public health guidance may change rapidly in response to the pandemic conditions. It is essential for candidates to be aware of the alert level of recovery that applies to the zone in which they are living, working, and visiting.

The measures listed below must be used in combination to provide a layered protective approach. Even if a candidate has been immunized against COVID-19, or has personally recovered from the virus, it is crucial that all these measures are used.

Keep practising physical distancing

Physical distancing minimizes close contact with others in your community.

Things you can do to keep practising physical distancing are:

- avoiding crowded places and vulnerable populations;
- avoiding greetings that include physical contact, such as handshakes;
- keeping 2 metres away from others when outside of your home;
- following your local public health guidance on the number of people that can gather in one place at one time; and,
- determine occupancy of any facility based on the ability to maintain 2 metres of physical distancing (in all directions) between people that are not members of a single household bubble.

Wear a Community Face Mask

In New Brunswick, masks are currently mandatory in indoor public places. For Orange and Red alert levels, masks are also mandatory outdoors when unable to remain 2 metres apart. Please check the [NB Recovery Plan](#) often to remain current about most recent recommendations and content from [Mandatory Order](#).

Wearing a [community face mask](#) helps stop the spread of COVID-19; and should be used in combination with physical distancing from others. Ideally, a mask would be three layers of fabric with a filter layer to provide optimal protection. A mask may also be combined with a clear plexiglass shield for added safety; but a shield alone cannot be used instead of a mask.

Practice Effective Hygiene

Keep your hands clean by washing them with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, frequently throughout the day; or using hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available. Make certain

your hand sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol and has been [approved by Health Canada](#). Cover your coughs or sneezes with the inside of your arm, or a tissue, and wash your hands after. Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Stay Home if Symptomatic

Before leaving your home, make certain you and your household members are symptom-free. Anyone experiencing two or more symptoms (or one symptom if your zone is in Red alert level), should [self-isolate](#) and use the [online form to register for testing](#); or call 811.

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough (or worsening cough)
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Diarrhea
- Loss of sense of taste
- Loss of sense of smell
- In children, purple markings on the fingers and toes

COVID-19 Operational Plans

All operating organizations, services and businesses in New Brunswick are required to have a written **COVID-19 Operational Plan**. **Candidates must develop an operational plan** that describes how risks will be addressed to protect yourself, as well as others, during your campaign. This plan applies to campaign offices, activities undertaken during the campaign, as well as individual events. A template is available on the GNB COVID website ([operational plan guide](#)) to make the process easier, along with signage to help you communicate the information. It is best to create a plan that would apply to the Red alert level of the NB Recovery Plan so that your campaign can remain active throughout all phases.

Please note: Operational Plans are subject to inspection upon request; and failure to comply with the Mandatory Order could result in fines.

Campaign Offices, Activities, and Events:

Screening and Signage Protocols

Before entering a campaign office, both workers and the public must participate in active screening to ensure they are symptom-free. This would be posted on the front door and asked upon entry.

Their name is recorded in a logbook detailing the date and time of their visit, as well as a phone number or email for contact-tracing purposes.

Then, everyone would sanitize their hands upon entering with alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Please consider recently approved alcohol-free hand sanitizing products for those impacted by certain sensitivities to alcohol products.

Physical distancing is essential and Operational Plans must detail how 2-metre separation will happen for all present within the setting (campaign staff, volunteers, public, etc.), in all directions. Reducing occupancy levels is often needed to maintain a 2-metre distance. When physical distancing cannot be achieved consistently, engineering controls (e.g. plexiglass barriers between workstations) may be necessary.

Floor and wall signage should be posted throughout to remind everyone to remain 2 metres apart. Traffic flow would be indicated using arrows on the floor, and rooms would have capacity limits posted outside. It is often necessary to remove chairs from a room or to indicate placement of seating to maintain the separation.

Wearing a mask is mandatory when inside any public building, under current health protocols. If your office is open to the public sometimes; it is mandatory masking for everyone, all the time (even if plexiglass barriers are in place). If your office is never open to the public, employees/volunteers may remove masks when sitting quietly and physically distanced by 2 metres; and while eating or drinking, with 2 metre distancing in place.

Masks are also required in outdoor public spaces when physical distancing of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

In the plan, include how you will communicate the mask requirement; citing the [criteria for an acceptable mask](#), and how to wear it safely. Note how you will provide for those who may forget their mask; and how you will accommodate those individuals who are unable to wear a mask. Consider offering a phone call, printed materials, or an online conversation.

Enhanced Environmental Cleaning would prevent transmission of the virus within the campaign headquarters or while participating in events. High touch items such as light switches, doorknobs, and railings would require daily cleaning and disinfection with a product [approved by Health Canada](#). Shared items, such as desks, chairs or office supplies would also need to be wiped down after using. Common areas, such as kitchens and washrooms would also have intensive cleaning needs and measures to prevent overcrowding. Lunchrooms are high-risk for transmission and should be avoided. Consider removing seating and encourage users to wash hands upon entering lunchroom and wipe down any touched items after use.

The importance of hand cleaning cannot be underestimated. Please provide opportunities to clean one's hands throughout the campaign center, or while conducting campaign activities in the community. Hand sanitizer with >60% alcohol content or handwash stations can be used.

Door-to-door campaigning

Traditional activities associated with door-to-door campaigning would be impacted by the zone or provincial phase of recovery. While Yellow alert level would permit door-to-door campaigning; it is not recommended that candidates enter homes. It is advised that electors would be engaged in great doorstep or verandah conversations instead. In Orange and Red alert level, door-to-door campaigning is not recommended. Candidates should ensure any activities they undertake adhere

to all public health safety protocols and are mentioned in their Operational Plan. It is essential that physical distancing, practicing proper hand hygiene and wearing a community face mask are foundational to the plan. Please consult with the [NB Recovery Plan](#) and [Mandatory Order](#) for the most recent updates to guide your practice.

To apply this to practice, candidates would sanitize their hands, don a community mask to ring/knock on the person's door, and stand 2 metres or more away from the door when talking to someone. A mask must be worn even if able to remain 2m away from the elector. Non-contact greetings would be used to maintain the 2m distance, and ideally the candidate would have doorstep conversations instead of entering the residence. Hand sanitizing, masking and distancing would be required throughout all Phases of Recovery. Before knocking on the next door, the candidate would sanitize their hands.

When collecting signatures for nomination papers, the candidate would sanitize their hands, wear a mask, and pass a freshly sanitized pen and nomination form to the nominator. The candidate would step back from the form to allow the nominator to complete the paperwork. When finished, the nominator can place the pen in a baggie labeled for used pens to be sanitized later. The Chief Electoral Officer has indicated it would be acceptable for the witness to the nominator to do so virtually, and then send the signed document electronically to the witness to sign.

Leaving printed campaign materials at an elector's home (i.e. in their mailbox) is not prohibited under the Mandatory Order, for any phase of recovery.

Plan for Illness

It is essential that campaign offices have a well-communicated plan should someone in the workplace develop two or more symptoms. The individual should exit the building immediately and notify their supervisor. Alternately, they should self-isolate in an isolation room until able to exit. Those with 2 or more symptoms should self-isolate at home, [request a test online](#), or call 811. If the candidate or their volunteers live, work, or have visited a Red zone within the past 14-days, this threshold for testing and self-isolation is reduced to only one symptom. Please see WorkSafeNB or [GNB COVID-19 Operational Plan Guide](#) for further information.

It is expected that this information may change in response to the evolving conditions of this public health event. It is essential that candidates remain up to date on measures required to protect themselves and their communities.

Resources:

[NB's Recovery plan \(gnb.ca\)](#)

[WorkSafeNB](#)

[Testing via 811](#)

[GNB COVID 19 Operational Plan Guide](#)