

# Winning Local Elections in Alberta

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# 1. Introduction

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## *a.* What This Booklet Is About

Many have dreamed of running for political office or have heard a friend talk about it. Very few people enter the race, though, and many of those who enter the race don't seem prepared to win.

That's a tragedy for us, in more ways than one. We are a democracy – the functioning of our civilization depends on people volunteering to run for these offices. And when one faction or another dominates political offices, we lose the “backstopping,” or alternate plans that democracy normally gives us.

The booklet you are reading has a very specific take on campaigning. It is primarily focussed on local elections in Alberta, particularly school board races. Because it suggests the use of computer technology, it tends to be bounded in time to the technology available in the early 2020's. I am going to try to keep as much general information in it as I can.

To make the booklet more useful in this respect, I am going to take things a little out of order. In the normal course of things, we would talk about the Campaign Plan and setup for the campaign at the beginning, and walk through other considerations later. However, as many people reading this booklet will be new to political campaigns, it makes sense to talk first about the campaigning process itself – how we identify and persuade potential voters, and then get them out to vote. We will return to the campaign planning stage the end of the booklet, once the essence has been explained.

## *b.* The Stages of Campaigning

The first thing that everyone needs to understand is that campaigns follow a regular, sequential order, like so:

Setup: you make plans, raise money, gather resources, and fulfill legal requirements. We will cover this in section 7.

Voter Identification: you figure out who is most likely to vote for you – or vote against you. This process is ongoing until the very last day. We cover this in Section 2.

Persuasion: you contact your best prospects and persuade them to vote for you. We will cover this – and the messaging work that goes with it – in Section 3.

Get Out the Vote (GOtV): when it is time to vote, you reach out to your identified supporters and push them to make those precious “x's” on the ballots. This is the subject of Section 4.

Wrap-up: it is time to take down your signs, pay any leftover bills, and file your government reports. – You do need to check any government requirements for these details.

*c.* Campaign Tools

We're using Tools to talk about all the things you need for your campaign. We'll talk about things like data tools, phone rooms, signs and literature, and methods for knocking on doors.

*d.* Setting Up a Campaign

Near the end of this booklet, we're going to go over the process of setting everything up together, as it's a lot easier to discuss set-up when you already understand the various parts.

*e.* Campaign Plans

We put the campaign plan last because it is really a sort of appendix: the campaign plan is how you write down what you are doing, so you can explain it to others and don't lose track yourself.

*f.* The Timeline

Just to make sure that you have the timeline down, here is an infographic:

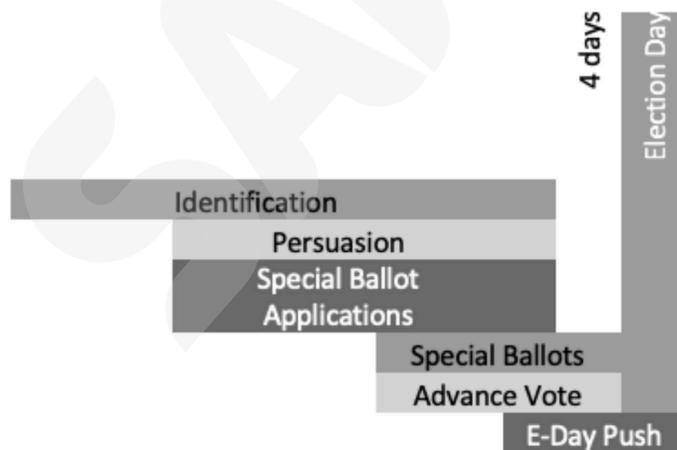


Figure 1: The Election Timeline

As you can see, there is considerable overlap between activities. We'll be looking at these in more detail later. It is best to observe that almost everything you do is dedicated to getting people out to vote – which is why it gets its own section!

## 2. Priorities: Voter Identification and Targeting

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How many votes do you need?

*a.*

The first problem in politics is to find out how many votes you need to win. Seems simple: see how many votes it took for someone to win last time, right? Unfortunately, there is a little more to it than that.

In this section, we're going to talk about some key concepts – the idea of a persuadable universe, your target vote, base voters, low-frequency voters, and the vote deficit. Beyond that, we're going to talk about how to identify some key constituencies, how to get basic data, and the nuts and bolts of voter identification. To start with, your Target Vote is indeed the number of votes you need to win. It is probably the number of people it took to win the last election. However, if you are running against an incumbent, you are going to need more votes than they got last time. In elections like school boards (and partisan nominations) you have to allow for the fact that they will work harder if there is opposition – and they may get more votes in total than they got last time. Less than a fifth of eligible voters actually vote for school board races – which means there is lots of room to get more people out if you do a little work. You will need to put some effort into that, and persuade more people to come out by applying some of the other concepts contained here.

You will have to discipline yourself to focus on:

*b.*      Your Persuadable Universe

The fact is that some people are just not going to be persuaded by you. What's more, there are always going to be people that you don't need to persuade – your base vote. You need to find out who is persuadable, so that you can turn them into supporters. Here's a handy infographic:

Figure 2: Your Persuadable Universe