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FEDERAL
ELECTION 2021

Hosting an All-candidates' Event

All-candidates' events are a great way to have political candidates hear the concerns of community members in the run-up to an election and to bring attention to growing food insecurity.

During the COVID pandemic, many Canadians became aware of just how prevalent food insecurity is in Canada, and hosting an all-candidates' event can help ensure ending poverty remains a priority for the next federal government.

In this tool kit, you will find:

- How to get your candidate to attend
 - How to find your local candidates
 - Sample invitation email to candidates
 - How to follow up with candidates
- Best practices for all-candidates' events
 - Structure
 - Room set-up
 - Maintaining a safe space
- A sample agenda
- A food insecurity backgrounder
- Sample questions for candidates
- Promotion materials for your event

If you need any further assistance, please contact Dana at dana@cfccanada.ca.

How to get your candidate to attend

How to find your local candidates

To find out who is running for each party in your riding:

1. Visit the [Elections Canada](https://www.elections.ca) website.



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2. Type your organization's postal code into the [Voter Information Service](#) box.
3. Click on Who are my candidates?

Sample invitation email

Dear [candidate name],

On behalf of [name of your organization], I am pleased to invite you to an all-candidates' event to discuss how the federal government can reduce food insecurity in Canada.

Key information on the event:

- The event will be held from [start time to end time] on [date] at [name of your organization].
- Located at: [your organization's address]
- Senior leadership and staff from [name of the organization] and community members will be in attendance.
- [A meal/light refreshments] will be served.

Even before the COVID pandemic, 4.4 million people in Canada were food insecure, meaning that they lacked the money to put good food on the table for themselves and their families. During the pandemic, food insecurity increased by 39%, affecting 1 in 7 people. Rates of food insecurity are much higher for Indigenous, Black and racialized people, as well as for newcomers, children and single parents.

[Include a sentence or two about your organization and your work supporting people who are food insecure.]

We invite you to make brief opening remarks (3-4 minutes) on how your party intends to reduce poverty and food insecurity in Canada and to answer questions from members of our community. Please note that any comments perceived as derogatory, discriminatory or stereotyping will not be tolerated.

We are looking forward to discussing with you all of the issues that matter most to our community. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are available to attend.



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Sincerely,

[Your name]

How to follow up with your candidates

Hopefully, your candidates' offices will get back to you promptly. However, because campaigns are so hectic and offices are often juggling multiple events, you may want to follow up.

Try to send invitations as soon as you know when you will be hosting your event. Candidates should all have campaign websites with contact information. You can call the campaign office a couple of days after you send the invitation to ensure they received the invite, and to follow up if you haven't gotten a response.

Best practices for all-candidates' events

Structure

There are a number of things to keep in mind when organizing an all-candidates' event. One of the most important is how to structure the event.

Generally, candidates will want to speak to their party's platforms, and this can be helpful for people to get a sense of how parties view the issues that matter to them.

It's also important, however, to ensure there is enough time for the community members who attend the event to be able to ask questions and talk about their concerns and priorities.

Here are some considerations to keep in mind:

- Presentations: Before the candidates speak, you may want to do a short presentation on food insecurity in Canada to set the tone for the event.
- Speeches: Make sure that you instruct the politicians to keep their opening comments brief (3-4 minutes) and focused on how their parties will address the issues of poverty and food insecurity.



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- Q&A/discussion: Try to keep as much time as possible for questions and answers. You can do this in a traditional way, in which the audience asks questions of a panel, or you can have the candidates move from one table to another to have more in-depth conversations.

Room set-up

Traditionally, candidates sit at a table at the front of the room, while people attending the all-candidates' event sit facing them, either in rows of chairs or at tables.

But don't be afraid to think outside the box! Inviting candidates to sit with community members over dinner and move from table to table between courses, for example, can be a lot less intimidating and might mean more people get to talk to the candidates.

Or if you decide on a virtual format, there are creative ways to use breakout rooms, allowing participants to choose which rooms to join or to move in and out of rooms as they like.

Whatever you decide, make sure you follow your region's COVID guidelines and let the candidates know the format in advance.

Maintaining a safe space

COVID considerations

While indoor gatherings are resuming across much of the country, make sure you check your local public health guidelines. Consider having your event outside if the weather permits and if you have the space for it.

You may want to ensure that people are seated at a distance and that you have enough microphones so that candidates do not have to share.



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If you are serving food (which we recommend), you may want to consider having pre-packaged portions or serving people, rather than having a buffet-style meal.

Finally, with rising concerns about COVID variants, you may want to go virtual and host an event online over Zoom, Google Meet, Instagram or Facebook Live. Questions? Contact dana@cfccanada.ca.

Concerns about views of candidates or parties

In the last federal election, some organizations had concerns that the views of certain candidates or parties might make some of their community members feel unsafe. For example, a few worked with immigrant communities and felt that certain candidates held anti-immigrant views.

Any election-related events that registered charitable organizations plan have to be non-partisan. That means that you can't directly support or oppose a particular candidate or party with your event and you need to invite all the candidates. The rules are more flexible for other kinds of nonprofits. Imagine Canada explains the rules for both in these [presentations](#).

That doesn't mean you shouldn't have your event or worry that it could become a platform for racist views and other derogatory comments. In your invitation to candidates, you can make it clear that any comments perceived as derogatory, discriminatory or stereotyping won't be tolerated.

Candidates who don't think they'll win a lot of votes at your event are unlikely to attend, but if they do, you can set the tone during your introductory remarks and state that any comments perceived as derogatory are unwelcome. Ensure the moderator at your event is prepared and comfortable intervening if necessary.



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Sample agenda

Time	Agenda item
Before the event	Ask people to sit down. Serve food
0:00-0:10	Welcome, overview, housekeeping, introduction to candidates
0:10-0:20	Overview of food insecurity in Canada and in your riding (optional)
0:20-0:40	Candidate speeches
0:40-1:00	Prepared questions Q&A
1:00-1:25	Audience Q&A or table discussions with candidates
1:25-1:30	Wrap-up, thanks and information on voting in your riding

Overview of food insecurity in Canada

You can refer to the food insecurity backgrounder (find it on [this page](#)) for content when drafting your introduction or if you decide to include an overview of food insecurity at your event. The backgrounder can also be used in conversations with candidates, media or community members.

Sample questions for the discussion

Here, you'll find some sample questions you can ask candidates about how their parties are planning to address food insecurity and its causes. If you can, though, try to involve community members in creating questions for candidates.

1. A root cause of food insecurity is poverty. What is your party planning to do to decrease poverty and food insecurity in Canada?
2. Black, Indigenous and racialized people experience food insecurity at much higher rates than white people in Canada. What will your party do to address



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this issue? What does your party's platform say about fighting systemic racism?

3. Food insecurity rates in Northern communities are astronomical, up to 57% in Nunavut. How will your party ensure that people in Northern and remote communities can access good food?
4. The cost of housing in much of Canada is unaffordable. What will your party do to ensure all people in Canada can afford safe housing?
5. The cost of child care in much of the country is unaffordable, and, during the pandemic, this contributed to women leaving the workforce in higher numbers than men. What will your party do to ensure that parents can afford childcare spaces for their children?
6. Many people have to choose between paying for food and paying for prescriptions. What will your party do to ensure everyone can afford to take their medications?
7. Indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast have been stripped of their land, undermining their ability to hunt, fish and gather traditional food sources. What can the federal government do to support Indigenous foodways?

Promotion materials for your event

[Customizable ¼-page printable flyer](#)

Sample social media posts

#ElectionDayCanada is ## days away and we've invited candidates from RIDING to discuss how the federal government can reduce food insecurity in Canada. Join us on MONTH DATE at TIME to hear from @CANDIDATE, @CANDIDATE, @CANDIDATE, and @CANDIDATE at our All-Candidates' Event.



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Hey **RIDING**, #ElectionDayCanada is coming up and we've invited candidates to discuss how the federal government can reduce food insecurity in Canada. Join us on **MONTH DATE** at **TIME** to hear from **@CANDIDATE**, **@CANDIDATE**, **@CANDIDATE**, and **@CANDIDATE** at our All-Candidates' Event.

Learn more about how **RIDING** candidates and their parties will work to reduce poverty and food insecurity in Canada and our community at our All-Candidates' Event. **Join us:** on **MONTH, DATE** at **TIME**.

Tip: Run out of characters to tag candidates? Tag them in the image instead!

Join us on **MONTH DATE** at **TIME** for our All-Candidates' Event! **RIDING** candidates will share how their parties will address the root causes of food insecurity in our community and across the country.

Sample social media graphics

Canva Template: [All-Candidates' Event graphic](#)

Google slide Template: [All Candidates' Event graphic](#)

Text for translation:

[Riding] Federal Electoral District
All-Candidates' Event
44th Federal Election

[Organization name] is hosting a moderated event at which you can learn more about how candidates and their parties will work to reduce poverty and food insecurity in our community and across Canada. Audience Q&A to follow.

A meal will be served.
Light refreshments will be served.

Invited candidates
[candidate]



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[candidate]

[candidate]

[candidate]

[candidate]

[date]

[time]

[location]

Contact:

RSVP

Learn more at: