

Guidelines for Candidates' Representatives: Advance, Ordinary and Mobile Polls



This document is Elections Canada's guideline OGI 2023-06.

Introduction

You have been chosen as a candidate's representative for the current federal election. These guidelines have been prepared to help you perform your duties in accordance with applicable rules, policies and legislation while attending advance, ordinary and mobile polls.

The following is provided for your guidance. The final authority is the *Canada Elections Act*. At a polling place, an election officer who is designated to manage the activities of candidates' representatives will have the final say on the application of the Act. The designated election officer will be a central poll supervisor or deputy returning officer. They will be identified when you present yourself at a polling place.

Note: If you interfere with the voting or counting process, engage in any misconduct or fail to obey the directions or decisions of an election officer, you may be asked to leave or be removed from the polling place or counting location.

The primary role of election officers is to serve electors as they come to vote. Your role is to observe the election proceedings and provide the level of scrutiny necessary to a fair and transparent voting process.

We suggest that you register and vote at your advance poll or by special ballot if your duties will make it impossible for you to vote on election day at the polling place where you are legally entitled to vote.

Authorization of a Candidate's Representative

Before you can act as a candidate's representative in an electoral district for the current federal election, the *Authorization of a Candidate's Representative* (EC 20020) form must be properly completed and then signed by the relevant election officer. Speak with your candidate or the candidate's official agent to get the authorization form.

At the polling place, the authorization process will be completed as follows:

- Before you can be admitted to the polling place, you must present the authorization form signed by your candidate or official agent to the designated election officer.
- The original form or a physical copy of it will be accepted; a digital copy cannot be accepted.
- The designated election officer will verify that the top section of the form has been properly completed.
- You will be required to make a solemn declaration and sign the authorization form in front of the designated election officer.

- The designated election officer will provide you with a *Candidate's Representative Identification Badge* (EC 20901) inside a *Clear Plastic Hanging Badge Holder* (EC 20909).
- The badge displays your name, your candidate's political affiliation, the polling place where you received the badge and the name and signature of the election officer who issued it.
- You must not write on or add anything to the badge.

Your *Candidate's Representative Identification Badge* (EC 20901) allows you to visit any polling place or service centre in your candidate's electoral district at any time during voting for the current federal election; you will not have to make a new solemn declaration at each polling place or service centre. When you go to a polling place to observe voting or to collect sequence number sheets (bingo sheets), you must first present yourself to the designated election officer and sign in. You do not have to line up with electors waiting to vote.

Note: Candidates have the right to be at a polling place in their electoral district. Candidates who wish to perform the duties of a candidate's representative should present themselves to the designated election officer on arrival. Election officers may ask candidates to provide identification or their *Notice of Confirmation of Nomination / Notice of Name to Appear on the Ballot* (EC 20012) to prove that they are indeed a candidate in the electoral district.

Responsibilities at the Polling Place

As a candidate's representative, you **MUST**:

- Be authorized as a candidate's representative;
- Help maintain the secrecy of the vote;
- Respect the right of electors to an accessible voting process;
- Sign in and sign out of each polling place in the *Visitors Log* (EC 50428), regardless of how many times you visit the same polling place;
- Display your *Candidate's Representative Identification Badge* (EC 20901) when acting as your candidate's representative; and
- Respect all the decisions of the designated election officer; these decisions will prevail unless overruled later by the returning officer or a judge.

As a candidate's representative, you **MAY**:

- Visit any polling place or service centre in your candidate's electoral district during registration, voting and counting for the current federal election, as long as you present a valid *Candidate's Representative Identification Badge* (EC 20901) to the designated election officer;
- At least 15 minutes before the polls open and as long as it does not impede the opening of the polls, ask to have the ballots intended to be used at a voting desk carefully counted in your presence, witness election officers initialing the back of the ballots, and ask to inspect the ballots, the ballot box or any other material related to the vote;
- Sign any seals placed on the envelopes and ballot boxes containing the ballots and other election material;

- Take note of the serial numbers on seals for the secure bag or ballot boxes and verify them against the seal control sheet;
- Ask to examine, but not handle, an elector's identification when the deputy returning officer is verifying proof of identity and address. Note that electors may vote even if they refuse to allow you to examine their identification, and election officers will keep a record of such situations in the *Events Log* (EC 50060);
- During voting hours, examine the list of electors with the deputy returning officer, provided this does not interfere with the voting process;
- Request, through the deputy returning officer, that an elector repeat their name and address;
- Request, through the deputy returning officer, that an elector make a solemn declaration if you have reasonable doubt about the elector's eligibility to vote (age or citizenship) or residence in the electoral district (if the elector shows a piece of identification that contains only their mailing address—see Elections Canada's [Policy on Voter Identification when Registering and Voting in Person in Federal Electoral Events](#));
- Take a picture of the *Sequence Number Sheet – Advance Polls* (EC 50109) with your mobile device after the close of advance polls;
- Get one copy of the *Sequence Number Sheet – Election Day* (EC 50111) on an hourly basis for each voting desk on election day; and
- Examine and object to any ballot being verified or counted—the deputy returning officer will keep a record of all objections in the *Events Log* (EC 50060).

As a candidate's representative, you MAY NOT:

- Interfere with the registration or voting process;
- Attempt to get information about how any elector is going to vote or has voted, or attempt to influence an elector's choice of candidate;
- Systematically challenge electors' eligibility to vote;
- Ask an elector to remove their face mask or other face covering;
- Handle an elector's identification;
- Require an elector to show proof of identity and address after their ballot has been issued;
- Take any photographs or make any audio or video recordings at the polling place
 - Exception: The Chief Electoral Officer allows you to take a photograph of the *Sequence Number Sheet – Advance Polls* (EC 50109) using a mobile device after the advance polls have closed, for the sole purpose of sharing a copy of the record with you;
- Sit at the same table as the deputy returning officer or the registration officer;
- Enter the polling place after the doors have been closed and the counting of ballots is under way, or re-enter the polling place if you leave after the count has started;
- Handle any ballots during the count;
- Display partisan symbols or material at the polling place (ask the designated election officer what parts of the building this applies to);

- Display literature or other material that could be taken as an indication of support for or opposition to the election of a candidate or political party; or
- Use or wear colours or emblems that would identify your candidate or party, with the one exception of the *Candidate’s Representative Identification Badge* (EC 20901) issued by Elections Canada.

If Elections Canada becomes aware of any potential contravention of the *Canada Elections Act*, the agency refers the matter to the Commissioner of Canada Elections for consideration and possible investigation. The Commissioner is the independent officer whose duty is to ensure that the *Canada Elections Act* is complied with and enforced.

Use of Mobile Devices

Candidates’ representatives are not permitted to take audio or video recordings or photographs at a polling place, with the exception of a photograph of the *Sequence Number Sheet – Advance Polls* (EC 50109) after the advance polls have closed. It is illegal for anyone, including an elector, to take a picture, make a video recording or copy in any manner a marked ballot. However, this prohibition does not apply to persons with a visual impairment who take a photograph or make a video recording of a ballot they have marked for the purpose of verifying the accuracy of the marking.

Candidates, their representatives and electors are not restricted by legislation on the usage of mobile devices. However, Elections Canada discourages their use in the polling place. Any use of a mobile device should be done discreetly and not impede any elector from exercising their right to vote, nor violate the secrecy of the vote. If the use of a mobile device results in the disruption of the voting process or the count, the designated election officer may ask the person involved to leave the polling place.

Number of Candidates’ Representatives Permitted at a Polling Place

Each candidate or official agent may appoint as many representatives as desired; however, there are limits to how many may be present at any given time.

Location	Number of Candidates’ Representatives Permitted (per candidate)
Advance, mobile and ordinary polls (during voting period)	Two per voting desk or one representative when going room to room
Registration desks	One per registration desk
Advance, mobile and ordinary polls (during counting of ballots)	Two per counting team

Voting Procedures

Election officers at the polling place

The deputy returning officer is responsible for checking electors' identification documents, crossing their name off the *List of Electors* and issuing a ballot to them. The registration officer (or, in their absence, the central poll supervisor) is responsible for registering electors, updating their information and administering the vouching process, when applicable. The information officer is responsible for greeting electors as they enter the polling place, directing them appropriately and, when required, providing extra assistance. Visit elections.ca for more information about election officers and their roles at polling places.

There will always be two election officers per voting desk to administer the counting of the votes when polls close on election day.

Voting at advance polls

The deputy returning officer enters the required information about electors, including any declarations made, on the *Record of Electors* (EC 50080).

As electors present themselves to vote, the deputy returning officer draws a line through their name on the *List of Electors* and provides a ballot to them. After an elector's ballot is placed in the ballot box, the election officer ticks (✓) the Voted box next to the elector's name on the *List of Electors* or *List of Entries*.

The deputy returning officer also completes the *Sequence Number Sheet – Advance Polls* (EC 50109), indicating the elector's polling division and sequence number.

The deputy returning officer records anything unusual that happens at the polling place in the Log of notable events section of the *Events Log* (EC 50060).

Note: Electors who are not on the *List of Electors* may register to vote when they arrive at the advance polling place. As these electors will not have an assigned sequence number, they will not be added to the *Sequence Number Sheet – Advance Polls* (EC 50109).

After closing the poll, the designated election officer prepares the *Sequence Number Sheet – Advance Polls* (EC 50109). You are permitted to take a photograph of it using a mobile device only when the advance polls have closed. This is an exception to the general rule that photography is not permitted in the polling place. Alternatively, you can choose to request a copy from the returning officer the next day or download it through the Political Entities Service Centre.

Voting on election day

The *Official List of Electors* contains the names of electors who registered before election day. As electors present themselves to vote, the deputy returning officer draws a line through their name on the *List of Electors* and provides a ballot to them. Once an elector's ballot is placed in the ballot box, the deputy returning officer ticks (✓) the Voted box next to the elector's name on the *List of Electors* or *List of Entries*.

The deputy returning officer records anything unusual that happens at the voting desk in the Log of notable events section of the *Events Log* (EC 50060). A designated election officer also maintains a log of anything unusual that happens at the polling place in the *Polling Place Log* (EC 50358).

Note: Electors who are not on the *List of Electors* may register to vote when they arrive at the polling place. As these electors will not have an assigned sequence number, they will not be added to the *Sequence Number Sheet – Election Day* (EC 50111).

The deputy returning officer records electors who voted on election day using the *Sequence Number Sheet – Election Day* (EC 50111). On request, you may get a copy of this sheet once an hour throughout the day. Speak with the information officer at the polling place for instructions on how to do so. Candidates will be notified when digital copies are available in the Political Entities Service Centre.

Electors' name already crossed off the *List of Electors*

Electors may have been crossed off the *List of Electors* because they requested a special ballot (indicated by an "S" in the margin) or voted at an advance poll (indicated by an "X" in the margin), but they may also have been crossed off by mistake. Electors whose names have already been crossed off the list when they arrive at the polling place are not allowed to vote, unless they make a solemn declaration stating that they have not previously voted or requested a special ballot for the current election and the election officer completes a *Voting Status Certificate* (EC 50051).

Placing the ballot in the ballot box

When an elector returns with their ballot, the deputy returning officer verifies that it is the same one issued to the elector and removes the numbered counterfoil from the ballot. The ballot is returned to the elector so that they can place it in the ballot box. They may ask the deputy returning officer to deposit the ballot for them.

Counting of the Ballots

Closing the polling place

At the time set for closing a polling place, any electors already in line (whether inside or outside the door) will be served before the counting starts. No elector arriving after the time set for closing will be allowed to vote, even if others are still voting when they arrive.

Counting the ballots

Candidates and candidates' representatives may be present when ballots are counted at a counting location. The counting of all ballots cast at polling places happens on the final day of voting, only after polls have closed on election night or by express permission from the Chief Electoral Officer to count advance ballots one hour early. This includes the counting of ballots in the sealed ballot boxes from each advance poll, which are not opened until election night. You must arrive before the counting begins if you wish to observe the process; ideally, you should arrive at least 15 minutes in advance.

Note: Candidates and candidates' representatives cannot return to the counting location if they leave during the count.

By law, two election officers must count the ballots. A second election officer will be assigned to help each deputy returning officer count the ballots; this will normally be the information officer, the registration officer or, in some cases, the central poll supervisor. Usually, the deputy returning officer counts the ballots, and the second election officer records the votes for each candidate on the *Tally Sheet* (EC 50090). Only the election officer doing the counting may handle the ballots, but everyone present will be shown how each one is marked. Once the count is complete, the election officer doing the counting records the results on the *Statement of the Vote* (EC 50100).

You may object to the validity of any ballot and have the objection recorded in the Log of objections to ballots section of the *Events Log* (EC 50060). The final decision rests exclusively with the deputy returning officer of each counting team. An objection number will be assigned to each ballot that is objected to, and an election officer will mark that number on the ballot.

You are encouraged to observe the counts throughout the polling place, especially if there are only a few representatives at each count. You may witness the process and sign seals at multiple counts.

After the count, you may print and sign your name on any envelope seal and on the *Statement of the Vote* (EC 50100). On request, you will receive the *Copy of Results for Candidates* (EC 50110).

Additional Information

For up-to-date information on health and safety measures, visit elections.ca.

Rules governing the conduct of representatives at Elections Canada's administrative centre, local Elections Canada offices and polling places differ. If you are observing proceedings at a polling place, please refer to this guideline. If you are observing proceedings at a local Elections Canada office, please refer to the *Guidelines for Candidates' Representatives: Service Centres in Local Elections Canada Offices* (EC 78058).

Reference materials:

- [Central Poll Supervisor Guidebook](#) (EC 50354)
- [Deputy Returning Officer Guidebook](#) (EC 50300 and EC 50305)
- [Registration Officer Guidebook](#) (EC 50357)
- [Information Officer Guidebook](#) (EC 50356)

If you have questions about your role, please contact the returning officer for the electoral district in which you will be representing a candidate. You may also contact Elections Canada:

Email:

For portal and election support: csep-pesc@elections.ca

For general information on elections: info@elections.ca

Phone:

1-800-486-6563

TTY: 1-800-361-8935

Mail:

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