



Guidelines for Candidates' Representatives: Service Centres in Local Elections Canada Offices

This document is Elections Canada's guideline OGI 2023-07.

Introduction

You have been chosen as a candidate's representative for this federal election. These guidelines have been prepared to help you perform your duties in accordance with applicable rules, policies and legislation while attending a service centre, where electors can vote by special ballot. Service centres are established in the office of the local returning officer or additional assistant returning officer. The returning officer will communicate the locations for counting special ballots to the candidate during the election.

The following is provided for your guidance. The final authority is the *Canada Elections Act*. At a service centre, the designated election officer has the final say on the application of the Act. The designated election officer will be either the returning officer, assistant returning officer, additional assistant returning officer or service point supervisor. They will be identified when you present yourself at a service centre.

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 register and vote. Your role is to observe the election proceedings under the Special Voting Rules and provide the level of scrutiny necessary to a fair and transparent 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 service centre, the authorization process will be completed as follows:

- Before you can be admitted to the service centre, 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 service centre 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 service centre or polling place 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 service centre or polling place. When you go to a service centre to observe voting proceedings, you must first present yourself to the designated election officer. You do not have to line up with electors waiting to vote.

Note: Candidates have the right to be at a service centre 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 Service Centre

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;
- 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 service centre or polling place 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;
- Observe the sealing and unsealing of ballot boxes, or the transfer of outer envelopes to a secure storage medium, as need be;
- Ask to examine, but not handle, an elector's identification when the service agent 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 *Service Agent Manual* (EC 40240);

- During office hours, examine certain official election material—such as the *Record of Outer Envelopes Issued to Local SVR Electors (RO)* (EC 78720)—provided it does not interfere with the registration or voting process;
- Request, through the service agent, that an elector repeat their name and address;
- Request, through the service agent, 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](#));
- Be present during the verification and counting of local special ballot votes; and
- Examine and object to any outer envelope or ballot being verified or counted—the deputy returning officer will keep a record of all objections on the *Objections to a Declaration on an Outer Envelope or to Ballot Papers* (EC 78740) form.

As a candidate’s representative, you MAY NOT:

- Interfere with the registration or voting process;
- Act as an interpreter for an elector;
- 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—you may direct your comments, questions or objections only to the designated election officer;
- 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 in the office of the returning officer or the service centre;
- Sit at the same table as the service agent;
- Display partisan symbols or material at the service centre (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 matter is referred 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 the office of the returning officer or the service centre. 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 office. 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 office.

Number of Candidate's Representatives Permitted at a Service Centre

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)
Service centre (during registration and voting period)	Two per service centre
Office of the returning officer (during the counting of special ballot votes)	One per counting team

Special Voting Rules

Any elector who cannot or does not wish to vote at a polling station during an election may vote using a special ballot. With a special ballot, an elector can vote by mail or in person at a service centre. If the elector is away from their electoral district, inside or outside Canada, they can also register to vote by special ballot with Elections Canada in Ottawa. Voting by special ballot is governed by the Special Voting Rules, set out in Part 11 of the *Canada Elections Act*.

In offices of returning officers, registration and voting services are offered to two types of electors:

1. *Local electors – Canadian electors in their electoral districts during the election*

Canadian citizens who will be 18 years of age or older on election day and who, during an election, cannot or do not wish to vote at the advance or election day polls, may apply to vote by special ballot in their own electoral district.

2. *National electors – Canadian electors temporarily away from their electoral districts during the election*

Canadian citizens who will be 18 years of age or older on election day and who live in Canada but who expect to be absent from their electoral districts, either in Canada or abroad, during an election may apply to vote by special ballot.

Registration and Voting Procedures

Registering to vote by special ballot at the service centre

When an elector comes in to register and vote by special ballot, they are served by a service agent. The service agent ensures that the elector's application is complete, and validates the electors' proof of identity and residence before issuing a special ballot voting kit. The elector must complete and sign the declaration on the outer envelope that forms part of the voting kit. The declaration states that the elector is a Canadian citizen and will be at least 18 on election day, and that they have not already voted and will not attempt to vote again in the current electoral event.

A multi-envelope system is used to protect the secrecy of the vote while also ensuring that adequate administrative measures are in place.

When an elector applies by any other means (i.e. by fax, by mail or through a third party), they must pick up their voting kit themselves or receive it by mail. A third party cannot pick up a special ballot voting kit on the elector's behalf.

Electors who reside in a different electoral district or who will be completing their ballot while outside of the local Elections Canada office must always vote using a "blank special ballot." Electors who reside in the electoral district and who are voting immediately at the office of the returning officer or additional assistant returning officer vote using a regular ballot once they are printed, if available.

Once an elector's application to vote by special ballot is accepted and a special ballot voting kit is issued, they can only vote by special ballot in the current election. They cannot vote at the advance or election day polls.

Service agents record anything unusual that happens during registration in their office.

An elector who wishes to register to vote by special ballot does not need to be on the list of electors to do so.

A *local* elector who does not vote immediately, but rather leaves with their special ballot voting kit, is responsible for ensuring that the completed ballot reaches the office of the returning officer in their electoral district before the polls close in that electoral district on election day. Otherwise, it cannot be counted. A ballot from a local elector that is misdirected and is received at Elections Canada's administrative centre no later than 6:00 p.m., Eastern time, on election day will also be counted. The ballot must be returned in the inner and outer envelopes provided, either in person or by mail.

A *national* elector is responsible for ensuring that Elections Canada's administrative centre receives the ballot no later than 6:00 p.m., Eastern time, on election day. Otherwise, it cannot be counted. The ballot must be returned in the inner and outer envelopes provided.

A ballot received by fax or other electronic means cannot be counted.

The elector must always sign the declaration on the outer envelope in order for their ballot to go through the verification process and be sent to the count.

Crossing electors off the list when they register to vote by special ballot

After service agents register electors in the system, they will automatically be crossed off the list of electors as having received a special ballot.

On the lists of electors, an “S” appears in the left margin next to electors’ names to indicate that their *Application for Registration and Special Ballot* was accepted.

Placing ballots in the ballot boxes

When an elector votes immediately in the office or returns their ballot there, the service agent ensures that the elector has completed and signed the outer envelope before depositing it in the ballot box.

Ballots for national electors are returned to Elections Canada in Ottawa (before the deadline) for processing. Ballots for local electors are kept in the office of the returning officer for the count.

Ballot Counting Procedures

Ballots from local electors are counted in the office of the returning officer by teams of two election officers. They may only be counted once the polls have closed in the electoral district.

The special ballots of other electors (electors temporarily away from their electoral districts, incarcerated electors, Canadian Forces electors and electors residing outside Canada) are counted at Elections Canada’s administrative centre by special ballot officers, under the supervision of the Special Voting Rules Administrator or designate.

Candidates’ representatives still have the right to witness all components of the verification and count, **regardless of when they take place**, including:

- The verification of outer envelopes against the local record;
- The separation of inner envelopes and outer envelopes; and
- The count of local special ballots.

The returning officer will communicate to the candidate when each part of the verification and counting process will take place so that you can attend or send someone on your behalf as a witness.

Counting *local* ballots at the office of the returning officer

- The counting team opens the ballot box and verifies each outer envelope to ensure that it is from a registered elector and that no previous ballot has been issued to that elector. They also ensure that the declaration was signed by the elector.
- They then open the outer envelopes, remove the sealed inner envelopes containing the ballots and deposit them in a sealed ballot box.
- Finally, they open the ballot box, remove ballots from their inner envelopes and count the votes. These procedures ensure the secrecy of the vote.

Responsibilities During the Count of Special Ballots

As a candidate's representative present during the count, you **MUST**:

- Be authorized as a candidate's representative;
- Become familiar with the rules governing the counting of the votes;
- Help maintain the secrecy of the vote;
- Display your *Candidate's Representative Identification Badge* (EC 20901) when acting as your candidate's representative; and
- Respect the decisions of the deputy returning officer.

As a candidate's representative present during the count, you **MAY**:

- Examine any ballot;
- Object to any ballot being counted and have the objection recorded by the deputy returning officer;
- Sign your name on any seal (after the count);
- Sign your name on the *Statement of the Vote – Local Special Ballots* (EC 78760) (after the count); and
- Request to receive a copy of the *Statement of the Vote*.

As a candidate's representative present during the count, you **MAY NOT**:

- Enter the counting location after the doors have been closed and the counting of ballots is under way, or re-enter the counting location if you leave after the count has started;
- Interfere with the counting of the ballot papers;
- Handle any ballots during the count;
- Attempt to get information about how any elector has voted;
- Communicate any information as to how an elector has voted; or
- Take any photographs or make any audio or video recordings at the counting location.

Communication of Results

Once the special ballots for every electoral district are counted at Elections Canada's administrative centre, voting results are communicated to each returning officer. Those results, known as "SVR Group 1," include:

- Canadian Forces electors;
- Canadian citizens residing outside of Canada;
- Incarcerated electors whose address for voting purposes was in the electoral district; and
- Electors temporarily outside of their electoral district.

Each returning officer enters these results, and then enters the results for "SVR Group 2," which comprises the votes of local electors who returned their ballot to their local Elections Canada office.

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 service centre, please refer to this guideline. If you are observing proceedings at a polling place, please refer to the *Guidelines for Candidates' Representatives: Advance, Ordinary and Mobile Polls* (EC 20045).

Reference materials:

- [Service point supervisor](#)
- [Assistant service point supervisor](#)
- [Service centre support officers](#)
- [Assistant returning officer](#)

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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