

Federal Elections 101 – The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of Voting in Canada

Who can vote?

All Canadian citizens aged 18 and above by October 21st have the right to vote in any federal election.

Votes are cast for individual candidates, generally nominated by political parties, seeking election as *your* district's Member of Parliament in the House of Commons.

Elections Canada defines your "place of residence or home address" as "where you ordinarily live, where you think of as home, or where you have adopted as home." So, if you're from out of town, your electoral district might be "back home," or you might opt for where you're currently living. Elections Canada has many ways for you to prove your address when you go to vote, outlined below.

What Does Voting Do?

Canadian federal elections generally happen in October every four years, when citizens in 338 electoral districts cast their ballots to select a local representative. The winner of each local election then becomes a Member of Parliament and represents you in the federal House of Commons, where laws are passed and governments chosen.

Make sure that you have your say! Along with paying taxes and watching Team Canada play for the gold medal in women's hockey, voting is one of the few times when millions of Canadians participate in the same duty at the same time, from Vancouver to St. John's and from Windsor to Whitehorse.

Why should I vote?

Why not?! Voting is easy, social, a duty of citizenship, and among the very best ways for millions of individual Canadians to have a say in how our country is governed. This year, millennials form the largest group of voters for the first time and the political parties want to earn your support. Policies affecting our generation, whether from post-secondary education to housing affordability to climate change, are being proposed by the candidates, so it's incredibly important to speak up, show up, and have your say.

When can I vote?

This year's election is on Monday October 21st. In BC, the polls are open from 7:00am to 7:00pm.

In addition to the 21st, there are also four days of Advance Polls during the Thanksgiving Long Weekend. These run from 9:00am to 9:00pm each day, Friday October 11th to Monday October 14th.

Additionally, between now and 6:00pm on Tuesday October 15th, any voter may cast a special ballot ahead of time at any of Elections Canada's 500 local offices. Their hours are Monday to Friday (9:00am – 9:00pm), Saturdays (9:00am – 6:00pm), and Sundays (12:00pm – 4:00pm).

Locally, the BCIT Student Association has partnered with Elections Canada to provide additional special voting opportunities at Burnaby Campus in Town Square A+B. These will be Saturday October 5th (9:00am - 6:00pm), Sunday October 6th (12:00pm – 4:00pm), and Monday October 7th to Wednesday October 9th (9:00am – 9:00pm).

Where can I vote?

If you plan to vote in your neighbourhood on either Election Day or during the Advance Polls, you'll want to check your voting location [here, via the Voter Information Service](#).

As mentioned above, to vote at an Elections Canada office between now and 6:00pm on October 15th, [use this webpage to find the one nearest your home, school, or workplace](#).

Additionally, any voter can cast a ballot (Saturday October 5th to Wednesday October 9th) at [one of these campuses](#), including Capilano University, Douglas (New West), Kwantlen (Richmond), Langara College, SFU (Burnaby Mountain), and UBC Vancouver.

BCITSA has tracked down the following voting locations for students at all five campuses; these are the places you can cast a ballot, any day of the week, between now and October 15th.

Burnaby Campus: In addition to Town Square A+B October 5th to 9th, ballots can be cast near campus at EC's two Burnaby offices, 4940 Canada Way and 4567 Lougheed.

Aerospace Technology Campus: 4451 No. 3 Road (suite 211) in Richmond, a 10 minutes drive or 20-30 minutes bus ride

Annacis Island Campus: New Westminster (620 Royal Ave, suite 10), a 15 minute drive or 40-60 minutes by bus, or Richmond (4600 Jacombs), a 15-20 minutes drive or 50-60 minutes bus ride

Marine Campus: 935 Marine Drive in North Vancouver, a 5 minute drive or 20 minute bus ride

Downtown Campus: 747 Cardero in Vancouver, a 20 minute walk or 15 minute bus ride

Lastly: if you need to vote by mail, *it's imperative that you [register online](#) as soon as possible, and no later than Tuesday October 15th at 6:00pm.*

How easy is it to cast my ballot?

Elections Canada wants voting to be as easy as possible. You can register when you arrive at the polling place, but voters are encouraged to use [Elections Canada's online service](#) to check their registration status, update their address, or register for the first time.

Elections Canada's website contains ([link here](#)) the authoritative legal list of acceptable ID: the most common is a BC Drivers Licence or BC ID, with your photo, name, and current address. Otherwise, there are a host of acceptable combinations, such as a passport or student ID combined with a bank or credit card statement. Finally, a friend or neighbour is able to vouch for you, if you two plan to vote at the same polling station.