



Your Guide to  
**Working at a  
Federal Election**



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# Overview

In this guide, you'll find information about the many jobs that Elections Canada needs to fill during an [election period](#).

We hire and pay around 200,000 [election workers](#) during every federal general election to ensure that it runs smoothly and fairly.

There are many benefits to working at an election, such as getting paid, helping to support Canada's democracy and meeting people in your community.

Elections Canada aims to have all [polling places](#) and [local Elections Canada offices](#) reflect the diversity of Canada's communities. That means we are looking to hire more members of the following groups:

- ✓ **youth (including those aged 16 and 17)**
- ✓ **post-secondary students**

- ✓ **bilingual people who can provide service in both official languages**
- ✓ **people who speak a language other than the common official language in their riding**
- ✓ **First Nations people, Métis and Inuit**
- ✓ **people with disabilities**

**There are different ways to work at a federal election.**

**The type of job you do depends on whether you're working at a:**

- [local Elections Canada office](#)
- [polling place](#)
- [Vote on Campus office](#)

You are not required to work in the [riding](#) where you live. In other words, you can apply to work where you choose. Depending on the

situation, we may ask you to work in a neighbouring riding where there are not enough workers <sup>1</sup>.

There are various paid positions available. Each job has its own roles and requirements, but they will all give you valuable experience, skills and networking opportunities, as well as a better understanding of how voting works.

Elections Canada also employs several hundred people at our headquarters in Gatineau, Quebec, and at our distribution centre in Ottawa, Ontario. For some office positions, remote work may be available. Check our website for [job postings](#) at our headquarters.

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<sup>1</sup> During the hiring process, priority will be given to applicants who live in the riding where they wish to work.

## **Your community is counting on you!**

Your role is important and taking it seriously will make a difference in your community. Be part of a team that will ensure the best experience for voters. **It's important to honour your commitment** as an election worker and show up for your shifts: your community is counting on you!

## **Who can work with us**

To work at a federal election, you must:

- be a Canadian citizen <sup>2</sup>
- be at least 16 years old on election day
- be [impartial](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Some positions at local Elections Canada offices may not require Canadian citizenship.

When hired, you must sign a [solemn declaration](#) to make official your impartiality. While performing your duties, you must refrain from:

- 1.** taking part in any political activities from the beginning until the end of your work for Elections Canada
- 2.** working for any candidate or [political party](#) or going to any political events or meetings
- 3.** showing or wearing items that say anything good or bad about a political party or candidate

This strict impartiality and non-partisanship is key, since it strengthens electors' confidence in our electoral system.

Under the **Canada Elections Act**, certain people cannot be appointed as poll workers, including federal ministers and members of the House of Commons. For the full list, visit the

[Poll Workers Employment page](#) on Elections Canada's website.

## **Calling all Canadians aged 16 and 17!**

Working at a federal election is a great learning experience for students. It will allow you to witness democracy first-hand, understand how the electoral system works and contribute as an active citizen. You'll be able to build your resumé and get paid (even for your training). Work is available on weekends, so it won't interfere with your classes. Ask the returning officer in your riding about working at the [advance polls](#).

Also, there are almost always extra jobs available on election night, counting the votes cast at advance polls and by special ballot or helping to collect and organize all the materials being brought back to the local Elections Canada office from the polls.



## **Did you know?**

Every election worker who works at a polling place gets three hours of paid training—some is in person, and some may be virtual. You'll learn about the responsibilities of your job. For some positions, you can practice with actual election materials so you'll know exactly what you need to do. There will always be a team of people who are ready to help and support you.

Want to learn more about federal elections right now? Check out [Elections Step by Step](#).

## **Jobs at local Elections Canada offices**

Every riding in Canada has a local Elections Canada office, which opens when a general election or by-election is called. The returning officer for the riding works at the office, along with the election workers who help plan the

delivery of voting services, manage budgets and resources, revise the lists of electors and communicate with the public.

When you work at a local Elections Canada office, you work for the entire [election period](#) (beginning 36 to 50 days before election day) from 7.5 to 12 hours a day, including weekends. The number of days you work will depend on the job.

[Election workers](#) at local offices prepare everything that people need to vote. Their duties include:

- registering electors or updating their names and addresses on the [list of electors](#)
- helping electors to register and vote by [special ballot](#)
- doing paperwork and managing election materials

- answering questions from the public

**The local Elections Canada office is a busy place, but you'll be working as part of a team.**

**Jobs at an Elections Canada office include:**

- ✓ [assistant returning officer](#)
- ✓ [service point supervisor](#)
- ✓ [assistant service point supervisor](#)
- ✓ [service centre support officer](#)
- ✓ [service agent](#)
- ✓ [financial officer](#)
- ✓ [training officer](#)
- ✓ [electoral material coordinator](#)
- ✓ [automation coordinator](#)

- ✓ [assistant automation coordinator](#)
- ✓ [receptionist](#)
- ✓ [poll operations manager](#)
- ✓ [office clerk](#)
- ✓ [office coordinator](#)
- ✓ [office messenger](#)
- ✓ [recruitment supervisor](#)
- ✓ [recruitment officer](#)
- ✓ [community relations officer](#)

These are **paid positions**.

Visit the Elections Canada website to learn more about the [requirements and roles of staff at local Elections Canada offices](#) and to find the most up-to-date information on [pay rates](#).

## **How to apply**

Check the [Administrative Staff Employment page](#) of Elections Canada's website for current opportunities or reach out to your [local Elections Canada office](#) (during an election only). Returning officers hire office staff both before and after an election is called.

## **Spotlight on community relations officers**

The Community Relations Officer Program is a key part of Elections Canada's outreach activities. Its goal is to provide information to assist electors in target groups that face barriers to registering and voting. These groups include:

- youth
- First Nations people, Métis and Inuit
- seniors

- ethnocultural communities
- people with disabilities
- people who are homeless
- official language minority communities

During each federal election, returning officers are asked to evaluate, within their riding, the needs of electors in these groups. The returning officer then appoints one or more community relations officers to reach out to these groups and make voting as accessible as possible to them.

By sharing information on where, when and the ways to register and vote, the community relations officers help electors in the target groups improve their knowledge and understanding of elections and overcome barriers to participating.

To find out with which groups in your community are served by a community

relations officer, call your [local Elections Canada office](#) (during an election only).

If you're interested in being a community relations officer, you need experience in building good community relations and in working with different communities. You must know about the customs, cultures and sensitivities of the target groups and have established contacts with organizations that offer services to them.

## **Jobs at polling places**

During federal elections, most people vote at their assigned advance or election day poll. Election workers at the thousands of polling places across the country are on the front line, helping Canadians exercise their right to vote.

From the information officer, who directs electors to their assigned polling station (voting table), to the deputy returning officer, who handles the ballots, poll workers make it possible for electors to vote in an orderly way.

Polling places can be busy at times, but you'll always have a team working with you.

Poll workers can work on election day and/or on one or more advance polling days (Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday the week before election day).

Most shifts begin up to an hour before the polls open and end when the last ballots have been counted—usually a 14-hour day, and sometimes more.

### **Jobs at a polling place include:**

- ✓ [deputy returning officer](#)
- ✓ [information officer](#)
- ✓ [registration officer](#)
- ✓ [central poll supervisor](#)

These are **paid positions**.

Visit the Elections Canada website to learn



more about the [requirements and roles of poll workers](#) and to find the most up-to-date information on [pay rates](#).

### **How to apply**

See the [Poll Worker Employment page](#) of Elections Canada's website for details. You can apply anytime, but poll worker positions are filled only during the election period.

## **Jobs at Vote on Campus offices**

Over 100 post-secondary institutions across Canada will host a Vote on Campus office during the next general election. These offices will be open for four days, from Sunday to Wednesday, two weeks before election day. When you work at a Vote on Campus office, you provide information, registration and voting services to electors, even those who aren't students or who don't live in the riding where you're working.

Most Vote on Campus jobs last for the four days that the office is open, though some start earlier to organize training and set up the office. Vote on Campus offices are usually open for 12 hours on weekdays and for 6 hours on weekends.

When you work at a Vote on Campus office, you work directly with the public. Vote on Campus offices can be busy at times, but you'll always have a team to support you.

## **Jobs at a Vote on Campus office include:**

- ✓ **[additional assistant returning officer](#)**
- ✓ **[service point supervisor](#)**
- ✓ **[assistant service point supervisor](#)**
- ✓ **[service agent](#)**
- ✓ **[information officer](#)**
- ✓ **[safety officer](#)**

These are **paid positions**.

Visit the Elections Canada website to find the most up-to-date information on [pay rates](#).

### **How to apply**

We are still working on the application form, but when it's ready you will find it on the [Elections Canada website](#). Most jobs are filled only during the election period, but you can apply earlier. You can also reach out to your student association. Students are encouraged to apply to work at Vote on Campus offices.

## **Hiring election workers**

Whether you're working at a local Elections Canada office, a polling place or a Vote on Campus office, election workers are hired according to the rules set out in the **Canada Elections Act**.

The process for hiring election workers at polling places is as follows:

- 1.** On behalf of the returning officer, the recruitment officer hires the poll workers in the riding.
- 2.** Potential workers can apply through the [Poll Workers Employment page](#) on Elections Canada's website.
- 3.** The recruitment officer conducts phone interviews.
- 4.** If the interview is successful, the recruitment officer assigns the applicant to an online training session based on their position and, as needed, to a polling place.
- 5.** After the training session, applicants sign a solemn declaration and are officially hired to work during the advance polls, on election day or both.

**6.** The returning officer evaluates how well the poll worker is doing, both during the training session and on the job.

The process for hiring election workers at local Elections Canada offices may vary. Check the [Administrative Staff Employment page](#) on Elections Canada's website or reach out to your local office (during an election only).

If your application is retained, you may be contacted anytime until election day. Once you apply, you cannot check the status of your application.

## **Training election workers**

We train all poll workers before they start to work.

No matter what your job is, you'll get a training session delivered by a skilled trainer or through self-study materials (you will not be able to choose the format).

**This training time is paid** and takes place in the riding where you'll work.

Training can usually be scheduled during the day or evening during the week or on weekends.

During your training session, depending on which position you are hired for, you can expect to:

- do hands-on practice using examples of common situations (we'll provide worksheets and materials for you to use)
- receive a guidebook, which includes all the information you need to do your job well
- watch videos and read short explanations
- take quizzes

Before you start working, you will make a [solemn declaration](#), likely during a classroom training session. If your training is in another

format, you'll make the declaration at a different time.

[Training](#) may vary for jobs at local Elections Canada offices.

## **Description of paid positions**

Follow the link on any position to know more about pay rate details.

### **[Additional assistant returning officer](#)**

The additional assistant returning officer reports to the returning officer and manages an additional office to provide services in a designated area of the riding.

### **[Assistant automation coordinator](#)**

The assistant automation coordinator helps manage the systems at the local Elections Canada office and provides technical support for all hardware and software applications.

### **Assistant returning officer**

The returning officer appoints an assistant returning officer to help carry out all duties related to an electoral event. The returning officer may delegate specific duties to the assistant returning officer. At times, the assistant returning officer may act in place of the returning officer.

### **Assistant service point supervisor**

The assistant service point supervisor manages the service centre at the local Elections Canada office when the service point supervisor is out of the office coordinating outreach initiatives or providing training to other office staff.

### **Automation coordinator**

The automation coordinator prepares and manages the lists of electors and provides technical support for all systems in the local Elections Canada office.



## **Central poll supervisor**

The central poll supervisor makes sure that all electors are able to cast their ballot in an orderly way and that election officers carry out their work according to established procedures. The CPS is the liaison between the RO and election day election officers. They also perform quality control checks to ensure the integrity of the vote and report to the RO any incidents that occur at the polling place.

## **Community relations officer**

Community relations officers are appointed in ridings that have large numbers of electors in certain target groups that face barriers to voting. Community relations officers facilitate communication between the local Elections Canada office and these target groups, making voting as accessible as possible to them. There are six types of community relations officers:

- Accessibility
- Homeless
- Youth
- Indigenous
- Official languages/Ethnocultural
- Seniors

### **Deputy returning officer**

The deputy returning officer makes sure that all electors are able to cast their ballot in an orderly way. DROs will be required to set up, open and close several polling stations, according to the instructions for safe set-up and service. DROs at advance polls will be required to open their polling stations on four separate days and count the ballots on election day.

## **Electoral material coordinator**

The electoral material coordinator manages and controls the inventory of election materials.

## **Financial officer**

The financial officer implements financial processes at the local Elections Canada office and gives complete and accurate financial information to the returning officer.

## **Information officer**

The information officer helps to set up and close the polling place. The IO greets electors, directs them to the voting room or to their polling station, and reminds them to have their voter information card and ID available. The IO helps electors who need extra assistance, makes sure that the polling place closes at the prescribed time and helps count ballots on election night.

## **Office clerk**

The office clerk provides office and administrative support to the returning officer, assistant returning officer and office staff.

## **Office coordinator**

The office coordinator manages and controls day-to-day operations at the local Elections Canada office.

## **Office messenger**

The office messenger provides courier services for the local Elections Canada office.

## **Poll operations manager**

The poll operations manager ensures that the plans for polling places during an electoral event are implemented. They also manage and integrate all operations and activities on polling days, including those relating to polling places, poll workers, contingency plans, materials and other logistics.

## **Receptionist**

The receptionist receives and directs telephone calls and greets people at the local Elections Canada office. In smaller offices, the receptionist also provides office and administrative support. More than one person can share this position. The office of the additional assistant returning officer may also require a receptionist.

## **Recruitment officer**

The recruitment officer supports recruitment activities and works closely with the recruitment supervisor to facilitate the hiring and training of enough poll workers to run an electoral event. At the returning officer's discretion, the recruitment officer could start working before the election period.

## **Recruitment supervisor**

The recruitment supervisor manages the recruitment of workers for advance and

election day polls as well as training logistics. The recruitment officer must be available before an election period to start setting up and training.

### **Registration officer**

The registration officer pre-fills Registration Certificates, Correction Certificates and Oath of Residence Certificates; they may request to see elector identification.

### **Returning officer**

The person who is responsible for all federal electoral events in a riding. Returning officers are appointed by Canada's Chief Electoral Officer.

### **Safety officer**

The security officer reports to the returning officer. Security officers must inform the returning officer of any concerns and potential security threats.

## **Service agent**

The service agent updates the preliminary lists of electors by accepting revision applications that electors submit by mail, fax, telephone or in person. They also assist electors with registering and voting by special ballot.

## **Service centre support officer**

A service centre support officer performs data entry tasks assigned by the service point supervisor or the automation coordinator.

## **Service point supervisor**

The service point supervisor manages the service centre at the local Elections Canada office. They may also coordinate acute care voting, home visits, data entry and the count of special ballots, as well as recruit and train service centre staff.

## **Training officer**

The training officer prepares and trains all poll

workers. A good training officer is essential to delivering a successful event and making sure that all electors receive the same quality of service. A training officer is required regardless of the size of the riding.

## **Glossary**

### **Accessible**

Refers to something anyone can do or use, even if it might be harder for some because of a disability, poor health, poverty, low literacy skills or other barriers.

### **Advance polls**

Polling stations that are open on advance voting days (Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday the week before election day). Voting at an advance poll is one way that electors can vote before election day.

### **Barriers**

Things that make it difficult for someone to



vote.

## **By-election**

An election that takes place in only one riding. By-elections happen when the member of Parliament for a riding leaves the job between federal general elections.

## **Candidate**

A person who runs for an elected position.

## **Election period**

The period of time beginning with the issue of the writ(s) (the call of an election) and ending on election day. A federal election period lasts between 37 and 51 days.

## **Election worker**

Someone who works for Elections Canada during a federal election, either at a local office, a polling place or a Vote on Campus office.

## **Elector**

Someone who can vote in an election.

## **Electoral event**

An event where Canadian electors vote. It can be a federal general election, a by-election or a referendum.

## **House of Commons**

The institution made up of members of Parliament from every riding in the country.

## **Impartial**

Not biased—that is, treating or affecting all equally.

## **List of electors**

A list of all Canadian electors with their name, address and date of birth. The list is updated at the start of an election period.

## **Local Elections Canada office**

The Elections Canada office for a riding. Every riding has at least one. Local Elections Canada offices open when a federal election is called and close after election day. The returning officer for the riding, along with their staff, work at the local office. Electors can go there to get information, register to vote and vote by special ballot.

## **Member of Parliament**

The elected candidate for a federal riding.

## **Partisan activity**

Any activity that is connected to or supports political parties. Partisan activities include sharing the slogans and images of political parties or otherwise promoting a political party, such as by displaying or wearing its colours.

## **Political party**

A group that supports particular candidates in an election. Members of a party share similar values, priorities and a vision for Canada.

## **Poll worker**

An election worker who works at a polling place.

## **Polling place**

A public building where people go to vote in a federal election.

It's often a school or a community centre.

## **Riding**

Also called an "electoral district" or a "constituency." A geographic area of the country that can be a community, region or town. A member of Parliament represents it in the House of Commons.

## **Solemn declaration**

A document signed by an election worker in which they solemnly affirm or swear that certain facts are true and that they will respect their work-related obligations when hired by a returning officer.

## **Special ballot**

A voting method for electors who cannot or do not wish to vote at their assigned polling station on advance polling days or election day. Electors who vote at a local Elections Canada office, at a Vote on Campus office or by mail vote by special ballot.

**For the best experience, access this toolkit on [our website](#).**

