

How to vote

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IT'S NOT AS EASY AS BEFORE, SO LISTEN UP

The Conservative government of Stephen Harper has changed Canada's election rules, making it much harder for all citizens to vote in their elections, and preventing Elections Canada from raising awareness about the new rules for voting.

Please take a few minutes to make your plan.

1. MAKE SURE YOU ARE REGISTERED.

Go to the Elections Canada web site at www.elections.ca to find out if you are on the voters list. If you aren't you can add your name.

2. LOOK FOR YOUR VOTER INFORMATION CARD IN THE MAIL.

A few weeks before election day you'll receive a card that confirms that you are registered to vote, provides information on where to vote and the dates and locations for advance polls. If you don't get this card, you can register with your local returning officer (listed at elections.ca).

3. CHOOSE HOW YOU WANT TO VOTE.

Election Day is Monday, October 19. You can also vote at advance polls on October 9, 10, 11 and 12, but the locations are limited. The voter information card mailed to you will tell you where to vote. On Election Day you can vote at any Elections Canada office - as long as you have the right ID. You can also vote by mail, but the deadline is October 13 and you have to apply at elections.ca well in advance so don't wait too long.

4. MAKE A PLAN AND MARK IT ON THE CALENDAR.

Most people say they vote, but participation has dropped to just 58% in 2008, the lowest level ever recorded. Many people intend to vote, but wind up missing out because of last-minute scheduling issues. Don't miss your only opportunity to shape the next five years of national government. Plan ahead.

5. BRING THE RIGHT KIND OF IDENTIFICATION.

This is critically important because of recent changes. You must bring government-issued ID like a driver's licence or provincial ID card. If you haven't got those, you must show two pieces of ID where one has your current address - passport, birth certificate, band membership card, credit card statement, bank statement, utility bill, student ID card, etc. If you only have ID without your address, be prepared to have someone who does have the right ID swear an oath attesting to your identity. More information about this can be found at elections.ca.

6. WATCH OUT FOR DIRTY TRICKS.

Conservative Party organizers have been convicted of or pleaded guilty to breaking election laws in each of the last three federal elections. In the most recent election, thousands of voters received intentionally misleading phone calls that directed them to false polling locations. Be very suspicious of any last-minute phone calls, leaflets, emails or social media messages that appear to change your voting location or hours.

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