



# **A Young Canadian's Guide to Participating in the 2011 Federal Election**

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# Introduction

## Why should I care about the federal election?

If it's important to you whether or not Canada goes to war, allows the death penalty, improves living situations on First Nations reserves, or provides a safety net that ensures disadvantaged people have access to things like health care and financial assistance, then you should care about the federal election, because the election will decide which parties and which people make up the government who make these decisions.

In Canada, the federal government is one of three levels of government - federal, provincial and municipal - that set the rules and provides the services that affect our everyday lives and make our country what it is. The federal government has direct responsibility for the following areas:

- defense
- external relations
- criminal law
- employment insurance
- citizenship
- Indian and northern affairs
- postal service
- trade regulation
- money and banking
- transportation
- census
- copyrights

While the federal government doesn't have direct responsibility for many social programs, it provides the necessary financial support to the provinces and territories. Through the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer, the federal government supports the following areas:

- health care

- post-secondary education
- social services
- early childhood development and care

### **How does a federal election work?**

Canada is divided into 308 electoral districts or 'ridings'. The voters who live in each riding elect one Member of Parliament (MP) to represent them in government. Individuals who campaign for election to become an MP may run as Independents, but usually they run as representatives of their particular political party. There are many political parties in Canada, but the largest ones are the Conservatives, the Liberals, the New Democrats, the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party. The Bloc Québécois do not run candidates outside of Quebec, but the other large parties generally run candidates in every riding.

In Canada, we do not vote for our Prime Minister directly, but rather for our Members of Parliament (MPs). Most of the candidates running in a federal election belong to a political party, and the leader of the party that has the most candidates elected as MPs generally becomes the Prime Minister.

### **How can I vote in the federal election?**

To vote in the Canadian federal election, you must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age or older on election day, ordinarily reside in the riding district in which you will be voting, and be registered on the Voters List, the list of all citizens who are eligible to vote in the election.

A few weeks before the election, Elections Canada will send you a voter information card if your name is on the Voters List. This card will tell you where and when you can vote. If your information on the card is incorrect, you must arrange to have it corrected. You can correct the information on your voter information card, or get registered on the Voters List, by contacting your riding's Returning Office. You can find out the telephone number and address of your riding's Returning Office from the Elections Canada website, at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

On Election Day, you should take your voter information card with you to your polling station. If you don't have a voter information card you can still vote, but must show proof of identity and residence. Information about specific identification requirements is available on the Elections Canada website and in the "Resources" section of this guide.

When you vote, you will be given a ballot and directed to go behind a screen. You will have to place an X on the ballot beside the name of the candidate for MP whom you support. The names of the candidates' parties will not be indicated, nor will the names of the parties' leaders, so make sure you know the name of your candidate and party! If you make a mistake, you can hand your ballot back and ask for a new one.

If you're not going to be in your riding on Election Day, you can arrange to vote ahead of time. Information about how to vote in advance is available on the Elections Canada website and in the "Resources" section of this guide.

## **For which candidate should I vote?**

Each candidate and each party has different ideas about what rules should govern us and what services we should have. You will need to decide which candidate's and which party's ideas make the most sense to you. So you'll have to do some research.

A good place to begin is by using the Vote Compass. This is an online tool that provides users with a sense of how their opinions fit in with the platforms of the political parties running in the 2011 Canadian federal election. Based on their responses to a series of statements, Vote Compass calculates your position in the political landscape and shows you the respective positions of the various parties running in the election. It can be found at [www.votecompass.ca/federal](http://www.votecompass.ca/federal).

The candidates and their parties will all try to let you know about their ideas by distributing flyers and placing advertisements on television or radio or in the newspapers. They will also be featured in election stories in the local media. You can also check out their websites, which you can find through the Elections Canada website.

If you have specific questions you want to ask the candidates about the specific issues that are most important to you, you can ask them if they come knocking on your door. If they don't contact you, you can contact them directly through their campaign offices. You can find out the telephone numbers and addresses of your candidates' campaign offices from the Elections Canada website.

Most candidates will also attend community meetings called All Candidates Debates. These are a great place for you to ask your questions, and also to hear how the candidates respond to other citizens' questions.

This guide provides some sample questions on some of the main issues in this federal election. Feel free to ask them! Or use them as templates to create your own questions.

# Federal Responsibility

## Defense

Canada's military spending has increased in recent years, and significantly so since September 11th, 2001. Spending patterns have been similar to the United States', with the vast majority of funds in recent years being spent on the Afghanistan mission.

The government has announced its intention to spend a further \$16 billion - the largest single military purchase in the country's history - on a fleet of fighter aircraft called F35 Stealth Bombers. The opposition parties claim that the true costs of these bombers will be closer to \$30 billion, and that Canada has no need for such aggressive and destructive weapons.

Critics of the F35 purchase point out that \$16 billion could build 80,000 homes for low-income Canadians, could feed 32 million African children for a year, or could provide four years of free post-secondary education for 400,000 Canadian students.

Question:

If elected, will your party continue with the current government's plans to purchase a fleet of F35 bombers, or will you invest the money into needed social programs such as health care, social services, and education?

## Criminal Law

The federal government has introduced a bundle of new laws that it calls its 'law and order agenda'. This legislation, which includes mandatory minimum sentencing requirements, will result in more people being held in prisons for longer periods of time. In order to accommodate a prison population that will grow because of this legislation by about 4,000 people, the government has announced that it will have to spend an estimated \$6 billion to build and operate more prisons.

Critics believe that the true costs of the so-called law and order agenda will be \$9.5 billion. They point out that crime rates in Canada have been dropping steadily for the past decade and are now about 17% lower than they were ten years ago. And the majority of prisoners are non-violent offenders, so there is no justification for building more prisons. Further, they argue, there is no evidence that the new legislation will do anything to prevent crime because it does nothing to address any of the factors - poverty, violence, trauma, addiction, and marginalization - that lead to criminal behaviour.

Questions:

1. If elected, will your party continue with the current government's plans to introduce mandatory minimum sentencing requirements and build more prisons?
2. Crime rates in Canada are dropping steadily, but more can be done to address the factors that lead to criminal activity. How will your party work to reduce crime in Canada?

## **Employment Insurance**

The purpose of employment insurance, according to the government of Canada, is 'to provide temporary financial assistance to unemployed Canadians who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own'. While almost all employees must pay into the employment insurance plan, changes to the entitlement rules over the past 20 years have meant that employees must now work more hours over longer periods of time before they can qualify for benefits, and as a result of those changes less than half of unemployed Canadians are eligible for this temporary financial assistance today. The statistics are even worse for women.

For many women, family responsibilities and lack of affordable child care limit their ability to engage in full-time paid employment. Women are much more likely than men to be employed in nonstandard work arrangements such as part-time or casual work, temporary or contract work, and self-employment. These jobs tend to be lower paid with little job security and women in these jobs are less likely to be eligible for employment insurance. In 1990, more than two thirds of unemployed Canadian women received benefits, but today less than one third do. And the population least likely to qualify is young mothers with dependent children.

Even when they do qualify for employment insurance benefits, the financial assistance that unemployed Canadian women receive is significantly less than that which men receive. Benefits are calculated based on employment earnings, and since women in Canada receive only 72% of what men earn, their employment insurance benefits are also reduced.

Question:

If elected, will your party make the necessary changes to the Employment Insurance program to provide equality of access and benefits to women and men?

## **Citizenship and Immigration**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada was created in 1994 to link immigration services with citizenship registration, promote the unique ideals all Canadians share and help build a stronger Canada. In 2008, the Multiculturalism program was moved from Canadian Heritage to Citizenship and Immigration Canada. CIC is responsible for immigration, settlement, resettlement, citizenship and multiculturalism programs and services.

In December 2010, the Federal government announced \$53 million in cuts to immigrant settlement and adaptations services (ISAP) nationwide, \$44 million of which was cut in Ontario. These cuts took place March 31, 2011. This, at a time when Statistics Canada reported that in the third quarter of 2010, Canada saw the highest immigration rate the country has seen in four decades. This funding was used to support language training programs, job search, mentorship and other programs that help newcomers integrate into Canada. Without this funding many agencies have been forced to lay off workers and/or shut their doors and many Canadians have lost vital services they need to integrate into Canadian society.

Questions:

1. How does your party propose to support newcomers to Canada without this vital funding?
2. Does your party support the reinstatement of funding for immigrant settlement and adaptation services?

## **Indian and Northern Affairs**

In late 2010, the Canadian government finally signed on to the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights, after three years of refusing to do so. The government stated at that time that it is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples, however our country has been condemned by the United Nations and the international community for failing to do just that.

More than 100 First Nations communities in Canada don't have safe drinking water. One out of four children growing up in a First Nations community lives in poverty. Their immunization rates are 20% lower than that of Canadian children as a whole, and as a result, First Nations children are hospitalized 80 times more often for preventable communicable diseases. Suicide rates among Aboriginal children and youth are three to seven times greater than in Canada overall. More than a third of Aboriginal women live below the poverty line and hundreds are missing and murdered. Aboriginal people comprise two percent of the adult population of Canada, but make up 17% of the prison population. The over-representation of Aboriginal women is even more acute and this situation is expected to worsen when the federal government's new 'law and order agenda' comes into effect.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child singled Canada out for criticism for the high rates of poverty, illness, and suicide in our First Nations communities, and for the low standards of education, housing and state care of children. However while the Aboriginal community continues to grow, the federal government has capped budget increases to First Nations communities at a grossly inadequate two percent for social services and three percent for health services.

Questions:

1. If elected, what will your party do to promote and protect the rights and improve the lives of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples in Canada?
2. If elected, what changes will your party make to address the over-representation of Aboriginal people, and particularly of Aboriginal women, in our prisons?

## **Trade**

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is an important document outlining many of the trade agreements between Canada, the United States and Mexico. These three countries signed this agreement in order to create a trilateral trade bloc in North America. A trade bloc is a type of agreement made by governments in order to reduce barriers to trade (such as tariffs or taxes that are charged at the border when goods are moved between countries). It came into force on January 1, 1994. Some people feel there are many components of NAFTA that threaten environmental and social priorities in Canada such as the dispute process found in Chapter 11 of the agreement. The rules outlined in Chapter 11 give corporations the right to sue the Canadian government if any public policy or government action denies that corporation investment or profit opportunities. These corporations often sue for tens of millions of dollars and there are many cases currently under review. One example of a settled case occurred in 1997 when the Canadian government paid Ethyl Corporation \$13 million based on Canada's decision to ban the trade of a gasoline additive, MMT, a suspected neurotoxin. Using Chapter 11 under NAFTA, this corporation was able to sue Canada for denying them a profitable opportunity.

In addition to this, the Canadian government has expressed their interest in expanding NAFTA to restrict provincial and municipal procurement. Procurement refers to the purchase of goods and/or services at the best possible cost. The Canadian government has proposed conditions that would bind provinces, states, territories and cities to international trade rules. This would remove the right of local governments to make their own decisions on procurement. Specifically, this could mean local governments could not keep jobs local, could not purchase from local companies and could not reinvest locally. Currently, many municipalities have contracting policies that give preference to Canadian suppliers, allowing them to reject the lowest bidder in favour of a Canadian supplier, if the local employment and spin-off benefits outweigh the price difference.

Questions:

1. Will your party respond to some of the effects of NAFTA, such as rules outlined in Chapter 11?
2. Will your party attempt to renegotiate NAFTA to remove or amend the Chapter 11 clauses that allow companies to dismantle environmental and public health protections on the grounds that they interfere with profits?
3. Will your party work to encourage "Buy Canadian" policies in order to support local, publicly funded infrastructure projects?
4. Will your party lobby the American government to have Canada exempt from the "Buy American" initiatives in order to support local economies?

### **Taxation and Social Services**

Taxation is the primary way that governments get the revenues they require to deliver the programs and services that their citizens want and need. In Canada, we have had what is known as a 'progressive' income tax system, in which wealthier people and corporations pay higher rates of income taxes than poorer ones do. In contrast, a 'regressive' tax system is one in which wealthier people and corporations pay proportionately less in income taxes than poorer ones do. A progressive tax system seeks to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, while a regressive tax system tends to increase that gap. Over the past 20 years, Canada's tax system has become less progressive and more regressive.

While necessary, taxes are not always popular with the people and corporations who have to pay them, and often parties will try to win votes by promising to cut taxes. One way that governments can cut taxes is by offering targeted tax credits, which effectively reduce the taxes that certain tax payers - usually the tax payers whose votes the governments are courting - have to pay. The federal government has just released a budget that promises \$300 million in tax credits for certain corporations and individuals but not for others. These sorts of tax credits are sometimes called 'boutique' taxes, because they benefit only the middle and upper income earners who pay income taxes in the first place. In 2009, over one third of Canadians earned too little money to pay income taxes, and so these people - our neediest citizens - won't be helped at all by this \$300 million promise. Worse, they may be harmed by it, because in order to afford it, the government will have to cut some programs and services.

Question:

One in ten Canadians lives in poverty and reducing poverty should be our first priority. If elected, how will your party use the tax system to promote the common good and protect the most vulnerable Canadians?

## **Explanation and evolution of the Canada Health and Social Transfer, Canada Health Transfer and Canada Social Transfer**

The Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) was introduced in 1996 by the federal government. The CHST put funding for social policies into single block transfers of money for the areas of health, post-secondary education, social assistance and social services. At the same time, the government reduced their contribution to social programs by \$7 billion and gave very few rules for how these block payments should be spent. The government said the purpose of this was to disperse power and give the provinces and territories more flexibility in determining priorities and designing programs to meet local community needs.

In April 2004, new changes were made and the CHST federal payments were split. Dollars used for health services were delivered under the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and post-secondary and social assistance/services were delivered under the Canada Social Transfer (CST). This was because the portion of the CHST being spent on health care was climbing higher and higher. Some also felt that within each province, whoever had the “squeakiest wheel” would receive the money and not necessarily go towards those who needed it. The federal government does not directly administer the social policies for health care, post-secondary education, social services or early child development and care; however, they provide the financial support required for the provinces and territories to do so.

### **Through the CST tax the Federal Government Supports:**

#### **Health Care**

Historically, Canada’s universal health care system has been based on need, not on ability to pay. Most Canadians are proud of this as it represents an area of social policy that is based on equity.

Similar to other social policies, health care received dramatic cuts in the mid 1990s. The days are long gone when women could spend at the very least a few days in the hospital after giving birth. Many Canadians have also experienced longer wait times for medical attention such as specialists and emergency care than in previous years, which can be considered a threat to one’s health.

Over recent years there have been increasing cuts to what is covered by our health care system and increasing talk of private health care facilities opening up. The consequences of privatization are higher costs, decreased access, lower efficiency and quality of care, as well as loss of public control over health care.

Even though Canada’s health care system is based on need, not on ability to pay, Aboriginal Canadians’ health care remains unacceptable and inadequate. For example:

- the life expectancy of Aboriginal women is 76.2 years versus 81.0 for non-Aboriginal women
- mortality rate for Aboriginal women due to violence is 3 times that of other Canadian women
- suicide rates remain consistently higher for the Aboriginal population than the average Canadian population in almost every age group
- Aboriginal women experience higher rates of circulatory problems, respiratory problems, diabetes, hypertension, and cancer of the cervix than the rest of the Canadian female population.

There are many other examples and we should be asking ourselves why. Clearly, the health of Aboriginal Canadians needs to be considered using framework that addresses oppression, gender, race and the continuing impact of colonization.

Questions:

1. If elected, what will your party do to strengthen Canada's one-tier, publicly funded health care system?
2. If elected, will your party take a leadership role in addressing the inadequate state of Aboriginal Canadians' health care?
3. If elected, how will your party work to address the inadequate state of health care services for Aboriginal Canadians?

## **Housing**

Affordable and safe housing improves health, combats poverty, and is a foundation for children's educational success. Yet 1.5 million Canadian households are unable to afford adequate housing. In fact, the majority of low income families don't have access to this basic human right. Twenty-five thousand more affordable housing units are desperately needed in our country.

The federal government's role in housing has been steadily deteriorating since the 1980s, culminating with a decision in 1993 to cancel all federal spending on new housing supply. By 2002, the number of affordable housing units being built was down more than 90% from four years earlier. The funding provided to the national homelessness program has remained virtually unchanged since 1999, even though the number of homeless families in Canada has skyrocketed, with women and children being the fastest growing group of homeless people in Canada. As well, the federal government has announced that its spending on the program will end in 2014.

Question:

How many affordable housing units will your party commit to building before the end of this 41st Parliament?

## **Post-secondary education**

The cost of attending post-secondary schools in Canada continues to increase. Tuitions in Canada's post-secondary institutions increased by 4% on average this year with undergraduates paying about \$5,138 compared to \$4,942 last year. Fees rose in all but three provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland/Labrador. The lowest increase was in Alberta at 1.5% and the highest was Ontario at 5.4%. Again this year, Ontario schools have the highest tuition on average of \$6,300 for a full year of study.

The federal transfer payment for post-secondary education remains approximately \$800 million short of 1992 levels when accounting for inflation and population growth. Between 1978 and 2008, the proportion of university operating revenue provided by government sources declined from 84% to 58% while the portion funded by tuition fees increased from 12% to 35%. According to David Molenhuis, National Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, "Students and their families are being forced to assume more education-related debt than any previous generation. Without a national strategy for higher education tuition fees, student debt will

continue to increase, threatening to bankrupt a generation.” In September 2010, student loan debt owed to the federal government surpassed \$15 billion. Investments in post-secondary education constitute one of the most important investments needed to build towards a full economic recovery.

Questions:

1. If elected would your party support the recommendations from the Canadian Federation of Students, specifically,
  - a. Restore per capita funding to 1992 levels
  - b. Reduce tuition fees to 1992 levels over three years
  - c. Eliminate deferred maintenance at Canada’s colleges and universities over five years?
2. If elected, what will your party do to address the consistently and rapidly rising cost of tuition in Canada? At the very least, will you address the fact that there are discrepancies in tuition fees and grant programs between the provinces?

### **Social Services**

Most poor people in Canada are women. Of the world’s 29 most developed countries, Canada has the largest wage gap between women and men in full time work. One in seven Canadian women lives in poverty today. Canada has signed international agreements pledging to eliminate discrimination against women in our country, but has been censured by the United Nations for failing to live up to these agreements by allowing our problem of women’s disproportionate poverty to persist.

Over the last decade, Canadian governments have drastically cut the social services that should ease women’s poverty and as a result the depth of women’s poverty is increasing. It is the responsibility of the federal government to fund the provinces’ delivery of social services through the CST. Most of the cuts to our country’s social service systems stem from the federal withdrawal of billions of dollars in these transfer payments, and from the elimination of federal standards that guarantee help for people in greatest need.

Questions:

1. If elected, will you reinstate cancelled pay equity legislation to reduce persistent discrimination in wages based on gender?
2. If elected, will you address the national disgrace of women’s poverty in Canada by restoring eroded transfer funding for social services?
3. If elected, will you ease the poverty of Canadian women by re-establishing basic federal standards for social assistance and other poverty reduction measures?

### **Early Childhood Development and Care**

Good quality accessible child care is a foundation of lifelong learning and healthy development for children, essential to support parents’ employment and learning, necessary in any poverty reduction strategy, critical to women’s equality, an important element of reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples and key to social inclusion for newcomers to Canada.

Five years ago, the Conservative government eliminated the national child care program that was introduced by the Liberal government and instead introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) paying families \$100 per month for each child under six, money intended to support child care costs and to provide “choice” for families. Ken Battle, President of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy has raised several objections and says, “despite the sound-bite friendly ‘hundred bucks a month’ concept, the UCCB is actually ‘virtually incomprehensible’ to the average citizen. That \$100 is considered taxable income so no family gets \$1,200 a year. Furthermore, it’s actually harmed lower-income, single-parent families who no longer receive the annual \$249 young child supplement. Given the complexities of the tax system, high-income families actually receive the highest net benefit.” With child care costs often well in excess of \$7,000 per year, \$1,200 is simply not enough.

YWCA Canada believes that the lack of a national plan for child care services is a social policy gap that is decades behind reality and a potential drag on the economy. YWCA Canada’s recent report, “Educated, Employed and Equal: The Economic Prosperity Case for National Child Care,” documents that women have closed the gender gap with men in employment numbers and reversed it in higher education without any corresponding policy for comprehensive early learning and child care services. Canada is so bad at providing child care services that we tied for last in a United Nations study of 25 developed countries in terms of meeting minimum benchmarks for early childhood education and care. On a national level, fewer than 20% of Canada’s children under the age of six have access to a licensed child care space. At the same time, over 70% of mothers with young children are working in the paid work force.

In the Region of Waterloo there are a total of 82.2% of families with children aged birth to five years that require some form of non-parental care for at least part of the day. In terms of percentage of children who have access to care to a licensed child care space: infant (0-18 months)-9%, toddler (18-30 months)-22%, preschool and Junior Kindergarten/Senior Kindergarten (30 months to five years)-34%, 6-12 year olds-9%.

In terms of children aged birth to 12 years with access to a licensed child care space by municipality: Cambridge-11%, Kitchener-9%, Waterloo-16%, North Dumfries-5%, Wellesley-5%, Wilmot-9% and Woolwich-6%.

#### Questions:

1. If elected, how would your party deal with the lack of licensed child care spaces in Canada?
2. If elected, would your party support the development of a national child care plan?

# Voting Resources

## Accepted Identification for Polling Stations

### **Option 1- Government-issued ID Card with name, address and photo**

Examples:

Driver's license, Ontario Health Card (must have photo)

### **Option 2- One of each of the following:**

#### **Identity Cards**

- Driver's License
- Health Card
- Canadian Passport
- Certificate of Canadian Citizenship (Citizenship Card)
- Birth Certificate
- Certificate of Indian Status (Status Card)
- Social Insurance Number Card
- Old Age Security Card
- Student ID Card
- Provincial/Territorial Identification Card
- Liquor Identification Card
- Hospital/Medical Clinic Card
- Credit/Debit Card
- Employee Card
- Public Transportation Card
- Library Card
- Canadian Forces Identity Card
- Veterans Affairs Canada Health Card
- Canadian Blood Services/Héma-Québec Card
- CNIB ID Card
- Firearm Possession and Acquisition Licence or Possession Only Licence
- Fishing, Trapping or Hunting Licence
- Outdoors or Wildlife Card/Licence
- Hospital bracelet worn by residents of long-term care facilities
- Parolee Identification Card

#### **Original Documents with Name and Address**

- Utility Bill (telephone, TV, public utilities commission, hydro, gas or water)
- Bank/Credit Card Statement
- Vehicle Ownership/Insurance
- Correspondence issued by a school, college or university
- Statement of Government Benefits (employment insurance, old age security, social assistance, disability support or child tax benefit)
- Attestation of Residence issued by the responsible authority of a First Nations band or reserve
- Government Cheque or Cheque Stub
- Pension Plan Statement of Benefits, Contributions or Participation
- Residential Lease/Mortgage Statement
- Income/Property Tax Assessment Notice
- Insurance Policy
- Letter from a public curator, public guardian or public trustee
- One of the following, issued by the responsible authority of a shelter, soup kitchen, student/senior residence, or long-term care facility: Attestation of Residence, Letter of Stay, Admission Form or Statement of Benefits

### Option 3

Swear an oath and have an elector who knows you vouch for you (both of you will be required to make a sworn statement). This person must have authorized identification and their name must appear on the list of electors in the same polling division as you. This person can only vouch for one person and the person who is vouched for cannot vouch for another elector.

Examples: a neighbour, your roommate.

### **If your residence is in Canada but you will be out of your riding on Election Day**

1. **You can vote at advance polls** on Friday, April 22, Saturday, April 23 and Monday, April 25, from noon to 8:00 p.m.

The address of your advance polling site will be available after April 8:

- on the Elections Canada website
- on your voter information card, mailed to all registered electors, or
- by calling Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868

2. **You can vote by special ballot**

Special ballot application forms are available at any Elections Canada office, at any Canadian embassy, high commission or consulate, or by calling Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868.

1. **Vote by special ballot from *within* your riding.**

With this option, you can vote:

- in person at your local Elections Canada office through most of the election period, or
- by mailing your special ballot to your local Elections Canada office

To vote by special ballot from within your riding:

- Apply before 6:00 p.m. (local time) on Tuesday, April 26.
- Bring proof of identity and address.
- If they accept your application and...
  - if you applied by fax or mail: they will send you a special ballot voting kit by regular mail.
  - if you applied in person at your local Elections Canada office: they will hand you a special ballot voting kit. You can vote then and there. Or you can vote later – by mail, or by returning in person to your local Elections Canada office.

**Your completed ballot must be received at your local Elections Canada office before the polls close in your riding on Monday, May 2.** By law, they cannot accept late application forms and cannot count late ballots.

Once you have registered to vote by special ballot, you cannot vote another way.

## 2. **Vote by special ballot from outside your riding.**

This option applies to people whose residence is in Canada but who are travelling outside their riding, in Canada or abroad (e.g., snowbirds, students living away from home to attend university).

With this option, you can vote by mail from anywhere in Canada or the world.

To vote by special ballot from outside your riding:

- **Apply ASAP. Allow enough time for a special ballot voting kit to reach you and for your ballot to travel back to Ottawa.**
- They must receive your application by Tuesday, April 26:
  - in person at any Elections Canada office before 6:00 p.m. (local time), or
  - by fax or by mail sent to Elections Canada in Ottawa, before 6:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

If you are currently outside Canada, you could ask a Canadian diplomatic or consular office to forward your special ballot application to Elections Canada. Be aware that diplomatic and consular offices do not process these application forms or issue special ballots themselves, and they may not forward your application to Elections Canada right away. It's *your* responsibility to ensure that your application gets to Elections Canada on time.

Once they process and accept your application, they'll mail you a special ballot voting kit (or hand it to you, if you apply in person at an Elections Canada office). Your kit explains how to vote.

**Your completed ballot must be received at Elections Canada in Ottawa before 6:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on election day.** By law, they cannot accept late application forms and cannot count late ballots.

Once you have registered to vote by special ballot, you cannot vote another way.

## **I'm homeless. How do I vote?**

Eligible electors who are homeless or have no fixed address are welcome to register and vote.

Everyone who votes must prove their identity and address. Here are some of the ways you can prove your identity and address at the polls:

- To prove your identity (name), you can show a piece of ID with your name on it, like a fishing license, library card, social insurance card (SIN card), birth certificate or Veterans Affairs Canada Health Identification Card.
- To prove your address, you can show an official letter called an "Attestation of Residence." If you have gone to a shelter for food or lodging, you can ask the shelter administrator for this letter.
- If you don't have documents to prove your identity and address, you can swear an oath and get someone you know to vouch for you. That person has to be an eligible elector in the same polling division as you, and he or she must show authorized documents that prove his or her identity and address.

## How can I get involved?

1. **Vote.** Vote in any election you can, it doesn't matter if it is federal, provincial or your local regional government. Once campaigns get underway, spend some time getting to know the issues and then take the time to vote. At least having your direct say in things will provide funding to your party of choice (federally) even if they don't win.
2. **Donate Money.** If you donate money, you can get 75% of your donation back up to your first \$400 when you donate to a federal party. Money has a lot to do with winning an election so if you find someone you mostly agree with you might want to consider sending them \$25 for the election.
3. **Donate Some Time.** You can drop off some flyers, answer a phone, attend a rally or do just about anything for a party you like.
4. **Put a Sign On Your Lawn.** This is a fairly painless way to help out your candidate of choice, but be prepared to have a debate with your neighbours on why your candidate is better than their candidate.
5. **Join a Party.** This is what most people feel the most reluctant about doing, yet it provides you with the best means of influencing a party's policy and hopefully eventually the government's policy. Your level of involvement is a personal choice.
6. **Be informed.**
  - *Government of Canada* [www.canada.gc.ca](http://www.canada.gc.ca)
  - *Elections Canada* [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)
  - *Conservative Party of Canada* [www.conservative.ca](http://www.conservative.ca)
  - *Liberal Party of Canada* [www.liberal.ca](http://www.liberal.ca)
  - *New Democratic Party of Canada* [www.ndp.ca](http://www.ndp.ca)
  - *Green Party of Canada* [www.greenparty.ca](http://www.greenparty.ca)
  - *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives* [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca)

## **I'm not 18 yet, but want to get involved in the federal election. How can I do that?**

You may be too young to vote in this election, but you're not too young to get involved. There are other great ways that you can influence who gets elected and shape the kind of Canada that you want.

Call or email the candidates to tell them the issues that are important to you. They will listen! Go to an all candidates meeting and ask the candidates questions so that others can hear their responses. Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper about your views. If you've decided that you support a particular candidate or party, volunteer to help out with her campaign. You can answer phones or stuff envelopes or set up lawn signs or even canvas door to door on behalf of your candidate.

Get involved in the federal election in any way you can! Canada will be a better place for it.

