

I Can Vote!

A user-friendly guide to voting in Canada




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Any part of this publication – including the sample ballot – may be photocopied for educational purposes only.
We invite your comments and contribution of material for future editions.

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Dear Readers:

I am pleased to provide you with the updated user-friendly guide to voting in Canada entitled *I Can Vote!* The original edition was developed in close collaboration with community groups, educators, advocates and self-advocates, English as a Second Language teachers and ethnocultural specialists to reach first-time voters.

The overall goal of *I Can Vote!* is to make the electoral process more accessible to all Canadians. The approach we have used is both direct and personal. At the same time, the guide provides a framework that educators or teachers can use and adapt to their individual needs.

At Elections Canada, we are committed to the development of voter education and information programs for all Canadians. In this guide, we have made a special effort to reach out to those who may experience difficulty in exercising their individual right to vote.

If you need additional copies or have questions, please contact Elections Canada.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Marc Mayrand', with a stylized, flowing script.

Marc Mayrand
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

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Preface

Voting for the first time can be intimidating because people often do not know what to expect.

This guide takes the mystery out of voting. It shows what voting is all about. Voting is about choosing. Everyone has to make choices in their daily lives.



About this guide

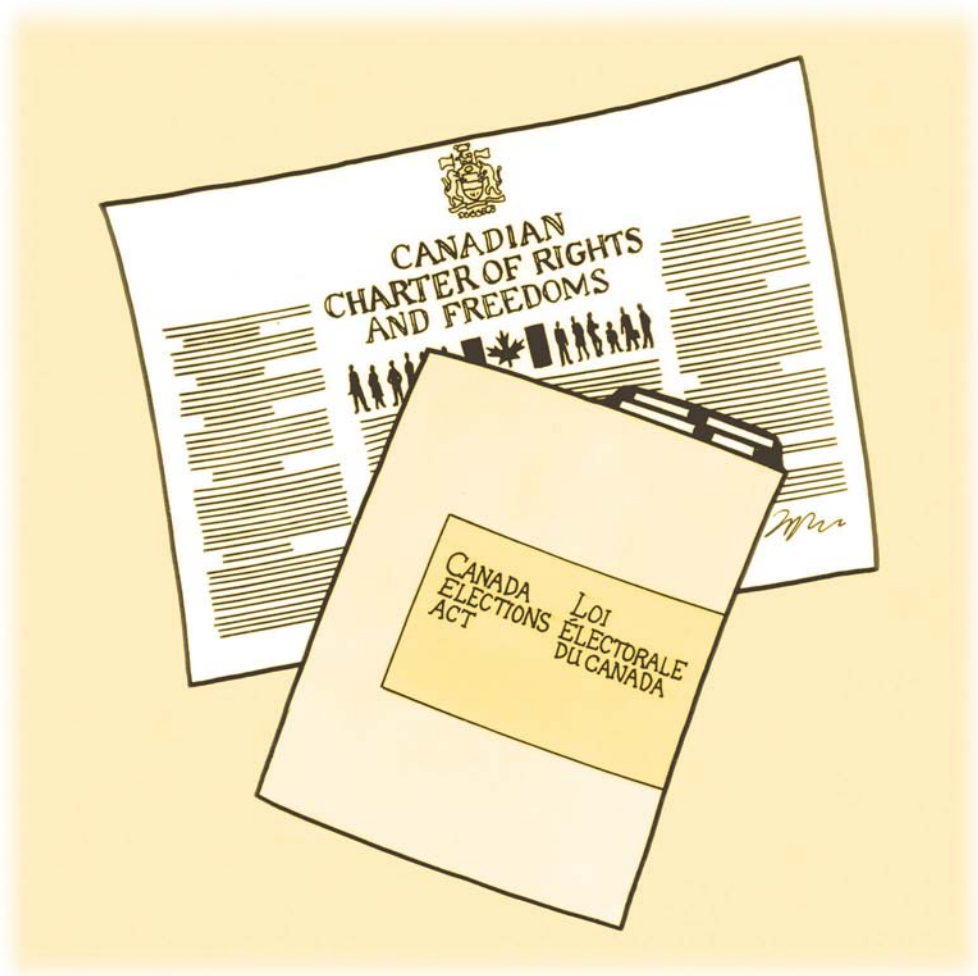
This guide is divided into three sections and teaches the basics of voting.

- Section 1 – Election words I need to know – This section explains election words used throughout the guide.
- Section 2 – What elections are all about – This section briefly outlines the electoral process and provides a sense of the people involved.
- Section 3 – Election day – I make a choice – This section is a step-by-step guide on how to vote. It is a good overview of the process, the people involved and election words. You may choose to go directly to this section.

How to use this guide

This user-friendly guide was made for first-time voters, educators and group leaders.

- Use it yourself to feel more comfortable about voting.
- Use it with the help of a friend, family member or advocate.
- Use it to organize a practice election. Role playing can be a fun way to learn how to vote.



Who can vote?

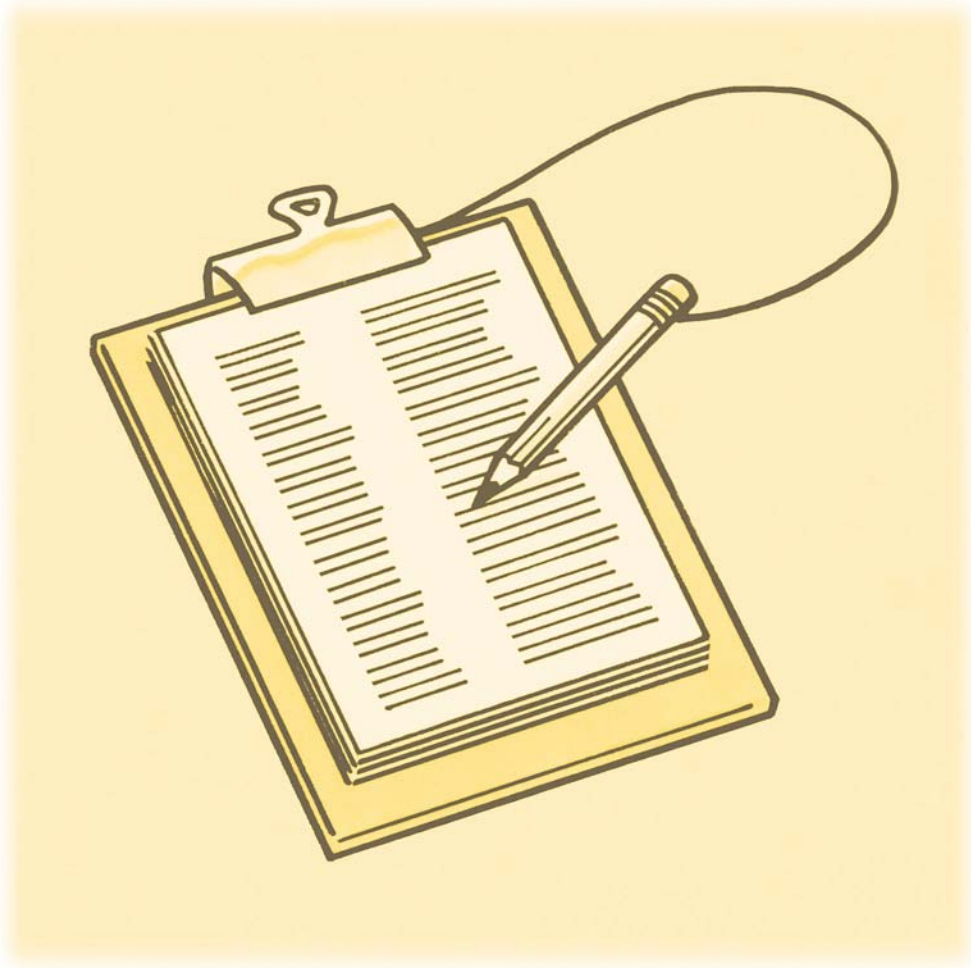
To vote, I must:

- be a Canadian citizen
- be at least 18 years old on election day
- prove my identity and address

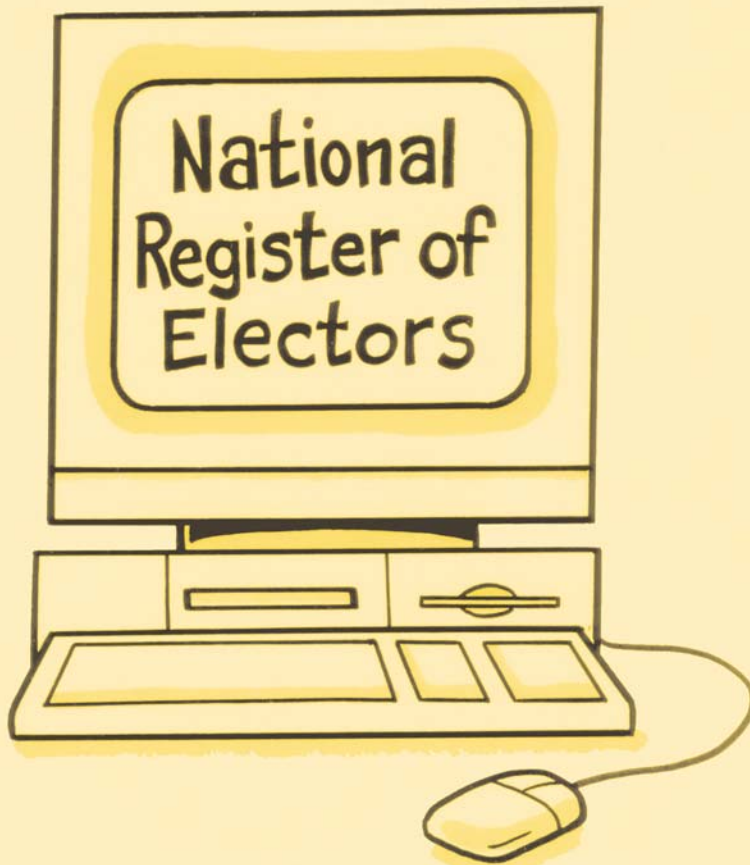
Section 1

Election words I need to know

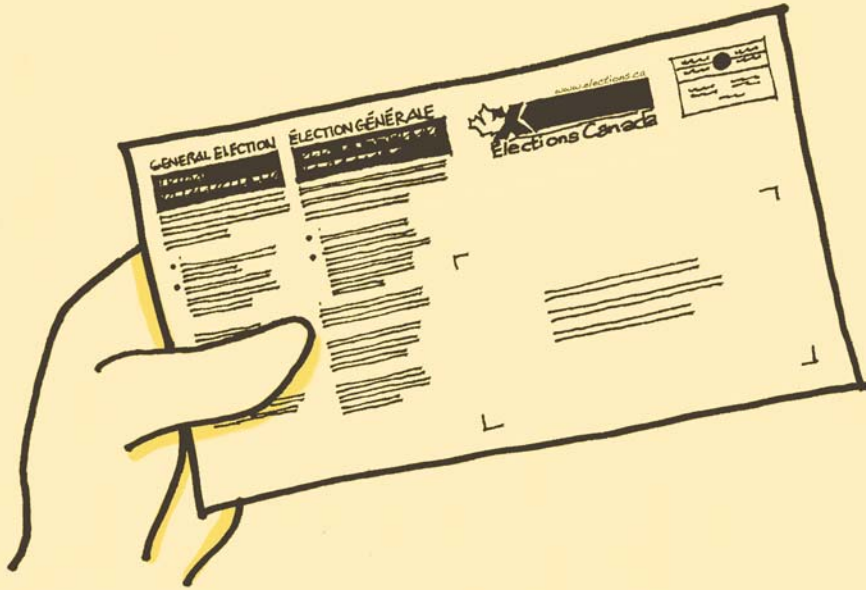




The names of the people who are allowed to vote are on the **voters list**, also called the list of electors.

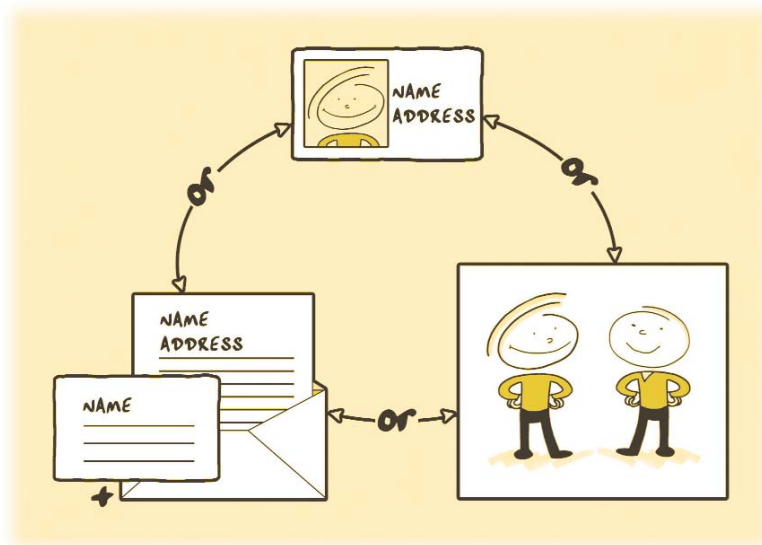


The voters list is taken from the **National Register of Electors**. The Register is a computer database of information on Canadians who have the right to vote.



If my name is on the voters list, I will receive a **voter information card** in the mail soon after an election is called. This **card** is important. It gives me lots of information. It tells me when and where I go to vote. If I do not receive this card, I can phone Elections Canada to make sure I get on the voters list.

When I go to vote, I must **prove my identity and address**. This verifies who I am and where I live. I have three options.



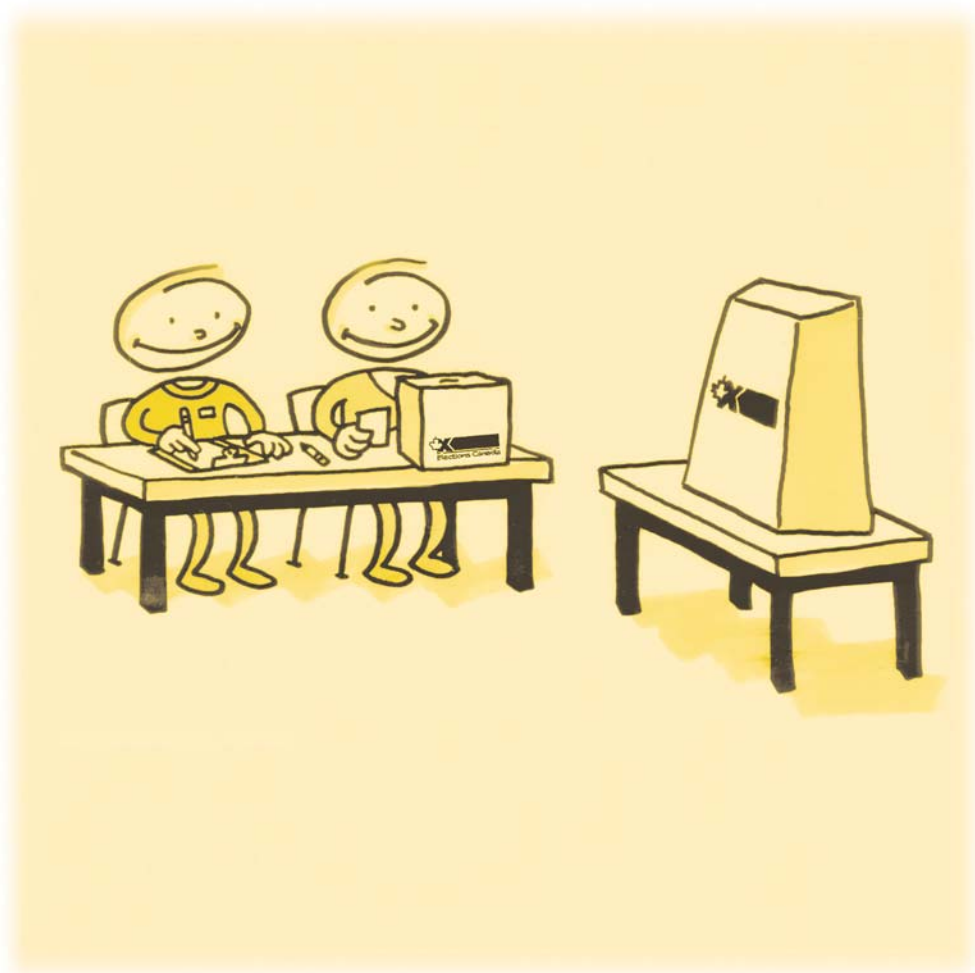
- **Option 1** – I can provide one piece of identification, issued by a government, that shows my photo, name and address. An example is my driver's licence.
- **Option 2** – I can provide two pieces of identification. Both must show my name, and one must also show my address. I can contact Elections Canada to find out which pieces of identification I can use.
- **Option 3** – I can swear an oath and have someone vouch for me. This must be a voter who is on the voters list in my polling division and who has the right identification.



I look for this big yellow sign. It is outside the building where I go to vote. My voter information card shows the address of this building.



Inside the door is the **information officer**.
He or she will inform me about the proper
identification to use at the **polling station**.
He or she will collect my voter information
card and direct me to where I need to go.



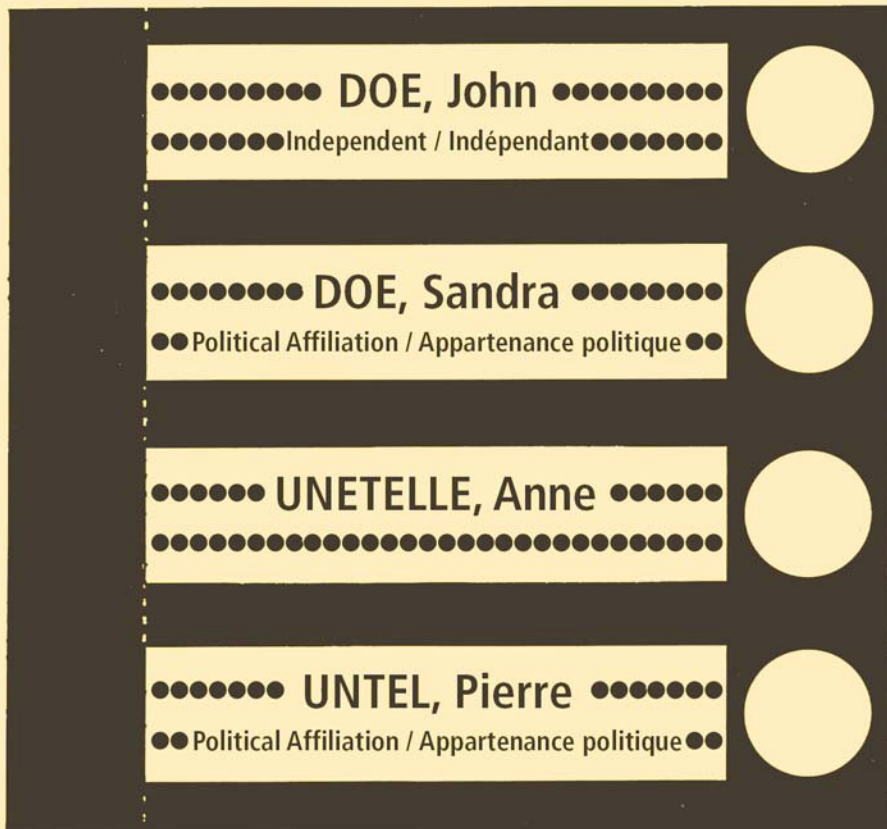
The **polling station** is where I vote. There are at least two people at each polling station: the deputy returning officer and the poll clerk.



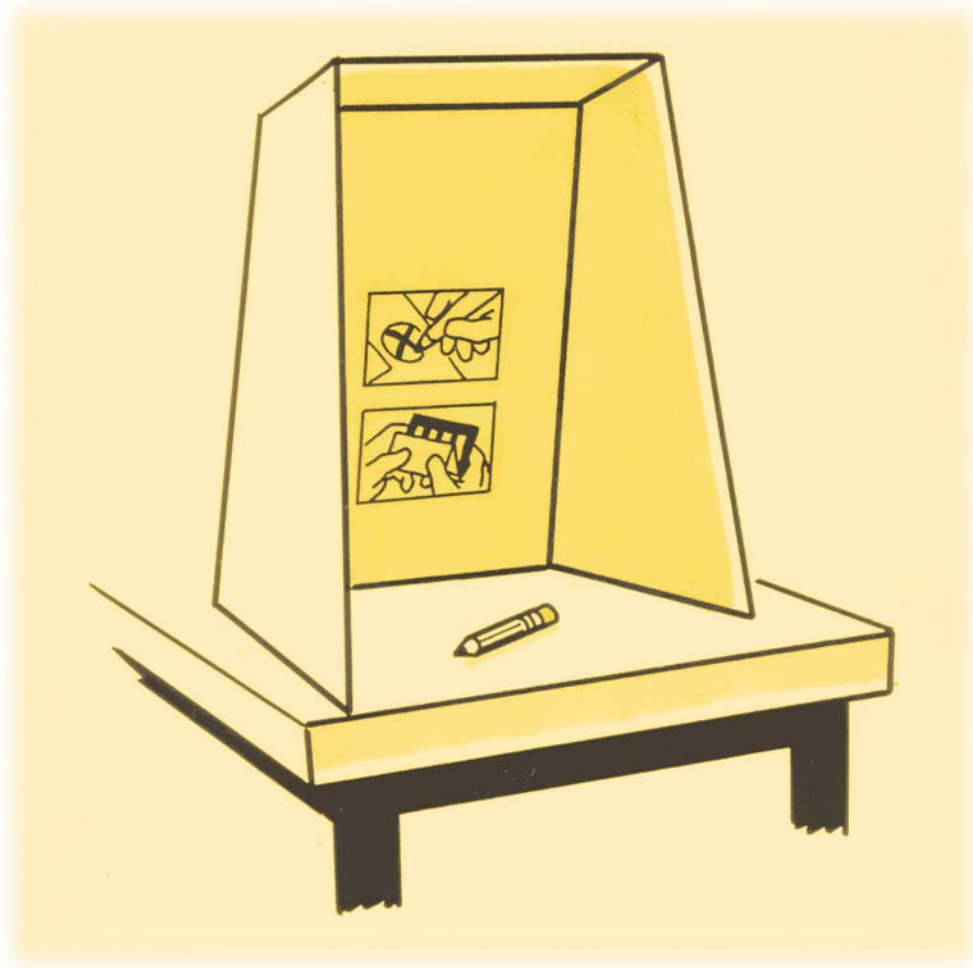
The **deputy returning officer (DRO)** asks me for my name and address, then asks me to show identification that proves who I am and where I live. The DRO gives me a special paper for voting. This paper is called a **ballot**. The DRO can help me vote, if I ask. The DRO counts the votes after the **polling station** is closed.



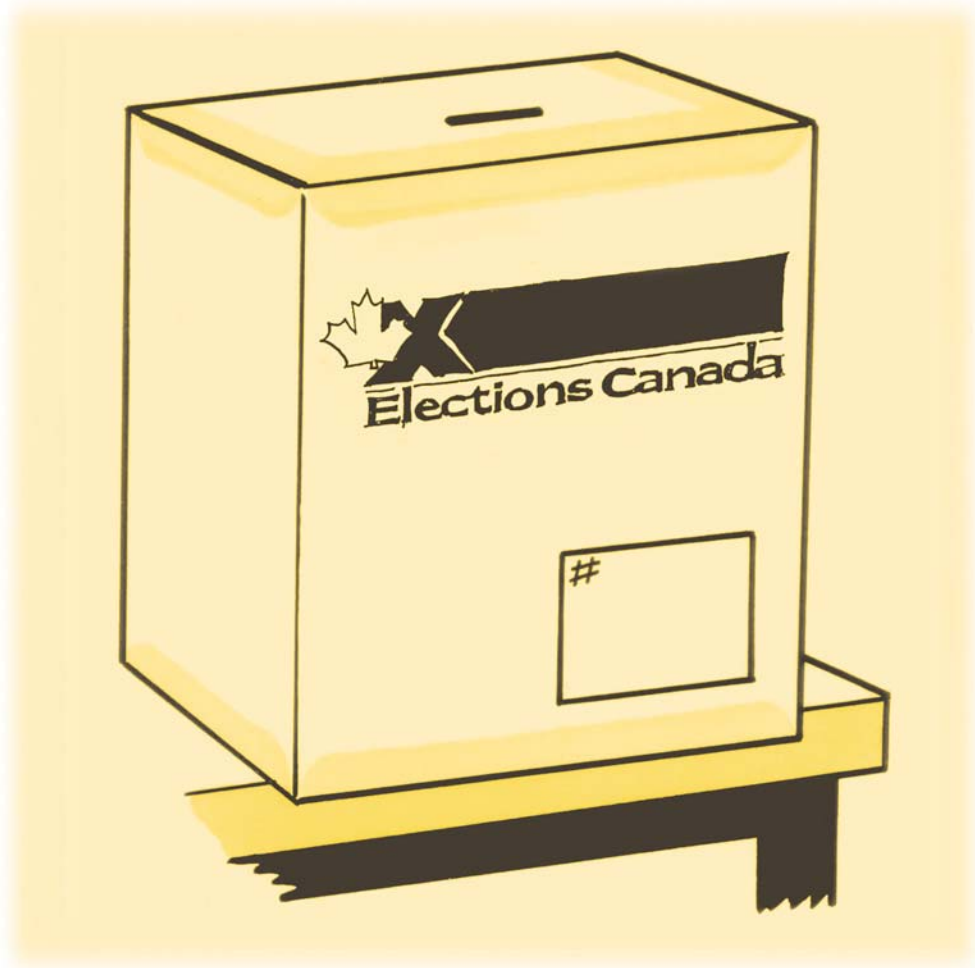
The **poll clerk** checks my name and address, then crosses my name off the voters list. The poll clerk also helps the deputy returning officer count the votes after the **polling station** is closed.



This is what a **ballot** looks like. People who want to be elected are called **candidates**. Their names are listed in alphabetical order on the ballot. I make an X in one of the circles to make my choice.



The **voting screen** is a private place in the polling station where I mark my ballot.



The **ballot box** is where all the marked ballots go. This is where I put my ballot after I make my choice.



When I vote, I choose one candidate
to represent me in the
House of Commons in Ottawa.

Voting in Canada

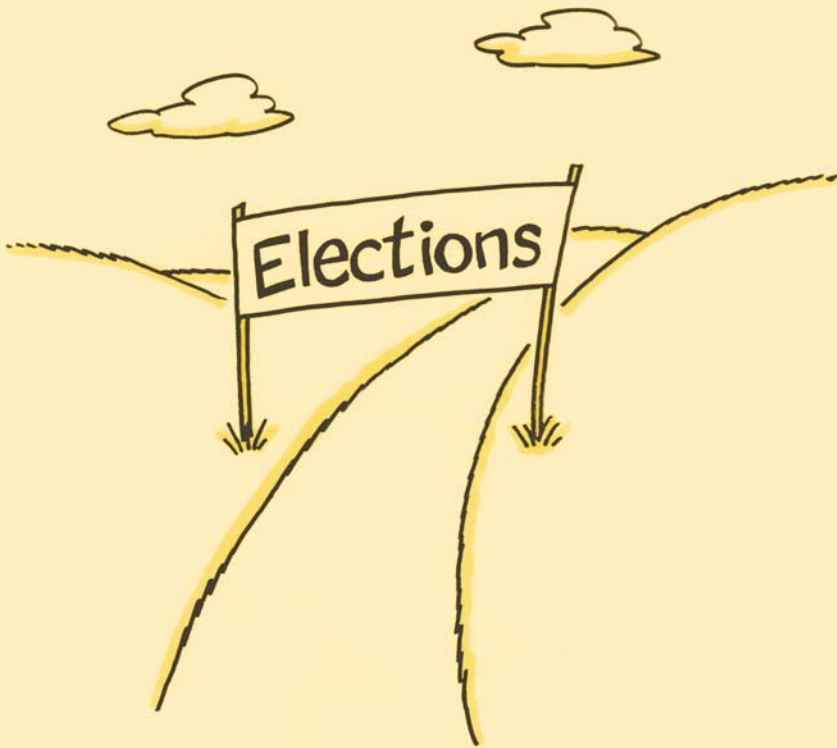
In Canada, federal elections usually happen every four years, and the Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for running them.

The Chief Electoral Officer, who runs Elections Canada, is chosen by the House of Commons. Elections Canada is an independent agency and is not connected to any political party.

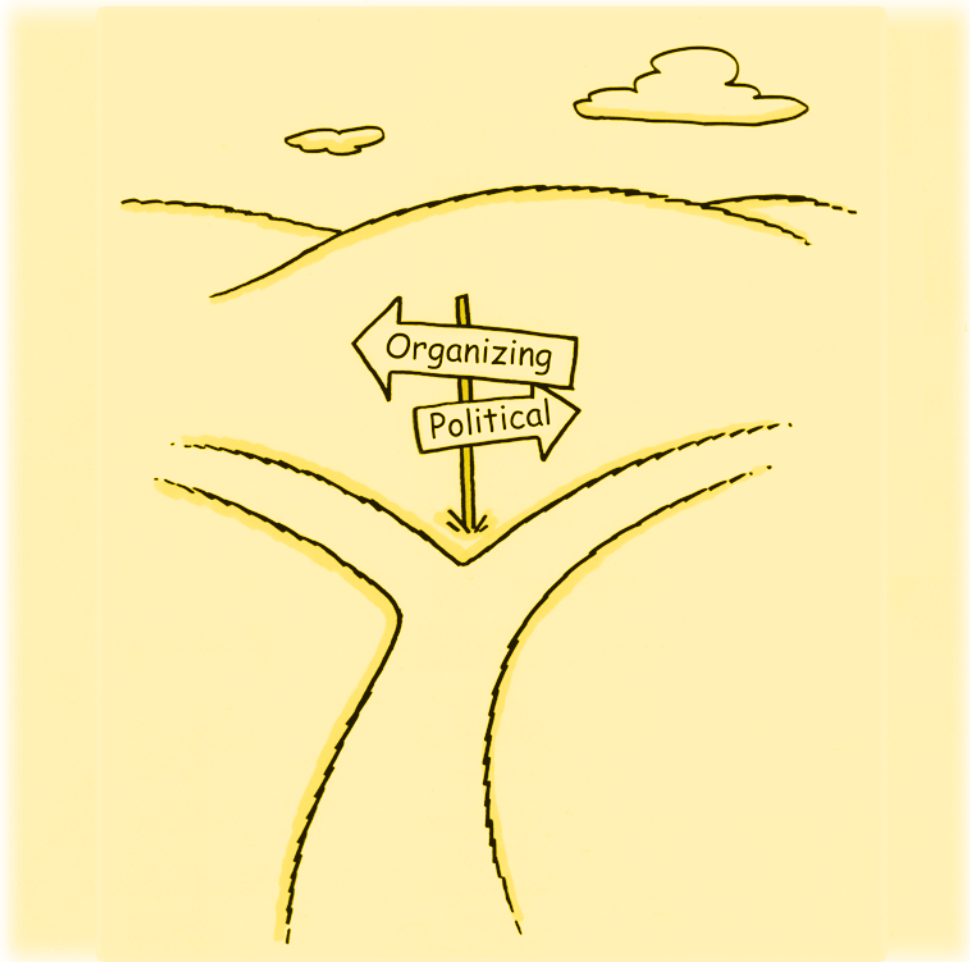
Section 2

What elections are all about

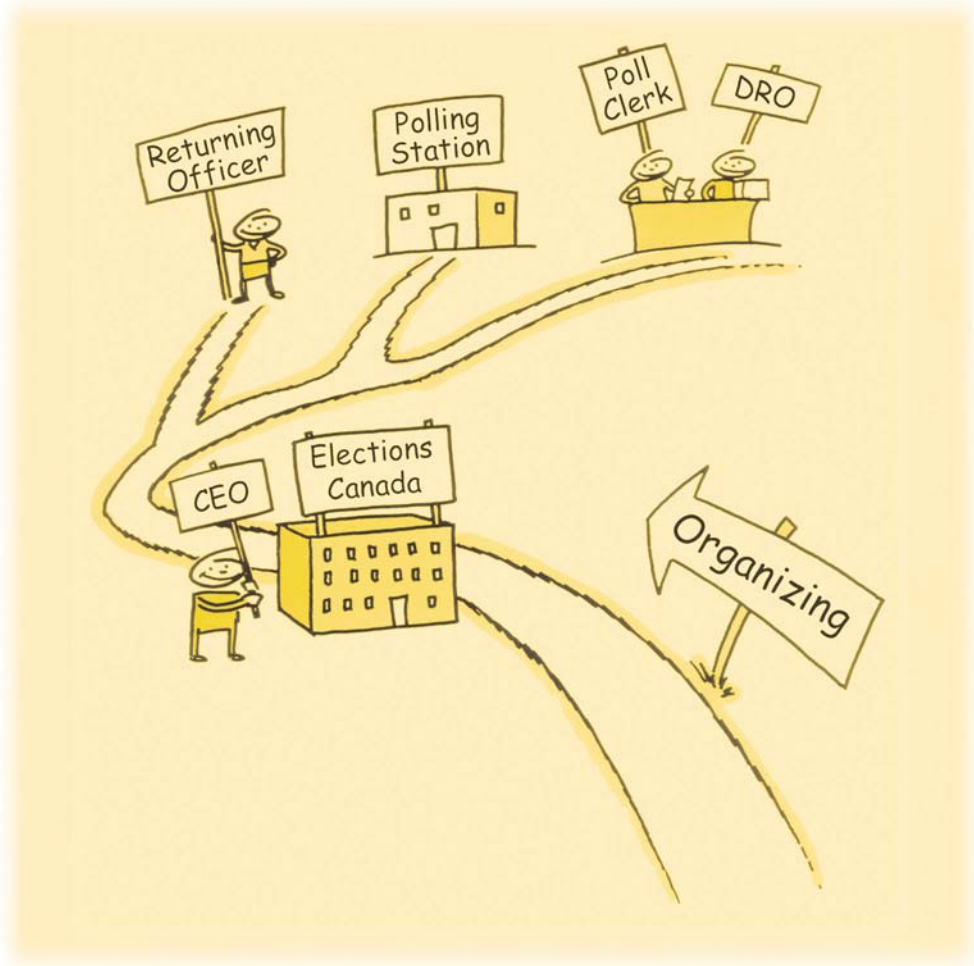




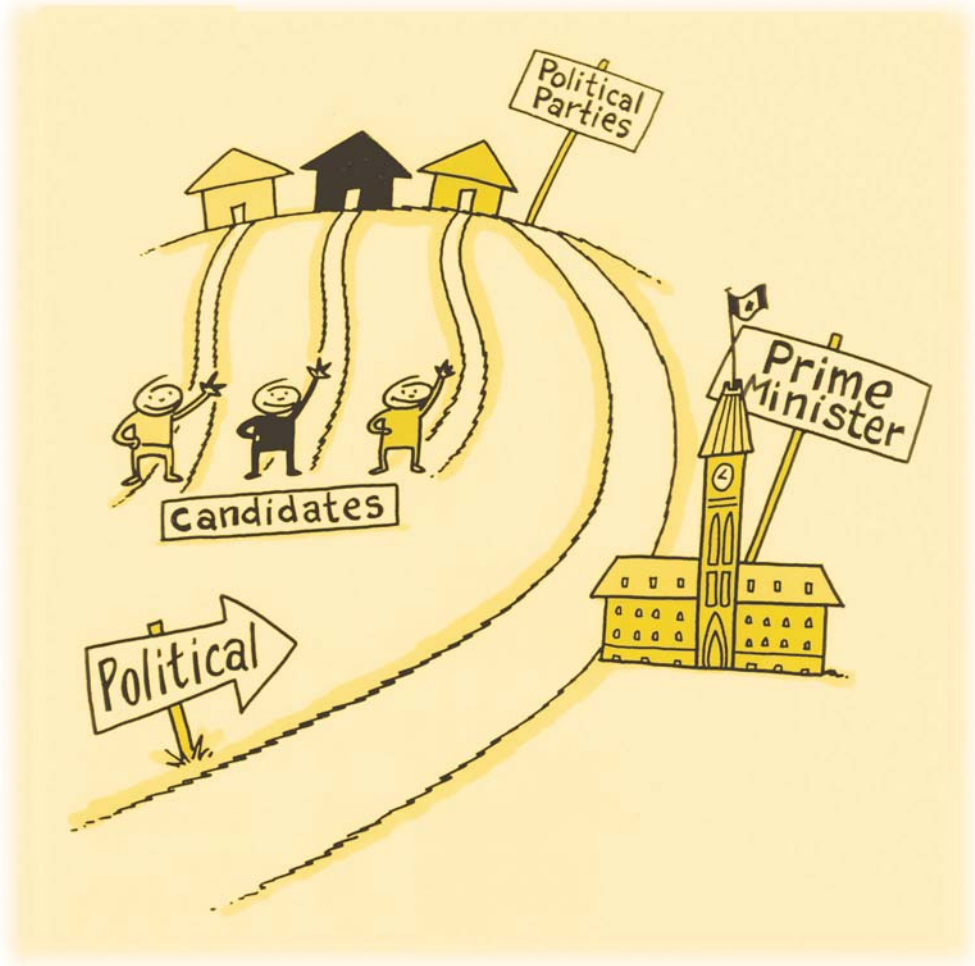
Voting is about **choosing** the member of Parliament (MP) who will represent each riding (sometimes called an electoral district or constituency) in the House of Commons. The political party with the most MPs forms the government.



The **electoral process** includes two parts:
the organizing part and the political part.



The **organizing part** includes all the people who work for Elections Canada. They help me vote but do not tell me which candidate to vote for.



The **political part** includes candidates who want to be elected as members of Parliament (MPs). A candidate can run as an independent candidate or as a representative of a political party. There are many political parties in Canada.

Voting is secret

No one can force you to vote for a particular candidate on the ballot. No one can force you to say who you are going to vote for. The law makes sure that your vote is **SECRET**.

Section 3

Election day – I make a choice





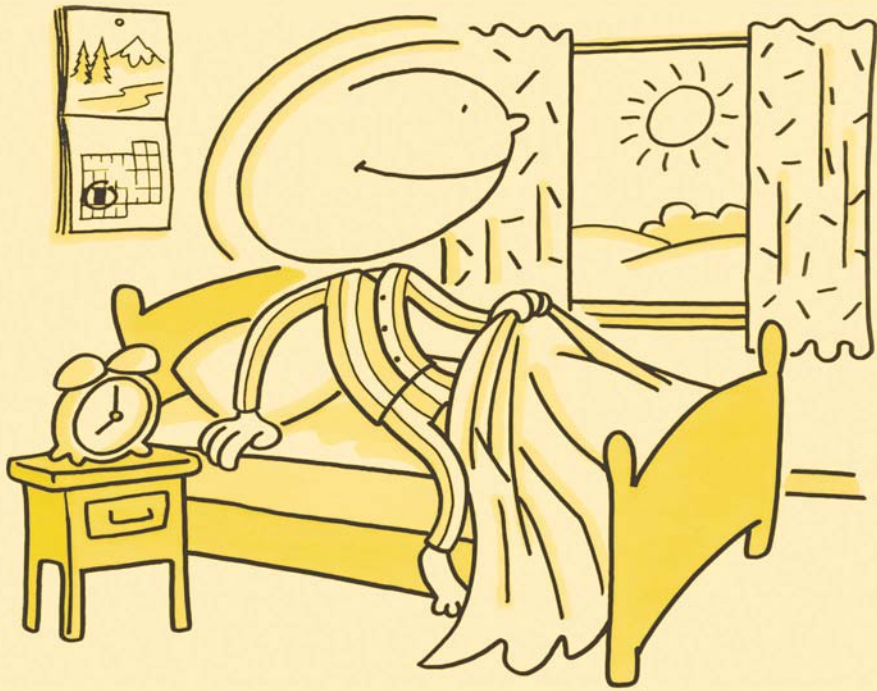
In an election, I have to make a choice.
I must choose a person to represent me
and help run Canada's government.



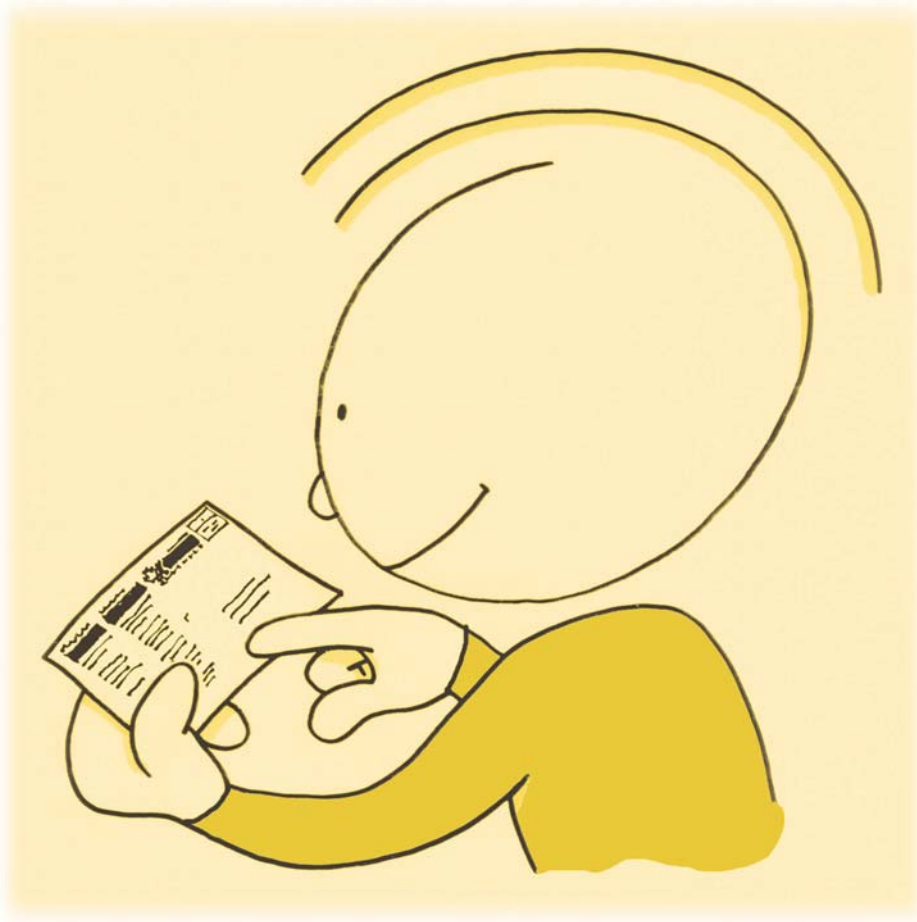
I can find out about the **candidates** by watching the news on TV, searching the Internet or talking to friends and family members. I will take the time I need to make my choice.



Who will I choose? I will choose the **candidate** who will do the best job of representing me.



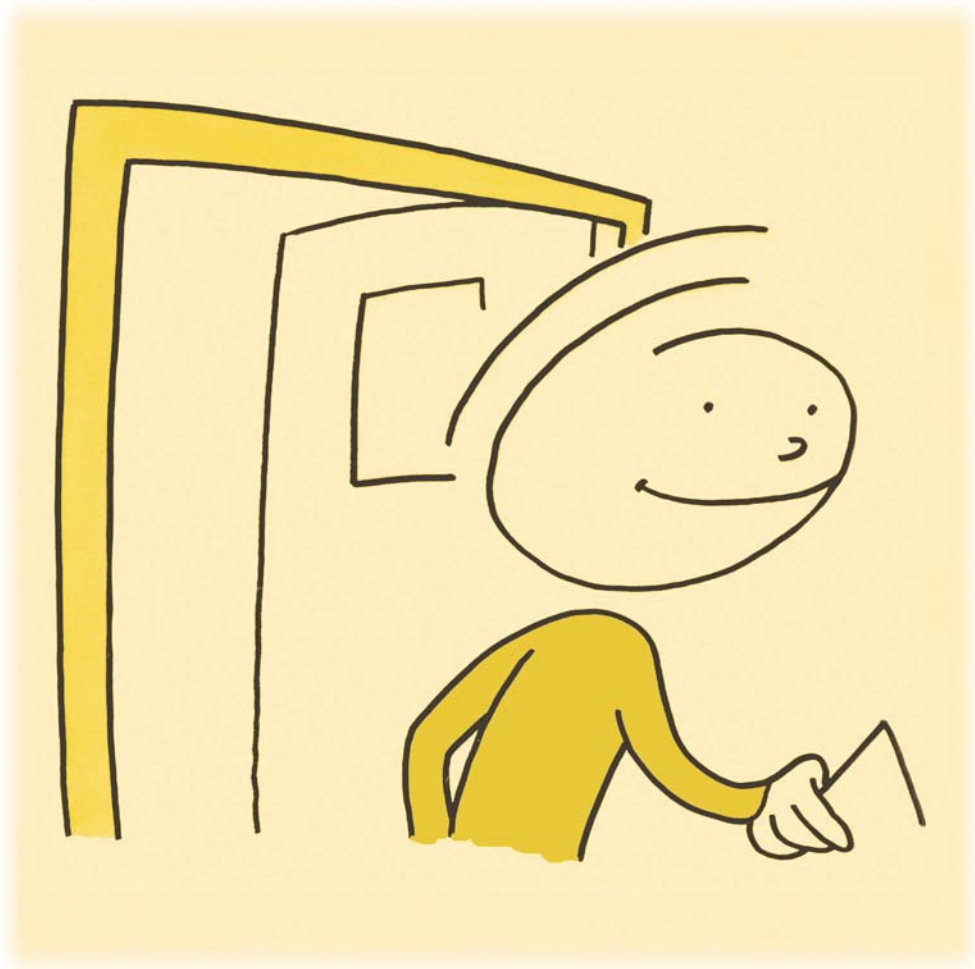
Election day is the day I vote.
I have marked the date on my calendar.



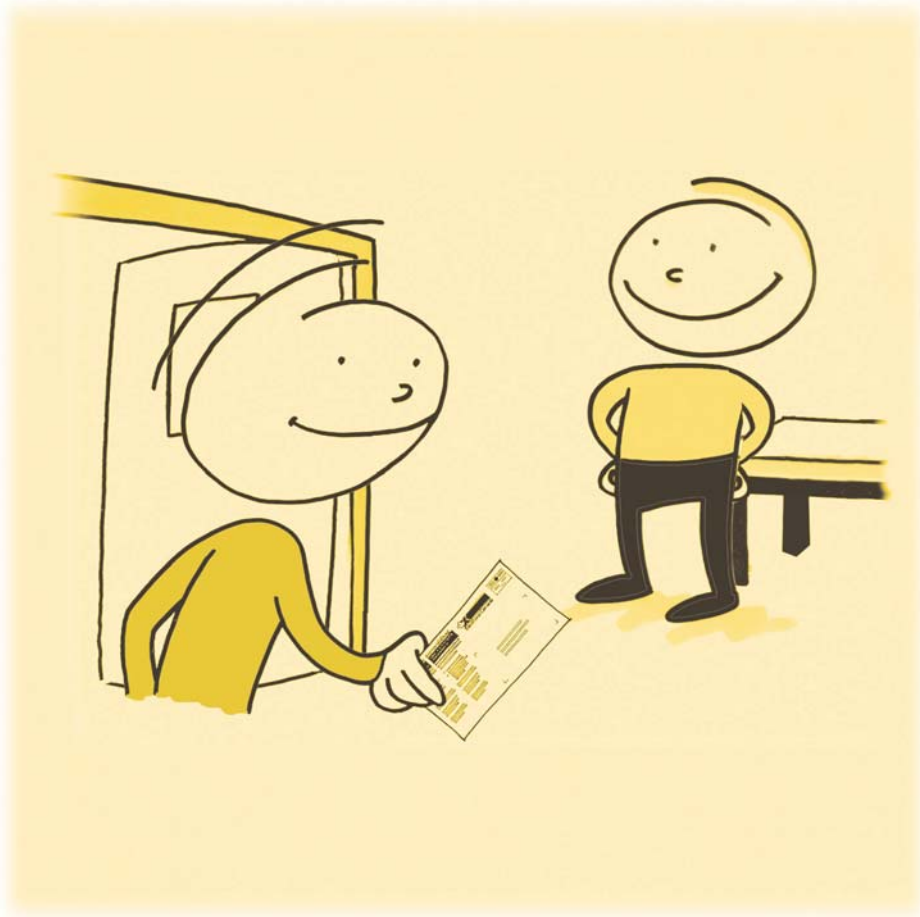
I find the address of my **polling station** on my **voter information card**. It also tells me when the polling station is open.



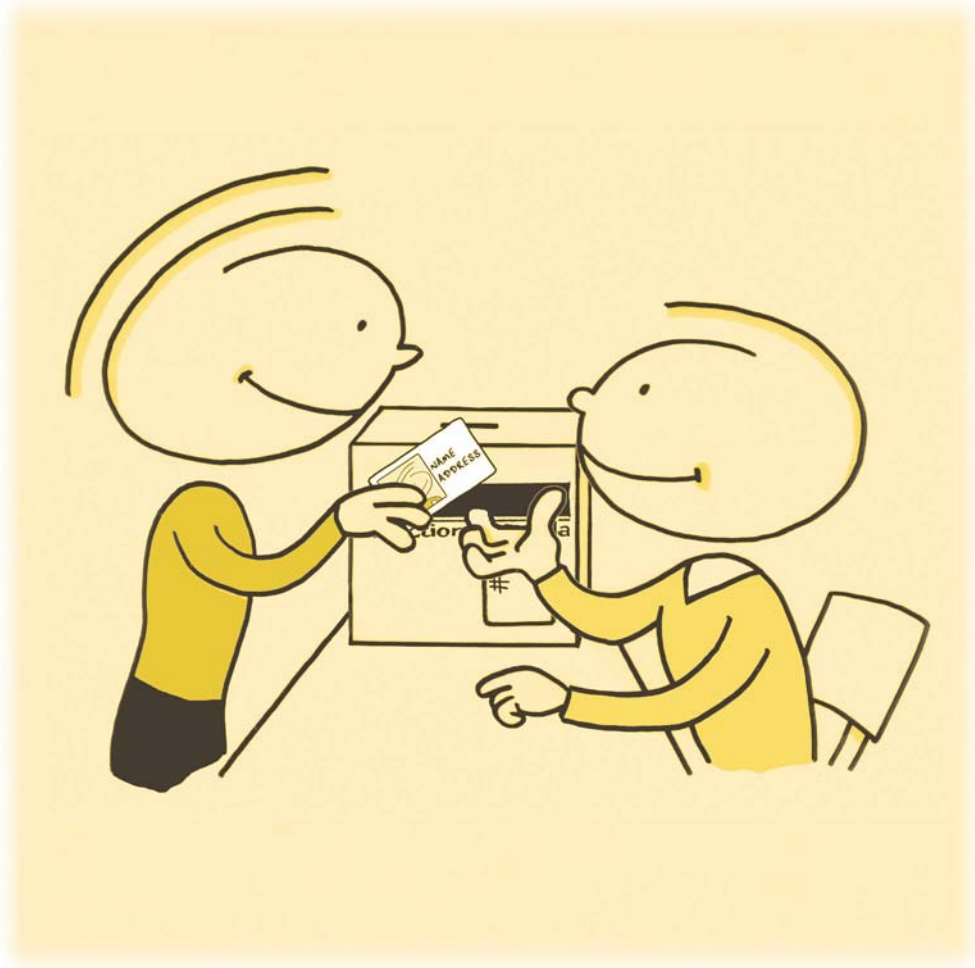
I take my **voter information card** with me
and my **proof of identity and address**.
I can go by myself or I can go with a friend
or family member. If I do not have the right
identification, my friend or family member
can show proof of identity and address,
then take an oath to vouch for me,
saying that I am who I say I am.



Inside, there are people sitting at tables,
working. There may be other people too.
Most people are here to vote, just like me.



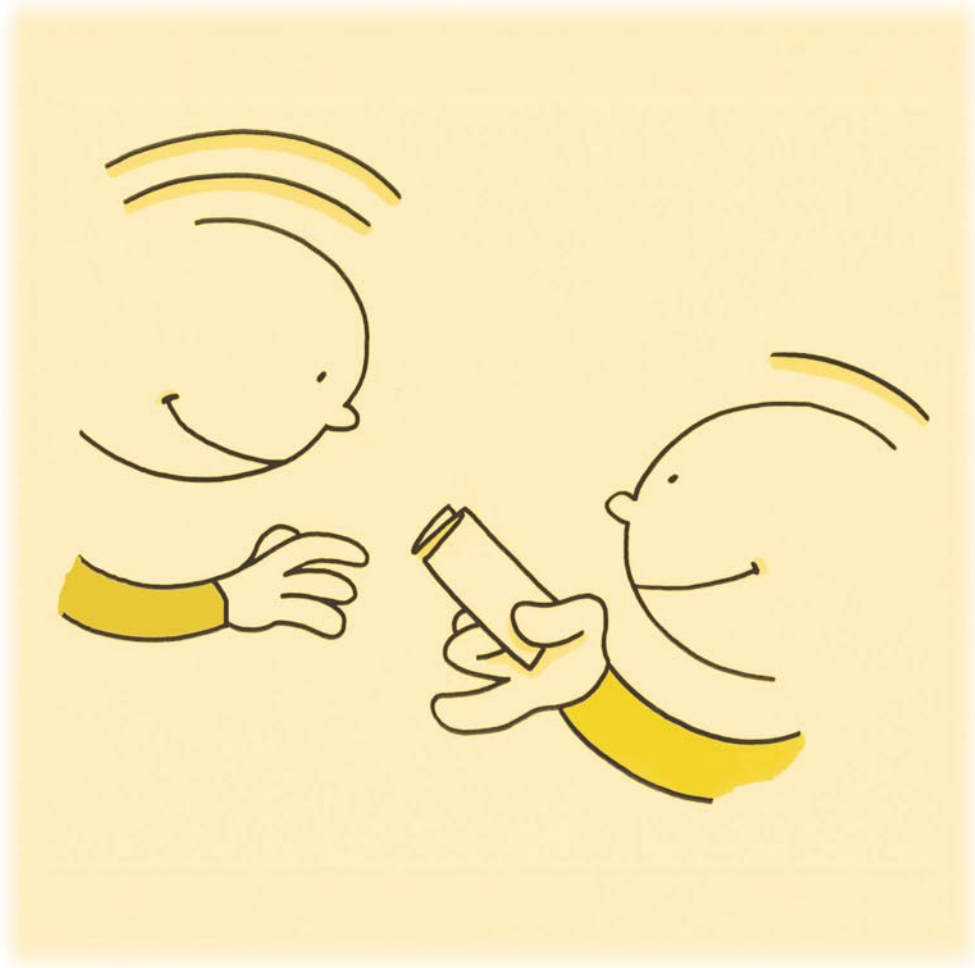
The **information officer** greets me. He or she will inform me about proper identification and will tell me where my **polling station** is. If I need to register before I vote, the information officer will show me where I do that.



I go to my **polling station**. I tell the **deputy returning officer (DRO)** and **poll clerk** my name and address. The DRO will ask me for identification that shows who I am and where I live.



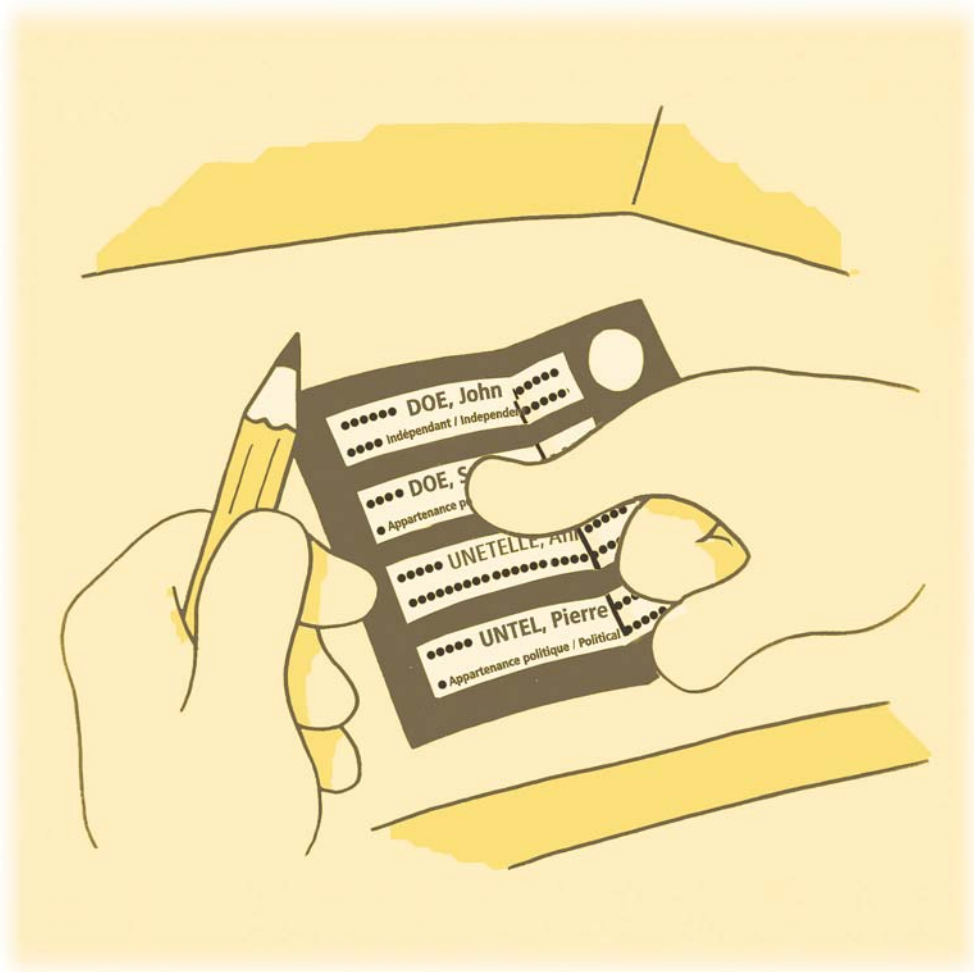
The **poll clerk** finds my name on the **voters list**, then crosses off my name to show that I have come to vote.



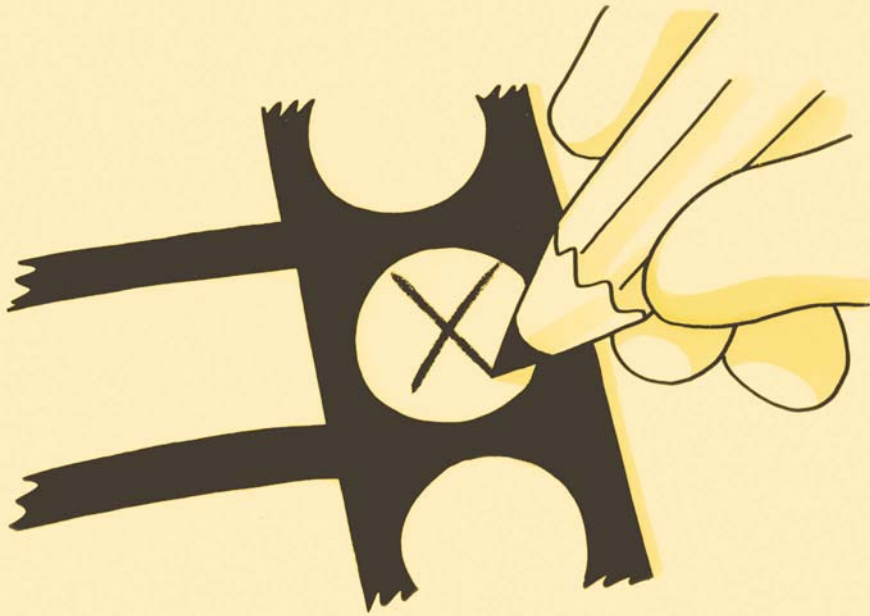
The **deputy returning officer** gives me a **ballot** that is folded. I can ask him or her to help me, or I can bring a friend or family member with me.



I take my **ballot** behind the **voting screen** so no one can see me vote. There is a pencil there for me to use.



I open the ballot to see the names
of all the **candidates**. I find the name
of the candidate I want.



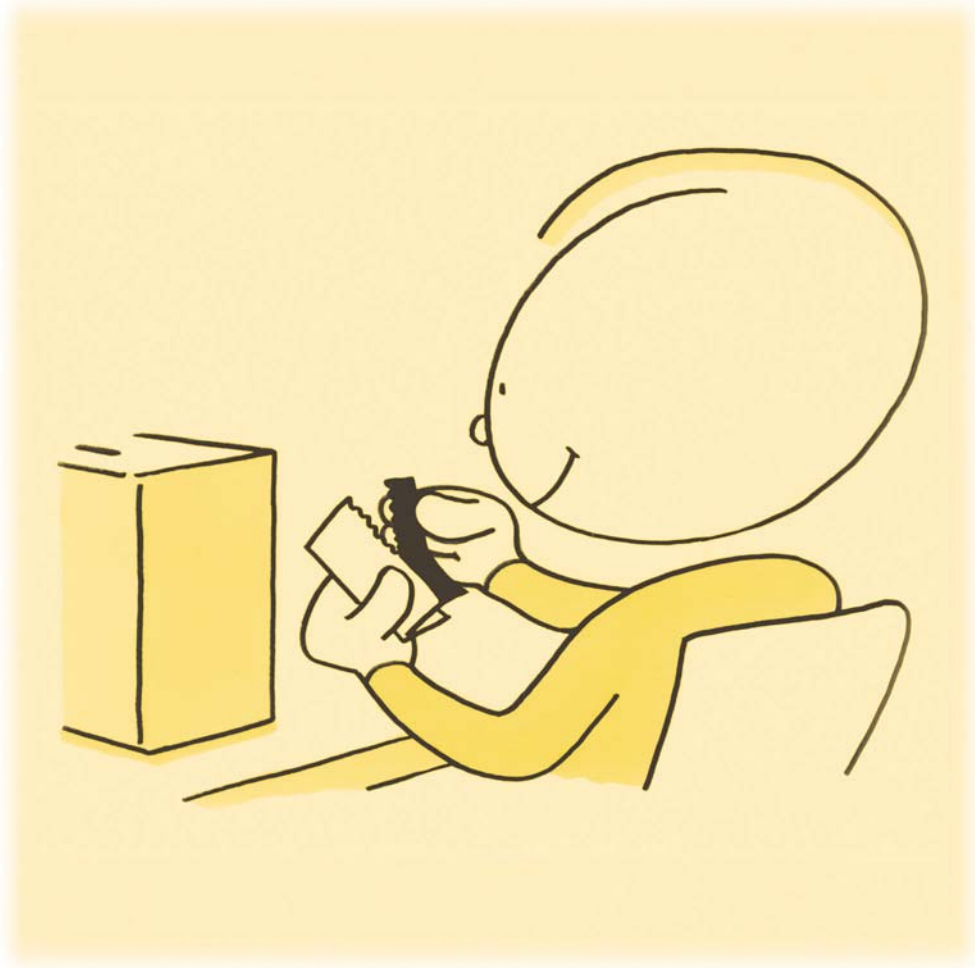
I make an **X** in the circle beside the name of the **candidate** I choose. The X is my vote.
If I make a mistake, I can take my ballot back and ask for another one.



I fold my **ballot** to keep my vote a secret.



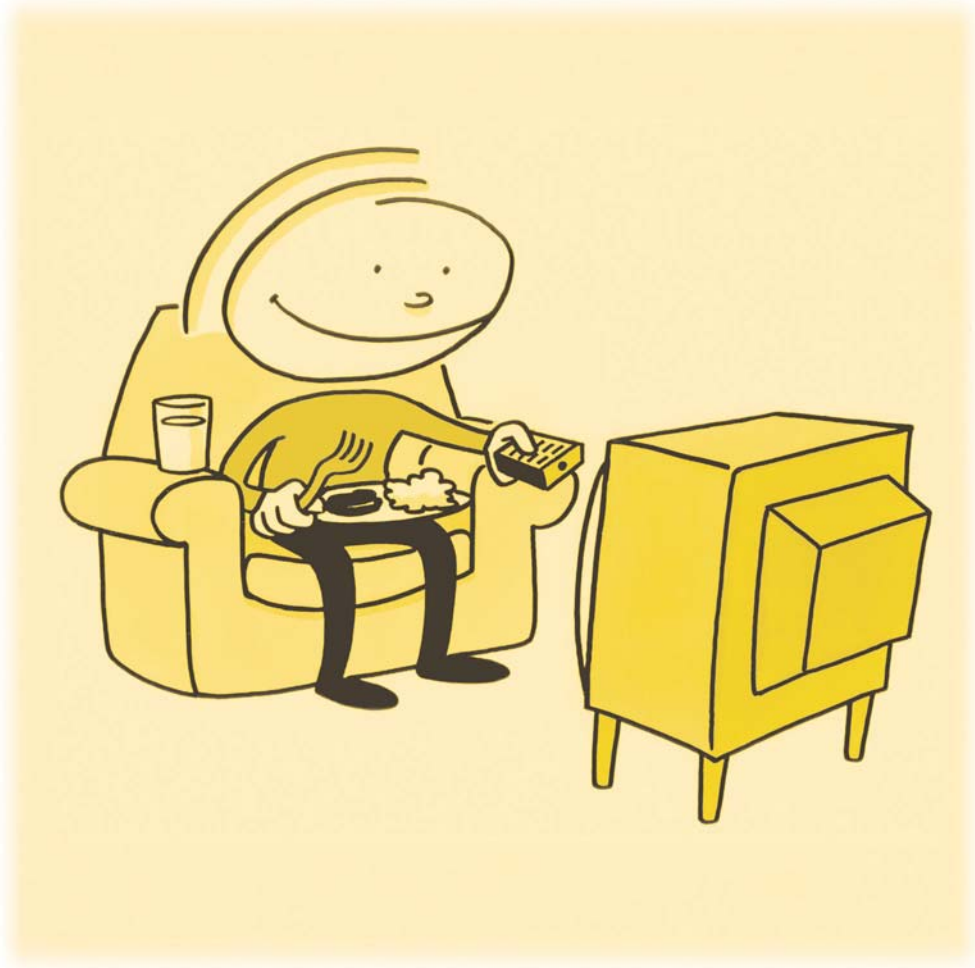
Then I take my **ballot** back to the table.
I give it to the **deputy returning officer**,
the person who gave me the **ballot**.



The **deputy returning officer** tears off the black tab without opening my **ballot**.



The **deputy returning officer** gives me back my **ballot**. I put my ballot into the **ballot box**. I have just voted!



Then I go home and watch the news.
I hope my **candidate** is elected.

Other ways of voting

If you cannot go to the polling station on election day, you can still vote.

1. **You can vote before election day at an advance poll.**

See your voter information card for the dates and the place to go.

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

The special ballot lets you vote away from the polling station, before election day. You can ask for an application for a special ballot from Elections Canada.




Election simulation

Elections Canada provides the supplies you need to set up a practice election and follow the steps outlined in this guide:

- ballot box EC 05000
- voting screen EC 00140
- short seals EC 99606
- long seals EC 99607

To order these supplies, please contact Elections Canada at the following numbers:

- 1-800-463-6868 or 613-993-2975
-  TTY 1-800-361-8935
for people who are deaf or hard of hearing

On the next few pages, you will also find the following sample documents:

- voters list
- tally sheet
- ballot

✂ Detach here

Voters List

List the names of all the participants in the simulation. People playing the roles of candidates, deputy returning officer and poll clerk have the right to vote – their names should be on the list too. They could vote before everyone else.

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| ELECTORAL DISTRICT – NAME OF ORGANIZATION | |
| MUNICIPALITY | POLLING DIVISION NO. |
| This voters list was prepared for use at the election simulation of <i>I Can Vote!</i> | |
| <div></div> | |
| DATE | |

The Polls Are Now Closed!

Counting the votes

1. The DRO opens the ballot box and empties the contents on the table.
2. The DRO picks up each ballot, calls out the name of the candidate for whom it has been marked and shows the ballot to the poll clerk and the candidates' representatives who are present. Then the ballots are put in a separate pile for each candidate.
3. The poll clerk and candidates' representatives keep score on the tally sheets provided.
4. Ballots are rejected if they are improperly marked.
5. The candidate with the most votes is elected.

Tally Sheet

| Candidate's name | | | | | | Candidate's name | | | | | | Candidate's name | | | | | | Candidate's name | | | | | |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 5 | | | | | | 5 | | | | | | 5 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 10 | | | | | | 10 | | | | | | 10 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 15 | | | | | | 15 | | | | | | 15 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 20 | | | | | | 20 | | | | | | 20 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 25 | | | | | | 25 | | | | | | 25 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 30 | | | | | | 30 | | | | | | 30 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 35 | | | | | | 35 | | | | | | 35 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 40 | | | | | | 40 | | | | | | 40 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 45 | | | | | | 45 | | | | | | 45 | | | | | |
| TOTAL: | | | | | | TOTAL: | | | | | | TOTAL: | | | | | | TOTAL: | | | | | |

| Spoiled ballots* | | | | | | Rejected ballots | | | | | |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 5 | | | | | | 5 | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | | 10 | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | 15 | | | | | |

*A spoiled ballot is one incorrectly marked, but exchanged for a new one.

Results

(Candidate's name)
has been elected

Black part
with
number
on reverse

- Notes: 1. Adapt the ballot based on the number of candidates.
2. Photocopy the desired number of ballots.

Detach : here

The counterfoil stays in the deputy returning officer's ballot book



