

ELECTIONS CANADA LAYS OUT PLAN FOR PANDEMIC VOTING

HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE POLLS THIS YEAR

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Canada is headed for an unprecedented pandemic election on Sept. 20, and with COVID-19 case numbers on the rise, voters may be anxious to know what their experience at the polls will look like.

Chief electoral officer Stéphane Perrault has laid out what you can expect from Elections Canada in the 44th general election and said on Aug. 18 that election day preparations are already underway.

At the polls, voters can expect mandatory masking, physical distancing, physical barriers and single-use pencils. Voters may also bring their own pens and pencils. As a result of the pandemic, Perrault said this election will be more expensive — with an estimated cost of \$612 million — and take longer to call.

Elections Canada expects to receive between two and five million mail-in ballots, compared to the usual 50,000 for a federal election. The counting of mail-in ballots won't begin until after election day and could take between two and five days to complete



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in some ridings.

If you're still not sure what all of this means for you, we'll try to address your queries here:

How strict will safety measures be at polling stations?

Perrault said the measures at polling stations, such as mandatory masking and physical distancing, will resemble those seen in places like grocery stores, albeit in a much more controlled environment. Vaccination isn't mandatory to vote in person, but masks are mandatory for anyone who does not have a medical exemption.

Will my usual polling station be open?

Voters may be assigned polling stations that are different from the ones they usually attend, since some locations are not available due to the pandemic. In some cases, they might be located further away or in a non-traditional space, or they might not meet all accessibility criteria.

Voters should pay attention to their voter information card to ensure they know where to go on election day or for advance polling. Voters who have accessibility needs that

might not be met by their assigned location should contact Elections Canada.

What if I don't want to vote in person?

Voters can register online at www.elections.ca or contact Elections Canada to receive a mail-in ballot kit. Anyone using a mail-in ballot to vote is responsible for making sure it reaches an Elections Canada office in their riding before polls close on Sept. 20. You should mail your ballot as soon as possible, and take Canada Post delivery standard into account.

If you received a mail-in ballot and don't think it will reach your local Elections Canada office in time, you can deliver it to your local office of the returning officer or wait until election day and take it to a local polling station anywhere in your electoral district.

How will Elections Canada prevent people from double voting in person and via a mail-in ballot?

When a voter registers for a mail-in ballot kit, their name is automatically struck from a list of people eligible to vote in person. If that voter loses their ballot or it never arrives and they attempt to vote at a polling station, staff will know they've registered for a mail-in ballot and require them to swear an oath that they have not already voted. A record will then be



Toronto Star file photo

Voters can expect mandatory masking, physical distancing, physical barriers and single-use pencils when they head to the polls Sept. 20.

kept indicating that they've voted in person. If Elections Canada staff receive a mail-in ballot in that person's name, they'll know not to record both votes.

Attempting to vote twice is a serious offence,

and any case of double voting will be sent to the commissioner of Elections Canada for investigation.

What can I do if I want to vote in person but avoid crowds on election day?

All registered voters

over 18 in Canada can cast their vote at their local advance polling station Sept. 10 to 13. Eligible voters can also register to cast a special ballot at their local office of the returning officer outside of advance polling days.



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