

# Overseas Canadians Voting e-Toolkit

Why and How to be Civically Engaged While Abroad



**GLOCAL**  
FOUNDATION OF CANADA

**YouCount**.ca 

# What is GLOCAL Foundation of Canada?

A non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to creating opportunities for Canadian citizens and residents to apply their global vision, professional expertise, and local knowledge in ways that improve cross-cultural understanding and creative problem-solving.



**GLOCAL**  
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Global vision

Local engagement

Open mindedness

Creative solutions

Adaptive leadership

Lifelong learning

# What is YouCount?

YouCount.ca is a non-partisan and not-for-profit platform for civic engagement. Its goal is to empower and support Canadian citizens and residents to navigate and participate in Canada's democracy with ease.



**YouCount.ca was soft-launched in July 2020 and supported both October 2020 provincial elections in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, Nova Scotia, as well as the by-elections in Ontario.**

**On July 1, 2021 we celebrated our 1-year anniversary launching an improved version!**

# Why We Created This e-Toolkit



Encourage and support Canadians living overseas to remain engaged and involved with Canadian affairs and politics.



Help overseas Canadians recognize their unique voice and impact on Canadian policies.



Further develop and strengthen relations, partnerships, and collaborations between Canada and its overseas citizens.

# Who is an overseas voter?



- ✓ Canadian citizen
- ✓ 18 years of age or older
- ✓ Must have resided in Canada at some point in their life with a civic address
  
- ✓ Can vote in **provincial / territorial elections** if:
  - you are overseas but intend to return to the province / territory
  - you were residing in the province / territory for a certain number of months prior to leaving, according to the eligibility rules for the province / territory

## ***Did You Know?***

In 2019, the Supreme Court of Canada approved the new rule where overseas Canadians can vote in federal elections no matter the number of years they have lived abroad. Before this ruling, one was eligible if abroad for only up to 5 years.

# Why Vote from Abroad?



- ✓ As a Canadian citizen, you have a right to vote, even when you are outside of Canada - so exercise it! Your vote counts, no less than if you were residing in Canada
- ✓ Your voice and vote *does* make a difference and has an impact on Canadian policies including domestic affairs and foreign matters relating to Canadian expatriates like yourself
- ✓ Your civic engagement allows you to become more connected and engaged with your home country Canada, while overseas
- ✓ Voting abroad is easy and simple!

## ***Did You Know?***

In the 2019 Federal Election, **34,142** international ballots were cast. This was an increase from the 2015 Federal Election where 11,001 international ballots were cast.

# Why Does Canada Care About My Vote?



- ✓ Canada aims to strengthen relations with overseas Canadians and keep them included in policy-making and legislation. Your vote and engagement allows Canada to hear your voice and learn and understand your experiences, insights, and concerns as an overseas Canadian which will help Canada implement and improve policies that will benefit you greatly - whether that be about business and finances, education, healthcare, social issues, etc.
- ✓ Overseas Canadians spread Canadian values beyond the border, showing the world what Canadians has to offer. Canada cares about your engagement as you bring new perspectives to the conversation and maintain relations between Canada and other countries

# How to Vote?

*Three Quick & Easy Steps!*

- 1** Apply to the *International Register of Electors*
- 2** Receive and complete your special ballot
- 3** Return your sealed special ballot by deadline



# How to Get Your Special Ballot

## Visit Elections Canada

- Visit [elections.ca](https://elections.ca)
- Click “**Voters**”
- Click “**Voter Registration**”
- Click “**Voting by Mail While Inside or Outside Canada**”
- Answer the prompts to check your eligibility

## Apply to be on the International Register of Electors

- Apply online or by mail.  
*You will need:*
- Last address of residence before leaving Canada
  - Current address OR Canadian embassy / consulate (must be arranged with them)
  - ID: passport OR citizenship certificate OR birth certificate

## Receive Special Ballot Voting Kit

- After you submit your application, it will be processed and a confirmation letter will be sent to your current address / embassy
- You will automatically be sent a *Special Ballot Voting Kit* upon a General Election or By-Election

# Voting by Special Ballot

- ✓ Your Special Ballot Voting Kit contains:
  - a special ballot
  - inner and outer envelopes
  - instructions on how to mark and mail your ballot
- ✓ Your ballot won't show a list of candidates. Instead, there is a blank space on the ballot for you to write the name of the candidate you are voting for.

*Why?* This is because potential candidates can file their nomination papers until three weeks before election day!
- ✓ **Remember:**  
Once you apply for a special ballot, this must be the only way you can vote!

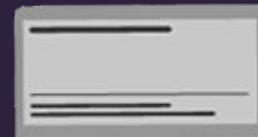
## ***Did You Know?***

When it's time to count the ballots, election workers will open all of the signed outer envelopes and remove all of the unmarked inner envelopes. They will then return only the unmarked inner envelopes to the ballot boxes and mix them up. In this way, your identity and vote are kept secret!

# Step by Step: Completing Your Special Ballot

1

Choose the candidate of your choice from your riding and write the first and last name of the candidate on your ballot



2

Place your ballot in the unmarked inner envelope



3

Place the inner envelope in the outer envelope and sign & date the declaration on the front of the outer envelope



4

Mail your special ballot - make sure that Elections Canada receives your ballot by election day at 6:00 p.m. EST



# Voting in Provincial Elections

It's a similar process to voting in federal elections - you just need to apply for a mail-in ballot via the elections website or elections office of your province / territory

## *Tips!*

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- ✓ Be sure to check the eligibility requirements for your province / territory, including the length of required residency before you left the province / territory
- ✓ Check that you have all required ID
- ✓ Be mindful of the deadline to return your mail-in ballot
- ✓ Check in with the election website for information on candidates in your riding

### ***Did You Know?***

The Northwest Territories is the first region in Canada that has ever implemented online voting - this occurred in the 2019 territorial general election!

# How do I know who to vote for?

Being informed and staying updated during elections while overseas may feel difficult, but there are many resources available that can easily bring relevant and reliable information to you.

## *Here are some useful & accessible resources*

- ✓ To find out about your riding and the most recent list of confirmed candidates, you can visit Election Canada's [Voter Information Service](#)
- ✓ Contact Elections Canada by phone (International #: 1-613-993-2975) or email on their contact page
- ✓ Some Canadian embassies or consulates can provide information regarding candidates
- ✓ Visit party websites to learn about running candidates and sign up for their newsletters
- ✓ Follow social media of Elections Canada for updates on federal elections
  - Instagram & Twitter: [@Electionscan\\_E](#) / [ElectionsCan\\_F](#)
- ✓ Follow social media of candidates and parties
- ✓ Sign up for newsletters on reliable news sites
- ✓ Visit [YouCount.ca](#) to be informed about your riding, your representatives, and candidates

# How YouCount.ca helps

YouCount.ca can serve as an effective and accessible tool for your engagement, especially during elections. We offer a variety of resources and information that will keep you informed and updated.

## *Here are some resources we provide*

- ✓ “Find Your Political Representatives” tool where you can find a list of your representatives in your riding
- ✓ Election modules with up-to-date candidate information that allows constituents to compare candidates
- ✓ Collection of e-Toolkits that navigate Canadian politics, Indigenous matters, and anti-discrimination resources you can trust with ease
- ✓ Fun activities such as trivia, bingo, and scavenger hunt games as well as creative outreach on our social media channels to build your knowledge on political institutions and local communities
- ✓ “Ask Beaver” tool where you can submit your questions regarding Canadian politics and our democratic system to and we can get the accurate and reliable answer for you

# How do I remain engaged besides voting?

You can also remain engaged outside of election time and be informed about political matters happening at home and be civically active.

## *Here are some tips on how to be civically engaged while abroad:*

- ✓ **Join clubs & organizations.** Many countries have clubs or organizations where Canadian expatriates can unify and stay connected to Canadian culture, lifestyle, and politics.
- ✓ **Sign petitions.** You can have an impact on Canadian policies with each signature you add on petitions concerning Canadian affairs. Also, going over the many petitions online can give you an idea on some pressing issues that are occurring in Canada. You can also share the petitions across your social media channels to spread the word and increase your impact.
- ✓ **Write to your MP.** Writing letters or sending emails to your Member of Parliament is a great way to be engaged - whether it be voicing your opinion or expressing your concerns about an issue.
- ✓ **Write letters to the editor of newspapers.** Reading newspapers and online news is an effective way to stay updated on politics, recent events, and local news. To be even more active, you can write letters to the editor about your own thoughts or views - an easy way to get your voice heard while you are overseas.

## 4 Fast Facts!



Overseas Canadians were first given the right to vote in **1993**. Until 2019, one could vote overseas if out of the country for up to 5 years. In 2019, the 5-year limit was removed and now there is no limit for the number of years you can be abroad to vote.



The US houses the highest number of Canadian expatriates - 800,000. Second nation is **Hong Kong** with over **300,000** Canadian expats!



The province that experienced the highest number of emigrants in 2019-2020 was **Ontario**. Runner up was **British Columbia**.

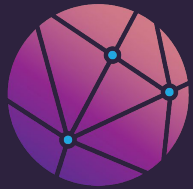


There is an estimated **2.8 million** Canadian expats, sometimes referred to as Canada's "eleventh province" by John Stackhouse in his 2020 book on Canadian expatriates.



# Researchers

This e-toolkit was researched and compiled by Dena Sharafdin in August 2021.



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