

# a guide for scrutineers



## Introduction

This guide is designed to provide general information and guidance to scrutineers appointed by candidates or official agents to represent them at polling places during an election, by-election or plebiscite. Scrutineers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the contents of *A Guide for Candidates* and *A Guide for Polling Place Officials*. The *Election Act*, particularly sections 71 to 125 inclusive, governs all aspects of conducting an election. Copies of the *Election Act* are available from the Alberta Queen's Printer.

## Appointment and Code of Conduct for Scrutineers

A candidate may appoint up to four electors as scrutineers for each polling station and registration officer's station. Scrutineers act as the candidate's representative at a polling station and registration officer's station. Only one scrutineer per candidate may, at any one time, be present at each station.

Before observing at each station, scrutineers must present their Appointment of Scrutineer form to the deputy returning officer or registration officer and take the Oath of Secrecy.

Scrutineers who leave and return to the same station do not have to take the oath a second time. The scrutineers must read and abide by the Code of Conduct for scrutineers, found on the back of the Appointment form. Scrutineers who fail to comply with the Code of Conduct may receive a verbal and/or written warning concerning their actions.

After receiving a warning, a scrutineer may be removed from the polling place if, in the opinion of the supervisory deputy returning officer or the deputy returning officer, the scrutineer fails to comply with the Code of Conduct.

While at a polling station or registration officer's station, no election badge, circular, card, poster, bill, ribbon or other item that might be construed as an identification of a candidate or political party may be worn or carried by any scrutineer.

Scrutineers will receive appropriate identification from the deputy returning officer.

Scrutineers in attendance prior to the official opening of the poll at 9:00 a.m. on polling day may examine ballots and other election forms and supplies, inspect polling booths and check to ensure that the ballot box is empty before it is sealed by the deputy returning officer.

While the scrutineer is present at a polling place, the scrutineer shall not interfere with the conduct of the poll or impose upon the deputy returning officer, poll clerk or other election officers. If, in the opinion of the scrutineer, irregularities or differences of opinion occur at the polling place, the scrutineer may take note of such irregularities and report them to the candidate or official agent for resolution with the returning officer.

A scrutineer may, in good faith, if the eligibility of any elector is in doubt, request the deputy returning officer to administer the Declaration of Elector to that elector even though the elector's name appears on the List of Electors. An elector who has taken the prescribed declaration before the registration officer or deputy returning officer because his or her name was not on the List of Electors cannot be required to take another declaration.

A scrutineer may view the poll book at a time that will not inconvenience electors. The poll clerk will advise the scrutineer of the electors who have voted by calling out the List of Electors number, or providing a record of electors who have voted.

No cell phone calls are allowed in the polling place, because they are disruptive. Sending and receiving text messages is permitted.

If you are acting as a scrutineer at a poll other than the poll at which your name appears on the List of Electors, you may vote at the advance poll or by Special Ballot prior to polling day.



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## Voting Procedure

A person who is entitled to vote will be given a ballot paper on which the initials of the deputy returning officer are placed. A counterfoil is attached to the ballot on which the deputy returning officer has recorded a number which corresponds to the number in the poll book. When the folded ballot is returned, the deputy returning officer in the presence of the voter shall, without unfolding the ballot, check to see that it is the issued ballot, and remove and dispose of the counterfoil. The ballot is then returned to the voter to deposit in the ballot box.

## Declaration Process

A person who is entitled to vote, but whose name is not included on the List of Electors, must produce proof of his or her identity and current residence. The person must then sign the Declaration of Elector before the registration officer or deputy returning officer, stating that he or she qualifies as an elector and ordinarily resides in that polling subdivision.

## Vouching Process

If an elector is unable to produce identification, another elector who is on the List of Electors in the same polling subdivision may vouch for him or her after completing the Vouching Declaration.

A scrutineer cannot vouch for an elector.

## Voter Assistance

If an elector is unable to read the ballot or is incapacitated by a physical cause, the deputy returning officer may, after the elector has taken the oath, assist that elector to mark the ballot in the presence of the poll clerk.

An elector who is unable to read the ballot or is incapacitated by a physical cause, may, if accompanied by a friend, be permitted to have that friend assist in marking the ballot, provided that both the elector and the friend take the appropriate oaths.

If an elector is unable to access a polling place because of the elector's physical incapacity, the poll clerk, and the other election officers the DRO considers necessary, shall bring the ballot box to some other place on the site on which the polling place is located. Before doing so, the poll clerk will advise the scrutineers at the polling station, who may accompany the election officers.

An elector may be assisted by an interpreter after the elector and the interpreter have taken the appropriate oaths.

## Scrutineers at Mobile Polls

Scrutineers may be present at mobile polls located in treatment centres and supportive living facilities. The treatment centre's official representative will decide whether the scrutineers may accompany the deputy returning officer and poll clerk during the conduct of a mobile poll.

## Conduct of the Unofficial Count

After the close of the polls on polling day, the scrutineer may be present during the unofficial count of ballots. Upon request, the deputy returning officer will provide the scrutineer with a Tally Sheet to record the unofficial count. The decision of the deputy returning officer on any disputed ballot is final and may only be changed by the returning officer during the official count of ballots. The deputy returning officer shall record the scrutineer's objections to any ballot in the appropriate section of the poll book.

Upon completion of the unofficial count, scrutineers in attendance shall be provided with a copy of the Statement of Poll. It is a record of the unofficial count of ballots. When all of the Ballots Counted for Candidate Envelopes have been sealed and placed in the large Valid Ballot Envelope, scrutineers in attendance may sign across the Valid Ballot Envelope and its flap before it is sealed in the ballot box for delivery to the returning officer. Scrutineers may also sign across the envelopes and flaps of the Unused Ballot Envelope, the Rejected Ballot Envelope, the Spoiled Ballot Envelope and the Declined Ballot Envelope.