

a guide for use of the special ballot poll

Will you be away during the
election period?



What is a Special Ballot?

It is a means for electors to cast a ballot, if they will not be able to vote during the advance polls or on polling day.

It is a paper ballot that is requested by the elector, completed by the elector, and returned to the returning officer in the elector's electoral division prior to the close of polls on polling day.

A series of envelopes is used to protect the confidentiality of the ballot. The envelopes are accompanied by a declaration that confirms the elector is eligible to vote and has not already voted.

It is frequently used by electors who are:

- ✘ physically incapacitated,
- ✘ studying away from their place of ordinary residence,
- ✘ working away from their place of ordinary residence, or
- ✘ vacationing during the election period.

The place of ordinary residence is defined by the *Election Act (the Act)*, not chosen by the elector.

Ordinary residence means the place where the elector "lives and sleeps and to which, when the person is absent from it, the person intends to return". A temporary residence would not be an ordinary residence. Each elector has only one place of ordinary residence.

These are typical examples of electors who are away from their place of ordinary residence, and who may appropriately apply for a Special Ballot:

- ✘ A construction worker from Edmonton working in Fort McMurray and living in temporary accommodations (a motel or apartment) who ordinarily resides with his family in Edmonton, *would be eligible to vote in Edmonton.*
- ✘ A retired person from Pincher Creek who is traveling the world and will be away throughout the election period, but who ordinarily resides in Alberta, *would be eligible to vote in Pincher Creek.*
- ✘ A candidate for Calgary-West who resides in High River, but plans to be in Calgary throughout the election period, would be eligible to vote in High River.

A student's place of ordinary residence is specifically defined in the Act:

✘ A Student Studying Outside Of Alberta

If a student has left his or her residence in Alberta to study at an educational institution outside of the province, the ordinary residence is the place where the student was resident immediately before commencing his or her studies.

✘ A Student Studying In Alberta

If a student has left his or her residence in Alberta to study at an educational institution elsewhere in Alberta, the student may, while pursuing his or her studies, consider one of the following as his or her ordinary residence;

- ✘ the place the student was previously resident before pursuing his or her studies; or
- ✘ the place the student is resident while pursuing his or her studies.

✘ Out Of Province Student Studying In Alberta

If a student has left his or her residence in a province or territory other than Alberta to study at an educational institution in Alberta, the student is considered to be ordinarily resident in the place where he or she is residing in Alberta.

Where applicable, these three residency provisions for students also apply to the spouse, adult interdependent partner and dependant(s) of the student.

Who May Apply?

Electors must be qualified to vote, by virtue of being:

- ✘ Canadian citizens,
- ✘ at least 18 years of age on polling day, and
- ✘ ordinarily resident in Alberta for the six months immediately preceding polling day.

Only those electors who will not be able to attend the advance polls or polling day polls for one of the following reasons may apply:

- ✘ physical incapacity,
- ✘ absence from the electoral division,
- ✘ being an inmate,
- ✘ working as an election officer,
- ✘ serving as a candidate, official agent, or scrutineer,
- ✘ being resident in a location designated by the Chief Electoral Officer as a remote area, or
- ✘ in other circumstances specified by the Chief Electoral Officer.

When Should a Request be Made?

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! The Special Ballot can be requested from the time the Writ of election is issued until the polls close on polling day.

Keep in mind that the Special Ballot must be requested from the returning officer in the electoral division where the elector is *ordinarily* resident, not the location where the elector is *temporarily* resident. **The elector must allow enough time for the Special Ballot package to be delivered by expedited mail service, or some other means arranged by the elector, and to be returned to the returning officer by the method arranged by the elector.**

The returning officer will mail the package on request, but if the request is received close to polling day, there may not be enough time for the Special Ballot package to reach the elector. Alternatively, the elector can arrange courier service or pick up the package in person and complete the Special Ballot at the same time.

The need to make special arrangements may be avoided by requesting the Special Ballot early in the election period. The Special Ballot can be marked by printing a candidate's name or a registered political party's name on the ballot. This means that the ballot can be completed even before the close of nominations. The deadline by which all candidates must be nominated is day 10 in the 28-day election period.

How Does the Special Ballot Process Work?

It's as easy as 1-2-3

Request, Receive and Return!

1) Request from the returning officer

An elector must contact the returning officer for the electoral division in which the elector is ordinarily resident. Contact information for the returning officers is available throughout the election period on the Elections Alberta website www.elections.ab.ca, by phone at 780-427-7191 or by email at info@elections.ab.ca.

The elector must contact the returning officer either by telephone, in writing, by facsimile, by email, or in person.

It is important to note that only the elector choosing to vote by Special Ballot can contact

the returning officer. The request cannot be made by another individual on the elector's behalf.

2) Receive the Special Ballot package

The returning officer will have the Special Ballot package mailed to the elector or will hold it for pick-up by the elector or the elector's designate upon request. An elector may have the package picked up by a commercial courier, friend or family member. The person picking up the Special Ballot package will be asked by the returning officer to provide identification.

If the elector makes the request in person at the returning officer's office, the Special Ballot may be completed at the same time.

3) Return the Special Ballot

Step-by-step instructions are included in the Special Ballot package. The elector must complete and sign Part I of the Special Ballot Certificate Envelope and must provide a copy of authorized identification.

If the elector is not included in the Register of Electors, an enumeration record will be sent with the Special Ballot package. Completion of the enumeration record will ensure that the elector's name is included on the List of Electors.

It is up to the elector to return the completed Special Ballot package to the returning officer in the electoral division where the elector is ordinarily resident, rather than temporarily resident, before the close of polls on polling day. The elector may return the package by mail or courier.

The returning officer is not responsible for the collection of completed Special Ballot packages.

It is important to remember that the Special Ballot cannot be sent to the elector nor returned to the returning officer by facsimile or other electronic means.

By law, Special Ballot packages that are incorrect or incomplete, or received after the close of polls on polling day, will not be counted.

It Works!

The Special Ballot provides a very flexible means for electors to cast their ballots, if they are unable to attend advance polls or polling day polls.

Every election, thousands of electors vote by Special Ballot. Some are outside of the province, and some are outside of the country. Without this option, they may not have been able to vote.



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