



INFOGUIDE

February 2009

Voting in a Provincial Election or Referendum: Information for Clients in the Divested Provincial Psychiatric Hospitals

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***This InfoGuide is intended primarily for clients
in the ten divested provincial psychiatric hospitals.***

Please note that election procedures and voter rules can change with each election. Speak with your local Patient Advocate to ensure you have up-to-date information.

Do all individuals in Ontario have the right to vote?

- Yes, as long as you are eligible to vote. Voting is an important way to participate in the democratic process of electing a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) to represent you and your interests.

Who is eligible to vote?

- You are eligible to vote if you are:
 - 18 years of age or older on the date of the election;
 - A Canadian citizen;
 - A resident of Ontario; and
 - On the Voters List (an up-to-date list of eligible Ontario voters).

Can I vote even if I am a patient in a hospital during the election?

- Yes. Voting places are usually located within the hospital and signs will clearly mark the location. You can also speak to your patient advocate or rights adviser as they will know where the polling station will be set up.
- In some cases there will be “traveling polls” that will come to each unit to ensure that those who do not have privileges to leave the unit will still have the opportunity to vote. Ask your staff in advance when Elections Ontario poll officials will visit your unit with the traveling poll.

What is a referendum?

- A referendum is when the government asks the public to vote on a question. The question in this referendum is about electoral reform (how politicians are elected).
- When you go to vote, you will get two ballots this time – one to vote for a candidate in the election and the other to vote for an electoral system in the referendum.

How do I know if I am registered to vote?

- You can check with hospital staff to confirm that your name has been added to the Voters List.
- In most cases, you will be asked by hospital staff if you want your name added to the Voters List or if you give your consent for your name to be provided to Elections Ontario for this purpose.
- If you have access to the Internet, you can also check to see if you are registered at the hospital address to vote by visiting www.elections.on.ca. Or, you can call Elections Ontario toll free at 1-888-668-8683.

How can I get on the Voters List?

- If you are not on the Voters List, you will need to apply to Elections Ontario to get on the list – otherwise, you will not be able to vote.
- There are two ways to get on the Voters List:
 1. Obtain a certificate to vote **before the election**.
 - In the month before an election, you can get on the Permanent Register of Electors by applying in person at your Elections Ontario returning office. You will need both proof of residence and proof of identity.
 2. Have your name added to the voters list at the polling station on **Election or Referendum Day**.

- You will need to show proof of identify and proof of residence with appropriate identification.
- You must also make a statutory declaration to state that you have not already voted in the election.
- If you are not able to show proof of identity, you can complete a statutory declaration to establish your identity and your qualifications to vote.

What if I don't have identification to prove my identity and/or residence?

- Speak to hospital staff and ask that the administrator of the hospital complete a "Certification of Identity and Residence Form."

When can I vote?

- On the date of an election or referendum polling stations will be open during a set time, typically between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. However, the polling stations at hospitals may be open for a shorter number of hours so you should check with hospital staff for the precise time.
- If you prefer to vote before Election and Referendum Day, you can vote in an advance poll. Advance polls typically open in the month before an election. However, you have to go in person to the poll which will be located outside the hospital. The dates, times and locations of advance polls will be provided on the "Notice of Registration" card that you will receive prior to Election and Referendum Day. The information will also be posted on the Elections Ontario website or by calling their office.

What is proxy voting?

- Instead of voting in person, you can appoint someone to vote on your behalf by completing an "Application to Vote by Proxy". For example, if you are in hospital on Election and Referendum Day and you want to vote for your local candidate in the community where you normally reside, you could appoint a proxy to vote in your place. Any qualified voter may appoint a proxy.
- The person you appoint to vote on your behalf must be a qualified elector in the same electoral district as where you reside. Keep in mind that a person may not act as a proxy for more than two other voters.
- A proxy may only be appointed after an election is called. Applications to vote by proxy typically must be received by the local Elections Ontario returning office on the night before election day. A proxy cannot be appointed on Election and Referendum Day.
- A Power of Attorney may not be used to appoint a proxy.

- Be sure to appoint someone who you know and trust to cast your ballot as you wish.

Why would poll officials ask me for both my residential address and my mailing address?

- Elections Ontario needs your residential address to know which poll you should be assigned to for voting.
- The hospital will be considered your “residence” at the time of the election if this is the place where you have returned most often to sleep or eat since the date the election was called.
- Your mailing address may be different from the residential address where you normally reside. Your mailing address is where Elections Ontario will mail your Notice of Registration card.

Will the polling station be accessible?

- Elections Ontario makes every effort to find locations that are accessible for voters who use a wheelchair. Call Elections Ontario to find out if the location is accessible or if there is an alternate location that is accessible.

Who can I talk to if I have problems voting on Election and Referendum Day?

- The Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office (PPAO) has patient advocates and rights advisers located in each of the ten current and former provincial psychiatric hospitals and you can ask them for assistance if you have problems. PPAO staff will be working closely with hospital staff and Elections Ontario to ensure you have the opportunity to vote if you are eligible to do so. We may be able to take your concerns directly to those involved in an attempt to resolve the issue and facilitate your participation.
- You may also call Elections Ontario for assistance.

Questions?

- Contact Elections Ontario at 1-888-668-8683 with any questions or concerns about the voting process, or visit www.elections.on.ca for more information on the provincial election.
- You can also contact your local patient advocate or call the PPAO with questions at 416-327-7000 (Toronto) or 1-800-578-2343 (toll-free).