

Persons born in Canada or born in a foreign land of Canadian parents are automatically Canadian citizens. Persons born in a foreign country may acquire Canadian citizenship after living five years in Canada.

Among those deprived of their franchise -- but only so long as the cause of the deprivation lasts -- are prisoners in penal institutions and persons confined to hospitals for mental illness. Certain classes of person are deprived of their vote because of their official functions: the Chief Electoral Officer and his deputy, judges and chief returning officers. The last-mentioned must cast the tie-breaking ballot when two candidates for election have received the same number of votes. Finally, any person found guilty of electoral fraud may lose the franchise for a specified period.

Voters who for any reason feel they cannot get to the polls on election day -- whether because they plan to take a trip, attend a wedding or just go fishing -- can vote in an advance poll a week beforehand.

Fishermen, mariners, prospectors, physically-incapacitated persons and students away from home have the right to vote by proxy.

Canadian public servants posted abroad, such as the staffs of embassies, vote before election day, with their dependants. The total in the next election is expected to be about 3,400.

In the same category for voting purposes are all 83,000 members of the regular armed forces plus the dependants in Germany of about 5,000 Canadian troops stationed there under NATO command.

These special votes usually take place throughout the second week before the election.

The candidates

In general, anyone eligible to vote is eligible for nomination and election to the House of Commons. There are no property or educational qualifications.

Some exceptions to this rule are members of provincial legislatures, judges, persons convicted of corrupt electoral practices, public servants and members of the regular armed forces. None of these may run for election to the House of Commons.

Most candidates are the official representatives of the various political parties, chosen at party nominating conventions.