



## About Voting and Elections

Voting can be described as the first or easiest step that a citizen can take to become politically involved. Every citizen of voting age has the right to vote in a democracy, although some choose not to.

A democracy cannot exist without free and fair elections. Everyone is equal in a free and fairly run election because each citizen has one vote. Therefore, voting gives every individual an equal say.

**Collectively**, or taken all together, election results can send a message to politicians, political parties and the public. Results let the government know what positions and points of view are supported by the majority.

All levels of government make important decisions that affect almost every aspect of your life. Some of these decisions affect things like:

- Your school, including how much time you spend there
- The environment, including how clean the air and water is or how decisions are made about environmental challenges
- Your health, including the availability of health insurance or how much it costs to go to the doctor or buy prescription drugs
- Who gets to visit, work and live in the country
- Your safety, including the size of police and fire departments
- How much money the government will spend on the military or on peace-keeping missions.

In Alberta, the **electoral process**, or the steps and actions involved in an election, is run by an organization called Elections Alberta. This organization is independent from the government. Elections Alberta makes sure that when an election happens, the following conditions are met:

- The election is open, fair and impartial.
- Voters have the necessary information to participate in the election.

**3** If I could vote, would I?



### Pause and Reflect

What do you know about elections? Why do you think they are so important in a democracy?

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### Pause and Reflect

Why do you think Elections Alberta is independent from the government?

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- Political participants have the information and assistance to make sure they are following election rules.
- Election officers are trained to make sure elections are run properly and results are made available to people.
- Elections are evaluated to recommend any changes that could be made to improve the electoral process.



Challenge yourself with this fast quiz. What do you think – True or False? Then, discuss your responses with a partner. Use a process of consensus to agree on a response for each question.

- \_\_\_ 1. In some countries, the voting age is less than 18.
- \_\_\_ 2. The United States is the world's most populated democracy.
- \_\_\_ 3. It is illegal to eat your ballot in a Canadian federal election.
- \_\_\_ 4. The secret ballot originated in Australia in the 1850s and is sometimes called the Australian ballot.
- \_\_\_ 5. The word "democracy" originated in ancient Rome.
- \_\_\_ 6. Quebec was the first Canadian province to allow women to vote.
- \_\_\_ 7. In some countries, voting is compulsory. If a person chooses not to vote, he or she can be fined, made to do community service or given a prison sentence.
- \_\_\_ 8. Alberta was the first province to hold an election for an Alberta representative to the Senate of Canada.

## Find Out More



Find out more about the elections and the experience of voting on the **Building Future Voters** elementary webpage at [www.buildingfuturevoters.ca](http://www.buildingfuturevoters.ca).

Explore information and examples in **Voting and Elections**. Take the fast quiz and check your answers on the webpage.

electoral process  
voting age  
ballot  
candidate

