

VOTING TIMELINE

1867: Confederation—Canada is created.

First-past-the-post system or simple plurality system is adopted for elections (*Constitution Act, 1867*).

1874: The secret ballot is introduced for provincial elections in Ontario and for federal elections.

1884: Widows and unmarried women are the first women given the right to vote in Ontario municipal elections.

1900: According to the *Dominion Elections Act, S.C.*, 1900, the only people who can vote in federal elections are the people who are allowed to vote in provincial elections. Visible minorities, Aboriginal peoples, and women are not allowed to vote in their provincial elections in 1900, so this Act means that they are not allowed to vote in federal elections either.

1915: The right to vote by mail is granted to military voters on active duty (WWI).

1916: Manitoba becomes the first province to extend the right to vote in their provincial elections to women. Women in Saskatchewan win

the right to vote in their provincial elections. Women in Alberta win the right to vote in their provincial elections.

1917: The *Military Voters Act* is passed. Women and men who are active or retired members of the military, including First Nations peoples and military nurses caring for wounded soldiers in Europe in WWI (they are called the “Bluebirds”), obtain the right to vote in federal elections.

The Bluebirds are the first women granted the right to vote in a federal election. Women in B.C. win the right to vote in their provincial elections. Women in Ontario win the right to vote in their provincial elections.

1918: Women in Nova Scotia win the right to vote in their provincial elections. Women who are 21 years of age and older win the right to vote in federal elections.¹

1919: Allan Dymond is appointed as first Chief Election Officer of Ontario. Women in New Brunswick win the right to vote in their provincial elections.

1920: The federal government gives everyone the right to

vote in federal elections except for some minorities and most Aboriginal persons.²

Advance polling is introduced, but only for commercial travelers, sailors and railway men.

Colonel Oliver Mowat Biggar is appointed as Canada’s first Chief Electoral Officer.

1921: Agnes Macphail becomes the first woman elected to the federal Parliament.

1922: Women in Prince Edward Island win the right to vote in their provincial elections.

1925: Women in Newfoundland win the right to vote in their colonial elections.³

1940: Women in Quebec win the right to vote in their provincial elections.

1960: First Nations persons gain the right to vote in federal elections.

1970: The voting age and the age required to be a candidate in federal elections is lowered from 21 to 18.

1971: The age for the right to vote in Ontario provincial elections is lowered from 21 to 18.

1. *An Act to confer the Electoral Franchise upon Women*, Statutes of Canada, 1918.

2. While technically Aboriginal persons (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) had the right to vote in federal elections, in practical terms, there were many barriers preventing most from voting.

3. Newfoundland joined Confederation only in 1949, thus women won the right to vote in the colonial elections.

1982: The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is enacted as part of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The Charter includes protection of fundamental freedoms, democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, equality rights, and linguistic rights. It protects equality between men and women and the rights of all citizens including minorities.

1992: The federal Parliament passes changes to the *Canada Elections Act*, the law that explains how elections take place in Canada, to improve access for voting for people with disabilities.

1993: For the first time, qualified voters living outside of Canada are allowed to vote.

1998: Persons with no permanent lodging are given the right to vote in provincial elections in Ontario.

2000: Persons with no permanent lodging are given the right to vote in federal elections.

2007: The title Chief Election Officer is changed to Chief Electoral Officer in Ontario (to be consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions).

2010: The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Ontario is required to make available accessible voting equipment that allows electors with disabilities to mark their ballots independently, without the assistance of other persons. Elections Ontario Returning Officers are required to ensure that all polling places are accessible to electors with disabilities. The CEO of Ontario is required to publish on the Internet the locations of all polling places six months before a general election.⁴

4. *Election Act*, (Ontario).
