

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 qualified 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, has not already voted and will not vote a second time.

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*, 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.

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

"A student who

- ◆ is in attendance at an educational institution within or outside Alberta,

- ◆ temporarily rents accommodation for the purpose of attending an educational institution, and
- ◆ has family members who are ordinarily resident in Alberta and with whom the student ordinarily resides when not in attendance at an educational institution, is deemed to reside with those family members."

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 student from Red Deer attending university in Victoria and living in residence there, who ordinarily resides with his or her family in Red Deer, *would be eligible to vote in Red Deer.*
- ◆ 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.*

Who May Apply?

First, 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 qualified 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 eligible inmate (sentenced to a term of ten days or less, or for non-payment of fines),
- ◆ working as an election officer,
- ◆ serving as a candidate, official agent, or scrutineer, or
- ◆ being resident in a location designated by the Chief Electoral Officer as a Remote Area.

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 reach the elector by mail, and to be returned by mail, unless the elector plans to make other arrangements with the Returning Officer for receiving and returning the package.

The elector must make the request in a timely manner to ensure there will be adequate time to receive and return the package. 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 by mail. Alternatively, the elector can pick up the package in person and complete the Special Ballot at the same time.

The Returning Officer will deliver the package by regular mail or make other reasonable arrangements. Arrangements to provide secure, timely delivery will be made in consultation with the elector.

The need to make special arrangements may be avoided by requesting the Special Ballot early in the election period. The Special Ballot can be cast by selecting a candidate or a registered political party. This means that the ballot can be completed even before the close of nominations, the deadline by which all candidates must register (day 14 in the 28-day election period).

How Does The Special Ballot Process Work?

It's as easy as 1-2-3 — just 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 (780) 427-7191, or by email, info@elections.ab.ca.

The elector must then contact the Returning Officer:

- ◆ by telephone,
- ◆ in writing,
- ◆ by facsimile,
- ◆ by email, or
- ◆ in person.

It is important to note that the elector must contact the Returning Officer. Contact cannot be made by another individual on the elector's behalf.

2) Receive the Special Ballot package

On receipt of a Special Ballot request, the Returning Officer will mail the Special Ballot package or hold it for pick-up by the elector or the elector's designate. 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.

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.

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 the Special Ballot and Part I of the Special Ballot Certificate Envelope.

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.**

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.