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Employees Across Canada Are Entitled to Time Off to Vote – What Employers Need to Know

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As employees head to the polls for upcoming elections across the country,¹ every employer should be aware of the requirement to provide an employee time off work to vote.

General Obligations

With certain exceptions noted below (see “Exceptions**”), whether for a federal or provincial election, an employee who is eligible to vote is entitled to time free from work to cast a ballot, while polls are open on an election day.** The amount of time free from work ranges from one to four hours depending on the Canadian jurisdiction (see chart below).

If an employee’s hours of work do not provide the required consecutive hours free from work, the employee can request and the employer must provide time off so the employee has the required consecutive hours to vote. An employer cannot deduct wages for this time taken to vote.

Example: If polls are open from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and an employee is scheduled to work from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., if the employee is entitled to **three consecutive** hours free from work to vote, that employee is entitled to the last hour of work off, with pay. By contrast, an employee who works from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. is not entitled to time off to vote, because the employee already has **three consecutive** hours following their working hours.

¹ **Canada** will have a federal election on or before October 20, 2025. **Ontario’s** provincial election is on February 27, 2025. **Yukon** will have a general election on or before November 3, 2025. **Newfoundland and Labrador** will have a provincial election on or before November 24, 2025.

It is important to note that time off work may be given at a time **most convenient for the employer's operations**. So, if an employee is scheduled to work from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., the employer can choose to give the employee three hours at any time during the employee's work day.

Canadian Jurisdictions

The following is a quick reference for each Canadian jurisdiction. In a federal election, an employee is entitled to three consecutive hours regardless of their province of residence.

Jurisdiction	Hours Free from Work to Vote
Federal	3 consecutive hours
British Columbia	4 consecutive hours
Alberta	3 consecutive hours
Manitoba	3 consecutive hours
Ontario	3 consecutive hours
Quebec	4 consecutive hours (not including normal meal times)
Nova Scotia	3 consecutive hours
New Brunswick	3 consecutive hours
Newfoundland & Labrador	4 consecutive hours
Prince Edward Island	Not less than 1 hour
Yukon	4 consecutive hours
Northwest Territories	3 consecutive hours
Nunavut	2 consecutive hours

Exceptions

In some jurisdictions, there are exceptions for certain types of employees.

Federal: Under the *Canada Elections Act*, time off to vote does not apply to an employee who transports passengers or goods by land, water, or air, when employed outside their polling area and time off cannot be provided without interfering with the transportation service.

British Columbia: Under the British Columbia *Elections Act*, if an employee is in a remote area and not able to reach a poll during voting hours, they are not entitled to time off to vote.

Alberta: Under the Alberta *Election Act*, an employer retains the right to determine when to give an employee time off during advance voting or on election day.

Quebec: Under the Quebec *Election Act*, an employee must provide reasonable advance notice to their employer if they wish to request time off to vote.

Nova Scotia: Under the Nova Scotia *Elections Act*, an employer is not required to provide time off to vote if an employee is engaged in the operation and dispatch of scheduled railway trains, buses, motor transports, ships or aircraft and three consecutive hours cannot be provided without interfering with the scheduled operation or dispatch of the trains, buses, motor transports, ships or aircraft.

New Brunswick: Under the New Brunswick *Elections Act*, an employer is not required to provide time off to vote if an employee is employed by a railway company engaged in the running of trains and three consecutive hours cannot be provided without interfering with the manning of trains.

Prince Edward Island: Under the Prince Edward Island *Election Act*, an employer is not required to provide time off to vote if an employee is engaged in the operation and dispatch of scheduled buses, motor transports, ships and aircraft and time free from work cannot be provided without interfering with the scheduled operation or dispatch of buses, motor transports, ships or aircraft.

Yukon: Under the Yukon *Elections Act*, an employer is not required to provide time off to vote if an employee is employed to provide emergency services, scheduled public transportation services, or public health or safety services and time off would cause significant inconvenience or risk to the public.

To learn more and for assistance, contact your Sherrard Kuzz LLP lawyer, or info@sherrardkuzz.com.

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