

Modern and Efficient Electoral Process Achieved through Central Registry

Canada's National Register of Electors

by Elections Canada staff

The National Register of Electors is a database comprised of Canadians who are qualified to vote. It contains basic information about each person – name, address, sex, and date of birth. Canadians may choose whether or not to have their names listed in the Register.

The information in the National Register of Electors is used to produce the preliminary voters lists for federal elections, by-elections and referenda. It may also be used to produce voter lists for provinces, territories, municipalities, and school boards that have signed agreements with Elections Canada, as permitted by the Canada Elections Act and provincial statutes.

Rationale and Benefits

Before the creation of the National Register of Electors, new voters lists were created for each federal electoral event through door-to-door enumeration (unless such lists had been produced in the preceding year). This was an expensive, time-consuming, and labor-intensive process. By replacing enumeration with a permanent computerized register, Elections Canada followed through on its commitment to a modern and efficient electoral process. Use of the National Register of Electors is now yielding net savings of \$30 million at every federal, general election and referendum. Sharing processes and data to update other registers and voters lists across Canada reduces duplication and creates further savings for taxpayers.

Privacy

The Canada Elections Act and the Privacy Act protect the privacy of the information contained in the National Register of Electors. The information can be used only for electoral purposes and any improper use constitutes an offense. Additionally, electronic and procedural safeguards have been put in place to ensure the security of elector information.

To ensure that the elector's right to privacy is respected, the Privacy Commissioner has the right, at any time, to audit how information for the National Register of Electors is collected, stored, updated, and used. Under the law, the voter list is shared with registered political parties and members of Parliament each year, as well as with candidates during an electoral event. The information shared consists only of electors' names and addresses. By law, parties and members of Parliament are allowed to use this information for communicating with electors. Such communications might take the form of contribution solicitation or recruitment of new members.

Every elector has the right to exclude his or her name from the National Register of Electors or to prevent the transfer of his or her name to the provinces or territories by writing to the Chief Electoral Officer in Ottawa. If an elector chooses not to be listed in the National Register of Electors, his or her right to vote is protected. However, at the time of a federal general election, by-election, or referendum, such an elector will need to add his or her name to the voters list at the office of the returning officer during the revision period, at an advance poll, or at an ordinary poll on election day.

Maintaining the National Register of Electors

About 20 percent of elector information changes every year. The National Register of Electors is updated with information supplied by provincial, territorial, and federal data sources between electoral events, and by electors themselves during federal electoral events. Elections Canada has signed agreements with data suppliers, including the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, provincial and territorial registrars of motor vehicles and vital statistics, and provincial electoral agencies with permanent lists of electors. It is important to note that there is no database linkage between Elections Canada and these data suppliers.

Annual Changes to Elector Information

Change	Electors Affected	% of Electors
Address	3,000,000	16
Persons reaching the age of 18	380,000	2
New citizens	125,000	1
Deaths	195,000	1

Data Suppliers

Sources used to maintain the National Register of Electors

- Canada Customs and Revenue Agency
- Provincial and territorial motor vehicle registrars
- Provincial electoral agencies with permanent voters lists
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- Provincial and territorial motor vehicle registrars
- Provincial electoral agencies with permanent voters lists
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Provincial and territorial vital statistics registrars
- Provincial electoral agencies with permanent voters lists

Active Consent

The principle of active, informed consent is applied to the National Register of Electors. Elections Canada will continue its programs to inform electors about their rights in relation to the National Register of Electors and to ensure that electors understand the importance of consent. Information from federal data suppliers will be transferred to Elections Canada only with the consent of the individuals concerned.

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency includes a section on its income tax returns that a filer can check to have his or her name, address, and date of birth forwarded to Elections Canada to update the information in the National Register of Electors. A similar section exists on Citizenship and Immigration's citizenship application forms so that new Canadians can give consent for their names to be added to the National Register of Electors. Individuals who turn 18 receive a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer asking them to confirm their eligibility to vote and to give their consent to be included in the National Register of Electors. □