Acknowledgements

The Samara Centre for Democracy

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VoteKit Calgary

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Elections Canada

Vote PopUp is a resource of the Democratic Engagement Exchange. Elections Canada has engaged the Exchange to deliver Vote PopUp for the 2019 federal election.

All the community-based organizations that are engaging in democracy

Thank you to all the community organizations and civic leaders across the country for contributing the most valuable asset they have – their time and talent – to building a vibrant and inclusive democracy.

Credits

The Democratic Engagement Exchange drives engagement by building partnerships with academic institutions, community organizations and government agencies to create tools, and champion policies and programs that promote a more inclusive democracy.

For more information, visit http://www.ryerson.ca/engagedemocracy

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“I’m voting - it’s vital for democracy to work”
Chris Hadfield, October 22, 2018

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About Vote Pop Up

Vote PopUps are simulated polling places run by community organizations and local civic leaders. Vote PopUps help build an inclusive and vibrant democracy in Canada. They do this in three ways – 1) demystifying the voting process; 2) connecting people’s concerns and hopes to an election and 3) building a culture of engagement.

Note to organizers:

Thank you for your commitment to engaging in democracy!

While this kind of nonpartisan engagement effort can be daunting, we hope Vote PopUps and this guide will help. Ultimately, you are not expected to be an expert on elections. If you have questions, there is help available. Elections Canada has a wide range of materials available to answer any questions related to where, when and ways to vote on their website – www.elections.ca. If you cannot find answers there, you can also call them at 1-800-463-6868. For questions related to Vote PopUp, please contact the Democratic Engagement Exchange at VPUnfo@ryerson.ca.
Demystifying Elections

At its simplest, the Vote PopUp toolkit provides community organizations and civic leaders everything they need to run a voting simulation to help people learn about voting. Unlike some countries where the ballots are complicated and the act of voting can be time-consuming, or even dangerous, voting in Canada is relatively easy. Despite this, many people continue to feel apprehensive about going to the polls. Vote PopUp is here to help!

Connecting concerns and aspirations to the election

Unlike traditional voter engagement efforts that tell participants they should vote, Vote PopUps start by asking a question: “What matters to you?” Participants are then given an opportunity to vote on the issues that matter to them. This reminds participants that the issues they care about are impacted by the election.

Building a culture of engagement

At the end of the Vote PopUp activity, participants are invited to contribute to a poster saying why they think voting is important. Instead of telling people they should vote, community members create a poster explaining why they think voting is important. This helps build a culture of engagement based on the voice of the community.

Working for Elections Canada

Running a Vote PopUps is an excellent way to learn what is involved in working during an election.

Elections Canada hires over 200,000 Canadians during the election. After running Vote PopUps why not get paid to help run the actual election?
Help Build A Movement

Vote PopUp was first piloted during the 2015 federal election and has since been run during provincial and municipal elections across the country. The initiative has been embraced from small community libraries in Nova Scotia to the largest settlement agency in western Canada.

In 2019, Vote PopUp won the First-Time Voter award from the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies.

Vote PopUps were held across the country in 2015.
Why Run Vote Pop Ups?

Vote PopUps help build a more inclusive democracy where all voices have an opportunity to be heard. In the last federal election, more than nine million people who were eligible to vote did not vote. That is more than the entire population of Quebec City, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver combined.

For community organizations, Vote PopUps help build community. They provide an opportunity to learn about their members’ priorities and concerns and hear from a wide range of community members, including many whose voices are never part of the conversation.

Vote PopUps also provide community organizations an excellent opportunity to build local leadership. The YMCA of Greater Toronto trained their youth leadership council to run Vote PopUps in their community, giving them an opportunity to practice community outreach and engagement and demonstrate their leadership ability to the community.
The Critical Role of Local Community Organizations

Vote PopUps succeed because they are run by community organizations and local civic leaders who have strong relationships in their community that are built on trust. For first-time, infrequent and future voters who may find the idea of voting intimidating, this is particularly important. Vote PopUps allow community members to connect with the friendly face of someone who knows the community and to ask questions in a relaxed and familiar environment.

Since the last federal election, over 750,000 people became newly eligible to vote because they became citizens.

“What matters to you?”

One of the most common responses we hear from participants is, “No one has ever asked me that before.”

By asking people about the issues that matter to them and then taking the time to really listen to their answers, you are reminding people that in a democracy, their ideas and opinions matter.

You are reminding them that their voice matters.
Vote PopUps Key Principles

**Non-partisan**

While most community-based organizations are required to stay non-partisan, it is also just good practice.

Most first-time and infrequent voters don’t have strong partisan views, and some people are turned off of politics and elections because they see them as too partisan. Instead, they are motivated by their concerns and hopes for themselves and their community.

Simply put, first-time and infrequent voters are more likely to engage in the activity if they understand that it is not a partisan effort to influence their vote.

**Driven by participant’s interests**

While many community organizations and civic leaders are concerned about particular issues (public safety, education, environment, food security), Vote PopUps work best when driven by the interests of participants. Community organizations should view this as an opportunity to hear from community members about their concerns.

**Listen – don’t tell**

No one likes being told what to do. Most Canadians already think voting is important. So, instead of telling them why they should vote, ask them why they think it’s important. This helps reinforce the idea that voting is something everyone does and that their opinion matters.
What is in the kit?

- Organizer Manual
- VPU Quick Guide
- Ballot Box
- Voting Screen
- Sample Ballots
- EC Materials
  - VIC materials
  - Sample Voter Information Card
  - Why Vote Poster
How to Organize A Vote PopUp

Organizing a Vote PopUp involves three steps:

1. **Preparation** includes securing a time and place, recruiting and training staff, and ordering and assembling materials.

2. **Running the activity** includes setting up, inviting people to participate, and demystifying the voting process.

3. **Follow-up** includes tallying and sharing the results of the vote, thanking staff and volunteers, and planning for your next Vote PopUp.

**Choosing a location**

Vote PopUps are designed to be flexible and can easily be held in a wide range of locations. You only need a couple of tables and a place for a poster.

The ideal location has a steady flow of first-time and infrequent voters (see box on page 9 for more information about first-time and infrequent voters). It is also helpful to have a steady flow of people to engage. Keep in mind that a single Vote PopUp set-up can engage about 30 people an hour. That means if there is a large crowd of people gathering to enter a movie, concert or sporting event in a short time, it is only possible to engage a few of them. If you do not already have a good location, local options include:

- Libraries
- Community Centres
- Local malls/businesses
- Sports fields

When approaching potential locations, be sure to clarify that you are a local non-partisan civic group educating people about how, when and where to vote. Emphasize that this activity is being done in similar places by other civic organizations across the country. If you need assistance or the location has a question, you can reach out to us at **VPUinfo@ryerson.ca**.
Some places where people who are first-time or infrequent voters gather:

- Food banks  
- Community centres  
- College campus centres  
- Student housing  
- Recreational sports leagues  
- Community festivals  
- Public library

**Choosing a time**

The best time to hold Vote PopUps is before advance polling begins. This will avoid confusion with actual polling locations and give people the most options for voting. Ideally, Vote PopUps should be held far enough in advance of Election Day so participants have enough time to prepare to cast their vote. People will need time to learn about the candidates, gather their ID and proof of address, and plan their journey to their voting location. If they’re registered and their information is up to date, they will receive a Voter Information Card in the mail.

**Staffing**

The number of people needed to run a Vote PopUp will depend on the location and duration of the event. Each voting station can be run by two to four people. The team can be composed of staff from community groups and/or volunteers. It may be helpful to assign people to different roles at the Vote PopUps based on their interests and skills.

- **Team Leader** – recruits and trains the PopUp Team and oversees the activity on voting day.

- **Outreach Officers** – encourage people to participate and direct participants to election officials (public events only; not necessary at an existing community event).

- **Election Officials** – carry out the voting procedures and answer questions about when, where and how to vote.
Prepare materials

In addition to the Vote PopUp toolkit, you will need:

✓ Printed ballots
✓ Signage directing people to your Vote PopUp and at the location
✓ Pens for marking ballots
✓ Colourful markers for “Why Vote” Poster/Banner
✓ Colourful sticky for “Why Vote” poster (optional)
✓ Food or other incentives (optional)
✓ Elections Canada materials in a variety of languages (available free to download)
✓ A list of local polling locations. Be sure to include both advance poll locations and Election Day locations (available from www.elections.ca)
✓ A list of local candidates to be taped to the table for reference. Be sure to include a separate list for candidates in different ridings if participants come from various locations (available from www.elections.ca)
✓ Computer(s) with internet connection to allow people to check their polling location and official candidate list on Elections Canada website (www.elections.ca)
Preparing Your Vote PopUp Ballot

- Your ballot should include a wide range of general issues related to the federal election. Use the blank ballot template included in your VotePopUp Kit. Type or neatly print the issues people will vote on and photocopy the ballots ahead of time.

- When choosing your issue, focus on general issues the federal government has control over. For example, list “Environment” and not “Pipeline,” or “Trade” and not “Trade with China.” Always include an “Other” write-in category.

- Deciding which issue to include is an excellent opportunity for groups to discuss topics that matter to them. Start with a long list of issues and then have people choose their top four and discuss.

- While listing issues on the ballot is an excellent way to connect people’s hopes and concerns to the election, some groups are not comfortable with this approach. In that case, you can list topics such as animals, movies, fruit, or vegetables. Keep it fun and inclusive.

Why does VotePopUp not list candidates?

One goal of Vote PopUps is for people to connect the concerns and hopes they have to the election. When candidates are listed, the conversation often turns to political parties and the issues and personalities of the candidates.
Running the Vote PopUp

Set Up Space

While each location will vary in space constraints, where possible, the layout should replicate an actual polling location (see diagram).

Example Setup

You will need:

- an information table where Elections Canada information can be displayed;
- a sample ballot with local candidate names (if known) that can be taped to the table;
- sample Voter Information Cards; and
- a voting table where the voting screens are placed and where participants will mark their ballot. This should be placed behind the information table and in a way that provides as much privacy as possible.

The ballot box can be placed on a small third table or on one end of the information table. A large “Why Vote” poster/banner can be placed on an easel or hung on a wall. Display several “Employment on Election Day” flyers in visible locations throughout the space.
The Vote PopUp has three steps:

1. Invite people to participate.
2. Demystify the voting process.
3. Ask participants why they think voting is important.

This process will take participants three to 10 minutes depending on the number of questions they have. Inviting people to participate, start by asking “What matters to you?” and then listen.

**DO**

- Stand in a prominent spot and approach everyone.
- Let people know that you are there to ask about the issues that matter most to them.
- Listen to their response to the question and ask follow-up questions.
- Explain that you do not work for a political party.
- Offer them food or other incentives.
- Encourage kids to participate with their parents.
- Explain the process will take just a few minutes.
- Be friendly. Smile!

**DON’T**

- Ask people if they plan on voting in the upcoming election.
- Start by asking people to take apart in a mock vote.
- Discuss partisan issues.
Some common responses by community members to Vote PopUps and how to respond:

They say – “I want to participate and vote.”
You say, “Great!” and direct them to the information table.

They say – “I am already planning on voting.”
You say, “Great!” Let them know there are options to vote at advance polls and ask if they have questions about where or when to vote. Invite them to take information for friends or family who may not have voted before. Finally, invite them to add to the WHY VOTE poster.

They say – “Voting won’t make a difference.”
Empathize with them. For example, say, “I have felt that way,” or “I have friends who feel that way.” Return to asking them about the issues they care about. Listen to their answers and ask follow-up questions. Explain that you are there asking people about issues that matter to them so you can hear from the community. They are not voting for a candidate.

They say – “I don’t have time.”
Let them know that it only takes a couple of minutes, that it is non-partisan and that you have food or another incentives. If they still are not convinced, thank them and remind them to vote.

“It is honestly a great initiative and it should be brought on to a bigger scale and maybe involve more media attention on Vote Popups.”

YMCA Staff and 2015 Vote PopUp Organizer
Once a participant decides to cast a ballot, this is the opportunity to answer questions about where, when and how to vote.

The most common issues are:

**ID requirements.** Ask if they have a government picture ID with their current address such as a driver’s license. If yes, explain they are all set and should take that when they go to vote. If not, show them the list of ID options on the Elections Canada Voter ID sheet and offer them a copy of the sheet.

**Voter Information Card.** Explain that Elections Canada mails all registered voters a Voter Information Card. This card tells them where their polling place is and the dates and times polling places are open. Show participants the sample card (HINT - tape it to the table). Remind people to take the card with them to the polling place and it will speed up the process.

**Where and when to vote.** Explain that advance polling runs from October 11-14, 2019. Polling locations are announced by Elections Canada on By September 25th, 2019 If you have a computer with an Internet connection, offer to check the participant’s polling location by looking it up on Election Canada’s website. Offer participants Elections Canada’s “How to Vote” card.

**Ways to vote.** Show people how to fill in ballot. Fun Fact – While the standard procedure is to mark the ballot by completely filling in the circle next to the candidate’s name, an “X” or “✓” is also acceptable. The legal standard is “clear voter intent.”

Direct them to go behind the voting screen to cast their ballot and return the ballot to the “polling officer” who then checks it. Allow participants to place their ballot in the ballot box. Encourage participants to take “voting selfies” but explain that this is not allowed at the actual polling place.

**Taking it further** – Set up an “I am a Voter” selfie station and encourage people to take pictures of themselves after they vote. Don’t forget to include #VotePopUp
## VOTING ON CAMPUS

Elections Canada is setting up special polling stations on university and college campuses across Canada. These polling stations will be open approximately one week before the advance polls are open. Check the Elections Canada website for the exact information on these polling stations on your campus.

Best of all, these are open to anyone (not just students) and they are vote anywhere polling locations. That means that you can vote for a candidate in your home district, while away at college or university.

## VOTING WHEN TRAVELLING

There are a number of options to vote if you will not be in your electoral district on Election Day, but they all take advance planning:

- Vote during advance polling days.
- Vote on campuses with Elections Canada offices (anyone is allowed to vote in these locations and they are open before advance polls).
- Vote at your local Elections Canada office any time after the writ is dropped.
- Request a special ballot to vote by mail from Elections Canada at www.elections.ca

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**Did you know?**

Explain that Voter Information Cards are mailed approximately three weeks before the election. You should bring it to the polling place because then you get to use the “fast lane” to vote. You will still need one other form of ID. However, if you don’t get one, don’t worry – you can still vote; just bring the right ID to prove your address.
Why Vote Poster/Banner

As the last step, invite people to write why they think voting is important on a poster or banner.

Power Tips

✓ Invite people to write in whatever language they are most comfortable
✓ Offer to write down the response for them
✓ Take a picture of the poster/banner before and after the activity
✓ Have people write on large colourful sticky notes and add notes to the poster
✓ Have lots of colourful markers for people to use
Election Integrity

Elections Canada is committed to ensuring the integrity of the election.

- All election steps are open and transparent and can be independently observed by Elections Canada officials and appointed representatives from registered political parties.
- Elections Canada uses paper ballots, with unique serial numbers, printed on special paper.
- Elections officials manually count the ballots at the polling location at the end of the evening. This is observed by representatives of all political parties.
- All elections officials have to take an oath to uphold the integrity of the ballot.

“It sparked engagement in conversations with, and between residents, about what mattered most to them about voting and what community concerns/issues were top of mind for them.”

Neighbourhood House Program Manager and 2015 Vote PopUp Organizer
Assign your staff members or volunteers the specific roles and responsibilities Elections Canada uses!

Assigning these roles will help your event run smoothly, and make your Vote PopUp that much more realistic and similar to an Elections Canada polling station. Finally, will prepare your staff members or volunteers a chance to see exactly what it would be like to work with Elections Canada on election day.

**Elections Canada/Vote PopUp Roles**

**Information Officer**

The Information Officer is the first point of contact voters have. An Elections Canada Information Officer:

- Greets voters;
- Directs them to the polling station; and
- Answers any initial questions they might have (or directs them to the person who can answer them).

A Vote PopUp Information Officer can:

- Greet potential participants;
- Explain what a Vote PopUp is;
- Invite them to participate, by asking “what’s important to you?”; and
- Direct participants to the Vote PopUp Registration Officer.

**Registration Officer**

The Registration Officer helps voters cast their ballot. An Elections Canada Registration Officer:

- Explains how the ballot process works;
- Checks voters’ ID; and
- Presents voters with their ballots.

A Vote PopUp Registration Officer can:

- Explain to participants how to cast their ballot in the Vote PopUp simulation;
- Remind participants of the polling times and locations for the General Election in their riding; and
- Review Elections Canada’s ID requirements and options for voting without current ID.
Deputy Returning Officer

The Deputy Returning Officer is essentially the team leader. An Elections Canada Deputy Returning Officer:

- Sets up the polling station;
- Ensures that the Information Officers and Registration Officers are following correct procedures;
- Answers any questions that other staff members cannot answer;
- Counts the ballots once the polling station is closed; and
- Reports the ballot numbers and results back to Elections Canada.

A Vote PopUp Deputy Returning Officer can:

- Ensure that everything is running smoothly and according to protocol;
- Congratulate participants after they vote;
- Invite participants to add to the “Why Vote” poster;
- Take the lead on counting the ballots once the Vote PopUp has concluded; and
- Explain to participants how and when the results of the Vote PopUp will be shared.

To learn more about the specific roles and responsibilities of Elections Canada officers, and to find out how to apply for these paid positions, visit www.elections.ca.
After the Vote PopUp

After the Vote PopUp, there are many ways to continue to build excitement for the election.

Start by sharing the election results.

When people see that they are not alone and others share their concerns, they are more likely to stay involved. Use #VotePopUp and #Vote2019 or engage with us at @RUEngageX on Twitter and Instagram.

Post results of the voting on social media or a poster. Share results with local media and candidates. This lets community members know you are amplifying their voice.

It is important to let people know their contributions mattered.

Thank volunteers and anyone who helped by providing space or materials.
FAQs related to Vote PopUps

When should I hold a Vote PopUp?

Vote PopUps can be held any time before Election Day. Ideally, Vote PopUps should be held far enough in advance of Election Day that participants have enough time to prepare to cast their vote. People will need time to gather their ID and proof of address, and plan their journey to their voting location. If they’re registered and their information is up to date, they should receive a Voter Information Card in the mail.

How many people do I need to help run a Vote PopUp?

The size of your Vote PopUp Team will depend on where you are running the activity and how many participants you expect. Generally speaking, if you expect 30 people per hour, you will want to have at least two to three people running the vote.

If your Vote PopUp is open to the public, you may want to have another one or two people to do outreach and draw people toward this activity.

What does it cost to hold a Vote PopUp?

It does not cost anything to run a Vote PopUp. It is a free tool. The only costs are photocopies and any refreshments that are provided.

The toolkit can be ordered free from Elections Canada here [will need a link and date for ordering kit]. Be sure to leave enough time for your order to be processed and shipped (recommended 2 weeks).

Who can participate?

A great thing about Vote PopUp is that anyone can participate! You can invite anyone to take part in the activity, regardless of their age, citizenship status or political interest. Vote PopUps allow anyone to experience the voting process, even if they are not eligible to vote because of age or citizenship status.

How do I choose which issues to include on Vote PopUp ballot?

Talk to your fellow Vote PopUp volunteers and, if possible, people in the community. Ask them what issues matter most to them and use those as options on the ballot.
**Why are Vote PopUps nonpartisan?**

While participants are encouraged to have and express what is important to them, the purpose of Vote PopUp isn’t to endorse or identify with a specific political party or candidate. Vote PopUp is designed to allow everyone in your community to learn about and experience the voting process. By remaining non-partisan, you will help everyone will feel welcome to participate and avoid alienating or distracting people from the voting process. Using real-life political parties or candidates may also create the false impression that Vote PopUp is in fact an official election.

**What if I don't have Internet access?**

You do not need Internet access to run a Vote PopUp. Internet access is recommended, though, so you can help participants find their voting locations, register, etc. while voting is on their minds. If you’re unable to connect to the Internet during the activity, provide participants with the Elections Canada website to check election times and locations.

You can also encourage participants to use their smartphones.

**How do I fill out the options on the ballot?**

Print out the sample ballots page, write down the choices with a marker, and then photocopy the ballot as many times as you need. Remember to make an additional 10 per cent for spoiled ballots.

“I liked that when it was held in existing programs and the community, people were engaged and were very vocal about their communities’ concerns.”

*Boys and Girls Club Staff and 2015 Vote PopUp Organizer*
FAQs related to Election

When is the next federal election?
The 2019 federal election will be held on **October 21, 2019**.

Who gets to work at the election? How can I apply?
All Election Day workers are paid employees of Elections Canada. On Election Day, Elections Canada is the biggest employer in the country and will need more than 235,000 staff nationwide. Visit www.elections.ca to apply to work in the federal election.

What if I make a mistake?
If you make a mistake on your ballot, then simply let the poll worker know, and ask for a new one. They are happy to provide you with a new ballot in this case. But note you are only given one replacement ballot.

When and where does advance polling take place?
Advance voting usually begins roughly a week before the General Election date. You can find the exact dates and locations of advance polling at www.elections.ca.

What if I am travelling or can’t attend advance polling?
There are many options for voting including special provisions for voting abroad, while serving in the military, voting on campus, or Elections Canada offices set up in each electoral district. All these options will take advance planning. For more information, visit www.elections.ca.

Where do I vote?
Your voting location is determined by your address. This is done to ensure that there is a voting location in every community. As the election approaches, you can find your voting location by using the tool on the Elections Canada website (www.elections.ca).
What if the website does not recognize my address?

This can happen for a variety of reasons, such as if you live in a new development, on a reserve or in certain rural areas, for example. If you have any problems using the Elections Canada website tool, please call Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868 for assistance.

Are Elections Canada materials available in other languages?

Yes. Elections Canada provides voting information in various indigenous languages and more than 30 other languages.
For more information and ways to stay involved, follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @RUExchangeX or contact us at VPUinfo@ryerson.ca or www.ryerson.ca/engagedemocracy