

Scrutineer Guide

A practical guide to the role, rights and responsibilities of candidate scrutineers.

Elections PEI (EPEI) has prepared this guide to help scrutineers understand their role and responsibilities during a municipal election in Prince Edward Island.

8:30 a.m.

Recommended arrival

1 per candidate

At a polling location

SDRO

Your point of contact

Who Is a Scrutineer?

A scrutineer is a person appointed to represent a candidate at a voting location. Their role is to observe the electoral process and help ensure it is conducted fairly and with integrity.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

At the voting location, a scrutineer communicates only with the Supervising Deputy Returning Officer (SDRO). Scrutineers must not interact with poll workers or voters before or after they cast their ballots.

Each candidate may have one scrutineer present at a polling location. Before entering, the scrutineer must present the SDRO with a signed and endorsed Certification of Agent form.

Information about who has voted is transmitted electronically to Elections PEI throughout the day. Candidates can access the list of electors who have voted online from their campaign offices. As a result, scrutineers do not need to record which electors have voted.

Arriving at the Poll

Polls open at 9:00 a.m. on voting days. Scrutineers should arrive no later than 8:30 a.m. to:

- report to the SDRO and get situated in the polling location; and
- witness the ballot boxes being shown as empty and sealed before voting begins.

Rights and Responsibilities of a Scrutineer

A SCRUTINEER MAY

- monitor the voting process for fairness and integrity;
- witness the setup of the polling location and confirm that ballot boxes are empty before they are sealed;

A SCRUTINEER MUST NOT

- speak to voters in the polling location before or after they cast their ballots;
- touch ballots at any time;

- sign the ballot box seal, if desired, along with the election officials;
- challenge an elector if they believe the elector is not qualified to vote at that polling location;
- witness the sealing of the ballot box at the end of a voting day;
- verify that all ballots have been removed from the ballot box for counting;
- witness the counting of ballots;
- request to examine a ballot during the count, although only the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) may handle the ballot; and
- object, within reason, to a decision to count a ballot. The DRO makes the final decision on whether a ballot is accepted or rejected.
- wear or display anything that identifies or promotes a candidate, including hats, buttons or clothing;
- interfere with or disrupt the voting process;
- challenge an elector after their ballot has been issued;
- use a device to make or receive calls, send texts or emails, take photographs or videos, or access social media while in the voting or ballot-counting location; or
- prevent a DRO from counting a ballot.

IMPORTANT

Failure to follow these requirements may result in the scrutineer being removed from the polling location by the SDRO for the remainder of the electoral event.

Counting the Ballots

Scrutineers play an important role in maintaining the fairness and transparency of the ballot-counting process.

WHO MAY ENTER THE COUNT

One scrutineer per candidate, per poll, may enter the counting area after the polls close on Election Day to witness the official count.

What You Need to Know

- **Be on time.** Scrutineers must be present when the count begins. A scrutineer who arrives after the count has started will not be admitted.
- **Surrender communication devices.** Cellphones, smartwatches, tablets and other communication devices must be given to the SDRO, who will ensure they are safely stored in the counting room. No one may communicate with anyone outside the counting area while the count is underway.
- **Keep a count.** Scrutineers may keep their own count of the ballots alongside the Poll Clerk.
- **Examine ballots when necessary.** A scrutineer may ask to examine a ballot during the count. Only the DRO may handle the ballot.
- **Remain until dismissed.** Once the count is complete, the SDRO will return communication devices and advise scrutineers when they may leave the counting area and report the results to their candidate.

Special Note: Advance Ballot Count

ADVANCE COUNT SEQUESTERING

A scrutineer participating in the Advance Ballot Count may be required to remain sequestered from as early as 3:00 p.m. on Election Day until the polls close at 7:00 p.m., provided the advance count is complete by that time.

A scrutineer participating in the Election Day count must remain in the counting area until the count is complete and the SDRO dismisses them.

Scrutineer At-a-Glance

BEFORE VOTING	Arrive by 8:30 a.m. • Present Certification of Agent • Report to SDRO • Witness empty ballot boxes
DURING VOTING	Observe • Communicate only with SDRO • Do not interact with voters or poll workers • Do not use communication devices
AT CLOSE	Witness sealing • Enter count only if authorized • Surrender communication devices
DURING COUNT	Keep your own count if desired • Request ballot examination through the DRO • Do not touch ballots
LEAVING	Remain until the count is complete and the SDRO dismisses you