

A Guide for Scrutineers

Elections PEI (EPEI) has prepared this guide to provide information to scrutineers about their role in the electoral process in PEI. General information for scrutineers designated to represent a candidate or party during an election event at a polling location and or for witnessing counting of ballots on Election night.

Who and What is the role of scrutineer?

A scrutineer is a person appointed to represent a candidate or party at a poll in a voting location. Their job is to observe the electoral process and scrutinize the elections integrity and fairness. In the polling location, the scrutineer interacts only with the poll's Supervising Deputy Returning Officer (SDRO), and never interact with poll workers or voters before or after they cast their ballot. In a polling location, a candidate or party is allowed to have one scrutineer working on their behalf. The scrutineer must present the signed and endorsed Certification of Agent form to the SDRO to be allowed entry to the polling location. Information about who is voting is transmitted electronically to Elections PEI throughout the day. Candidates will be able to access this list of electors having voted, from individual campaign offices over the internet. As a result, unlike in the past, there is no need for scrutineers to record which electors have voted.

How does a scrutineer prepare for a day in a poll location?

A scrutineer will prepare for a day at the polls by packing food and water, a notepad and pen. How you dress is important as well, as scrutineers are not allowed to wear anything that has a logo to support a party i.e. hats, button, clothing.

A scrutineer needs to read (in this document) what is allowable and not allowable for their position at the polls.

Polls are open to voters at 9am on voting days. A scrutineer should be in the polling location by at least 8:30 am to:

- make contact with the SDRO and get set up for their period at the polling location; and
- witness the sealing of ballot boxes to ensure they are empty prior to the start of polling.

Rights and Responsibilities of Scrutineers

A scrutineer is allowed to:

- monitor the voting process for integrity and fairness;
- witness the setup of polling location and to ensure ballot boxes are empty before they are sealed prior to the start of voting;
- challenge an elector if they believe they are not a qualified voter at that polling location;
- verify all ballots have been removed from ballot box for counting;
- witness the counting of ballots and tabulation process; and
- within reason, object to any ballot counted by the DRO, however, the final decision rests with the DRO.

A scrutineer is not allowed to:

- speak to voters in the poll location, before or after they cast their ballot;
- touch the ballots at any time during the electoral event;
- wear anything that has a logo to support or identify a party or candidate i.e. hats, button, clothing. ;
- interfere with or disrupt the voting process, or continually or repeatedly challenge voters;
- challenge a voter once their ballot has been issued;
- use any device to make or take calls, send texts or emails, take pictures/ videos or use any form of social media while in the voting or ballot counting location; and
- prevent a Deputy Returning Officer from counting a ballot.

Failure to comply could result in being evicted from the polling location by the SDRO for the duration of the electoral event.

Procedure for Counting Ballots

Scrutineers are an important part of the counting process to maintain the high level of fairness and transparency for the electoral event. One scrutineer per candidate per poll is allowed in to the counting area when the polls close on Election Day to witness the official count.

What You Need To Know

- You must be on time for the count. If you are not present at the start of the count you will not be admitted in;
- all communication devices (cellphones, smartwatches, ipads etc) must be surrendered to the SDRO who will ensure they are safely stored in the same room as the count. Nobody is allowed to communicate with another outside the counting area to maintain the privacy of the count;
- scrutineers will keep count of the ballots with the Poll Clerk;
- you will be allowed to examine a ballot upon request, however, only the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) is allowed to touch the ballots; and
- once the count is complete and all witnesses are in agreement with the count, the SDRO will return your devices and you will be free to leave the room and report back to your candidate.
- **SPECIAL NOTE:** If a scrutineer is part of the Advance Ballot Count, they may be sequestered as early as 3pm on Election Day until the polls close at 7pm, provided the count is complete by that time. If they are part of the Election Day count, the scrutineer must remain until the count is complete and the SDRO dismisses them.

What happens during the counting of ballots

Remember, during the count, only the DRO is allowed to touch the ballot box and ballots.

Once the DRO and Poll Clerk and all witnesses or scrutineers are ready to begin:

- the DRO will unseal the ballot box and empty all ballots onto the counting table. They will make sure there are no ballots stuck in the box, and will verify with everyone at the table by showing the interior of the box;
- the Poll Clerk and scrutineers will each have a counting sheet with tick boxes to count every vote for every candidate;
- the DRO will begin counting, one by one, by picking up a ballot, ensuring the DRO's signature is on the ballot. They will unfold the ballot and determine if it is a valid ballot;
- the name of the candidate marked, is called out as the DRO turns the ballot to show everyone at the table the marked ballot;
- scrutineers and the Poll Clerk will place a checkmark in a box on their tally sheet for the candidate receiving the vote;
- if the DRO deems a ballot not valid, they will state the reason why, and show everyone at the table the ballot. It will be put aside in a "Rejected Ballot" envelope;
- a scrutineer may object to the counting of any ballot. The DRO will hear the objections and make a decision which is deemed final;
- when all the ballots have been counted, the Poll Clerk tallies the votes and verifies with all scrutineers the totals are correct. They fill out the Statement of Poll which is the official report given to the Returning Officer. The SDRO will confirm all work is complete, return communication devices and dismiss all; and
- the SDRO will inform everyone when it is acceptable to leave the counting area.

Polling location dates and time

Every electoral event consists of 4 days of in person voting.

1st Advance Day: Saturday, the 9th day before Election Day

2nd Advance Day: Monday, the 7th day before Election Day

3rd Advance Day: Friday, the 3rd day before Election Day

Election Day: Monday

Poll Times

Voting: 9am - 7pm,

Poll setup for poll workers: 8am

Returning Officer: Contact information and office locations are listed on the Elections PEI website during electoral events.