

Do Employees Get Time Off to Vote on Election Day?



Employees may be entitled to 3 hours off at full pay, depending on their Election Day work schedule.

Remember that your employees may be entitled to paid time off to vote on Election Day, depending on their work schedule for the day. Here's a quick rundown of the rules you need to follow to avoid risk of hefty fines and even jail.

The 3 Consecutive Hours Rule

Under the *Canada Elections Act*, all Canadian citizens who are 18 or older are entitled to 3 consecutive hours during official voting hours to vote in federal and provincial elections. If the work schedule prevents the employee from being away for 3 consecutive hours on Election Day, the employer must give them 3 consecutive paid hours off if they request it.

To determine if employees qualify for the 3 paid hours off, you need to look at their work schedule on September 20 and the voting hours in your electoral district, which is based on which time zone it's in:

Time Zone	Voting Hours
Eastern	9:30 am to 9:30 pm
Central, Atlantic, Newfoundland	8:30 am to 8:30 pm
Mountain	7:30 am to 7:30 pm
Pacific	7:00 am to 7:00 pm

Doesn't have the required 3 consecutive hours off work to vote and thus does get paid time off if she works in Newfoundland or the Eastern, Atlantic or Central time zones;
Example: An employee whose September 20 workday is scheduled to run from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm:

- Does have the required 3 consecutive hours off work to vote and thus doesn't get paid time off if she works in the Mountain or Pacific time zones.

4 More Things You Need to Know

Other key things employers must keep in mind to ensure compliance:

1. You get to decide when the 3 hours off will be given;
2. You don't have to give additional time for the employee to travel to or from the

polling place;

3. The 3 hours are at full pay without any deductions or other penalties so that the employee gets what she would have earned had she actually worked the full day; and
4. The requirement doesn't apply if all 4 of the following things are true: (i) Your company transports goods or passengers by land, air or water; (ii) The employee is employed outside her polling division; (iii) The employee is employed in the operation of a means of transportation; and (iv) Allowing the time off would interfere with the transportation service.