

“VOTE AND KEEP ON VOTING TILL THEY MAKE YOU QUIT”: VOTER FRAUD IN CANADA

Charles Power, a long-standing Canadian Liberal politician, wrote in his memoirs that:

The [voter] lists used in [the 1908 federal] election were provincial lists which had been compiled two or more years earlier, and contained the names of many dead and absent persons. However, by a custom regarded as common and ordinary, the votes of the dead and absent were not lost but were made good use of by both contesting parties.²⁴

Stories of voter fraud like this—where people would cast additional votes by pretending to be someone they are not—are legendary in Canadian political lore. However, Elections Canada says that voter fraud has never been widespread in Canada, historically or presently.

Today, there are processes to ensure that people do not vote more than once. To vote in a federal election you must be on the federal electors list. Voters can register for the list in advance or register on polling day. As well, voters must show identification when they vote. While these rules on registration and on using ID help prevent fraud, they have an unfortunate side-effect: they can create problems for voters such as the homeless or students living away from home who may have difficulties providing valid identification with an address.

1. What difficulties would students or homeless people have in obtaining proper identification so that they can vote?
2. How could this be remedied?
3. Why is it important that voting be made as accessible as possible? How do we balance that concern with ensuring that voter fraud does not take place?

