

Hosting conversations about voting

Many of your participants engage in regular programming. It might be language training or computer skills or an employment training program. Or you might engage people who are in your drop-in, in your waiting room or lined up for the food bank. Nonpartisan voter information is important to everyone and a great addition to whatever programming you are doing, and we've tried to make nice, short, activities that are easy to do in minutes

Exercises

Do your program participants think voting is difficult, useless, or irrelevant? Here are three quick exercises you can do to show them otherwise.

1) Does every vote REALLY count?

People often think it takes a lot to win a race, but at City Council, just a few votes can make all the difference.

Ask participants how important they think their own single vote is.

Ask participants to guess how many members of the current city council have won or lost by less than 600 votes. Write the numbers on the chalk board if you have one.

Then give them the good news. Of the folks now on City Council, 10 of them, 40%, have won or lost races by less than 600 votes. One came as close as 94 votes in the last election. Many other past City Councillors have gotten elected in very very close races. One deputy mayor only managed to get re-elected by 20 votes. The longest serving mayor in Toronto got elected for the first time by a margin of less than one vote in every poll.

It doesn't take much to change the outcome of City elections.

2) Why care about a City election?

Most people don't know a lot about City Hall. But we rely more on the City than we think:

Remind participants that there are 3 levels of government

- Federal Government - Led by Justin Trudeau, which covers all of Canada
- Provincial Government - Led by Doug Ford, which covers all of Ontario
- City Government - Vacant since John Tory resigned, which covers all of Toronto

Ask which level of government they think impacts their day to day lives the most.

Then ask who they think delivers the following services. After each one, ask which level of government does that. Let them know it's the City after each one. (Get everyone to shout together "City").

List of services: Affordable housing, housing standards, homeless shelters, TTC, Traffic, Parks, Rec centres, sports fields, Senior's Services, Youth Programs, Childcare, Employment Programs, safety, policing, clean streets, garbage, clean water, sewer system, development and construction, local electrical systems.

After the exercise, ask who thinks it's important to get a mayor who cares about how those services are provided for people in this community.

Ask who is willing to take the voting pledge for the June election.



3) How hard is it to vote?

Most people think voting will be harder than it is.

Try a short pop quiz to see what people know about the process.

1) Does it take a lot of time?

How long did the Elections Canada study on voting say it takes to cast a ballot in an election?

- a) Under 8 minutes b) Under 15 Minutes c) About 30 minutes d) More than an hour

Answer: A - on average people waited about 3 minutes and spent about 4 minutes marking their ballot

2) Is voting difficult?

What percentage of people did the Elections Canada study on voting say found it very easy or somewhat easy to cast a vote?

- a) 50% b) 75% c) 90% d) 98%

Answer: D - Over 80% found it very easy and another 16% found it somewhat easy

3) Am I allowed to vote?

If you are over 18 and a Canadian Citizen what else do you need to be able to vote?

- a) Be on the voter's list b) Have a voting card c) Have government ID
d) Have anything that shows your address in Toronto

Answer: D - Yes, voter cards, or ID can show your address, but so will a piece of mail, a cancelled cheque, a report card, a benefits statement, a bank statement, a utility bill, or any other document issued by a government or corporation showing your address. Any of those will be accepted at the voting booth.

4) When do I vote?

When are you able to cast a ballot in the next election?

- a) Election day (June 26th from 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM)
b) During advance polls (June 8th - June 13th, 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM)
c) By mail any time up to June 15th (applications due by May 26th)
d) All of the above

Answer: D - voters have a lot of choices about where and when to vote.

5) Where do I vote?

Where are you able to cast a ballot in the next election?

- a) At a polling place near my home on election day, June 26th
b) At any polling place anywhere in the City on advance poll days (June 8th - 13th)
c) By mail anywhere, anytime up to June 15th (applications due by May 26th)
d) All of the above

Answer: D - voters have a lot of choices about where and when to vote.