# NEGLECTED CITIZENRY: HOMELESSNESS AND VOTING IN TORONTO

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# CAN CANADIAN CITIZENS WITHOUT A PERMANENT ADDRESS VOIT?



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## FEDERAL PROCESS

Federal Process Homeless elector requests a "Letter of Confirmation of Residence" from the institution they access Institution
administrator contacts
the local returning
officer to ensure the
institution is listed
with Elections Canada
(or else the Letter will
NOT be accepted)

Arrive at the polls with 1 piece of identification AND the "Letter of Confirmation of Residence"



# PROVINCIAL PROCESS (ONTARIO)

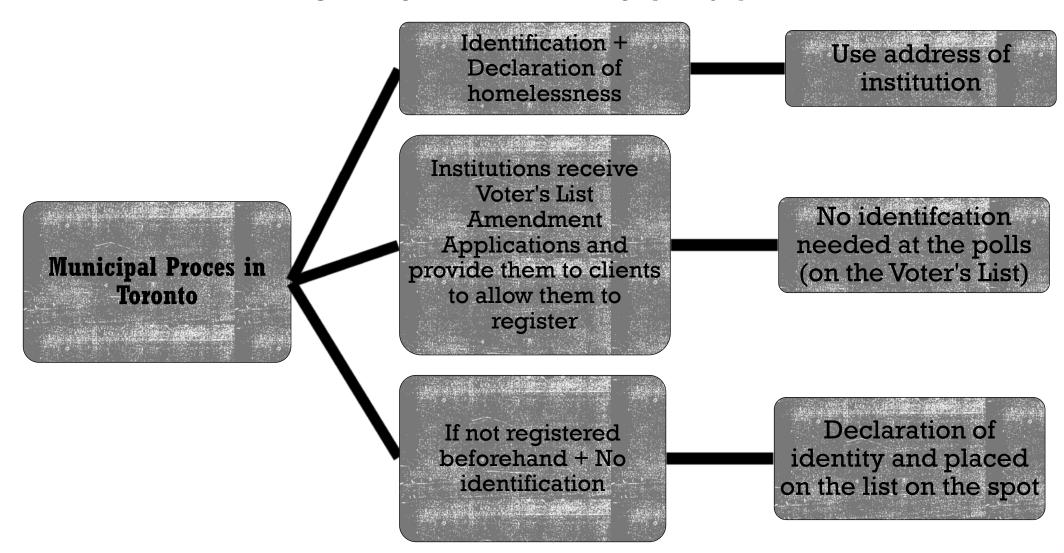
Provincial Process in Ontario Insitutions
recieve
Authorization for
Administrators
form to qualify
as place of
resdence

Once institutions are authorized they recieve a kit including resources and "Certificates of Identity and Residence"

Institutions give clients
"Certificate of Identify and Residence" form (acts as both ID and proof of address) - signed by electors and institution



## MUNICIPAL PROCESS





# DO CITIZENS WITHOUT A PERMANENT ADDRESS VOTE?

We don't know... It has not been an area of much research

Why not consider the political citizenship of citizens experiencing homelessness?

# RESEARCH PROJECT

- Question
  - What barriers do
     Canadian citizens
     experiencing
     homelessness in Toronto
     citizens face to voting?
- Methodology
  - 45 qualitative interviews
    - 9 service providers from 7 institutions
    - 28 individuals experiencing homelessness from 3 institutions
    - 3 election agency representatives (Elections Canada (via email), Elections Ontario, Toronto City Clerk's Office)
    - 5 politicians (MP's, MPP's, City Councillors)



## **ASSUMPTIONS**

- It is often assumed that citizens experiencing homelessness do not *want* to participate or are not *knowledgeable* on politics to vote
- "We are smarter than people think"
- Election agencies have identified citizens experiencing homelessness as a vulnerable group requiring further effort/outreach
  - But what does this look like on the ground?
- Politicians focus efforts are focused "where the votes are"
  - They do not see citizens facing homelessness as voters



## KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROCESS

- Over half (54%) of the participants experiencing homelessness were not aware (or unsure) of the processes that exist and therefore believed they could not vote without an address
- Half of those who were aware of the process were from the same drop-in centre
  - That was a polling station during municipal elections



## **VOTING**

- A majority (71%) of participants experiencing homelessness voted in the past
- Only 25% voted using the process for citizens without a permanent address
- •80% of those that did not vote did not know the process of voting for those without a permanent address



#### BARRIERS

- Complexity of the processes
- Disconnect between election agencies and institutions
- Lack of resources
- Lack of trained election/polling staff

Possible solutions?



#### FUTURE RESEARCH

Implementation of the policies

• What is the policy trail?

• What actors are involved and what are their responsibilities?





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QUESTIONS?

