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# STRATEGIC PLAN

Elections Manitoba  
for the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Election 2017-2021

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INNOVATION

SERVICE

LEGISLATION

ACCESSIBILITY

ENGAGEMENT

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# Message from the CEO

Our last strategic plan guided us through the 41<sup>st</sup> general election held on April 19, 2016. Many challenges were successfully managed, including a change to the fixed election date due to the timing of the federal election and new legislative provisions for nominations and collection of gender and date of birth information from voters. The strategic plan we followed ensured we were on-task to deliver the many components necessary for a successful general election and it helped us be in a position to quickly respond to changes as they arose.

I would like to congratulate all Elections Manitoba staff, beginning with the small core group of headquarters staff and then expanding to returning officers, assistant returning officers and other election workers who grow our staffing complement to 10,000 people. They are committed to the democratic principles enshrined in our legislation and determined to serve Manitobans by delivering free and fair elections. I would also like to thank the many agencies that help us reach out across the province to support Manitobans in exercising their right to vote. These include the Canadian Red Cross, Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council, Manitoba Education, the Nellie McClung Foundation, the Disabilities Issues Office and Communications Services Manitoba.

Elections Manitoba operates in a complex environment that necessitates flexibility. We must be able to quickly respond to changes in legislation and be ready to hold an election at any time. This strategic plan will guide us through the next four years to the fixed election date of October 6, 2020. It will also help us navigate the potential changes that will flow from the next Electoral Boundaries Commission, which is expected to complete its work by December 2018.

Our strategic priorities for the next four years are legislation, service, accessibility, innovation and engagement. These priorities support our vision: "To provide information, opportunities and resources to foster excellence, participation and fairness in the electoral process." I am also pleased to note that our direction reflects a deep commitment to our core values, which are fairness, integrity, respect, excellence, innovation, participation and accountability.

We are sharpening our focus on innovation and embracing business transformation. While innovation can present challenges, it also highlights the opportunities to view processes from a new perspective and to consider different solutions. It is part of our continuous effort to improve our service to Manitobans in support of democratic values.

There are many tasks to complete by 2020 but I am confident that this plan combined with the skill and talent of our team will ensure we fulfill our commitments. Post-election activities, including reporting back through the statement of votes, reviewing party and candidate financial statements and examining the experiences of the 2020 general election, will take us to the first quarter of 2021.

I look forward to the next four years and what we will accomplish in supporting the democratic rights of Manitobans through free and fair elections.

Shipra Verma, CPA, CA  
Chief Electoral Officer

# Our Organization

## Overview of Elections Manitoba

Public confidence in the institutions of government rests directly on the capacity of the electoral system to perform efficiently, reliably, impartially and in a timely fashion. The integrity of the electoral system supports the legitimacy of representative government. In 1980, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (Elections Manitoba) was established as an independent office and made directly accountable to the Legislative Assembly.

The mandate of Elections Manitoba is set out in *The Elections Act and The Election Financing Act*. It is the responsibility of the office to conduct free and fair elections, make the electoral process accessible to voters, promote public awareness through education, outreach and advertising, and ensure compliance with legislation. Elections Manitoba operates in a complex environment driven by several factors, including:

- Uncertainty of the timing of the general election:
  - Set general election date is subject to change based on the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor
  - Must be ready to conduct an election at any time
- Uncertainty of the timing of by-elections
- Statutory deadlines for election activities
- Frequent and significant changes to electoral legislation
- Conducting referendums under various laws
- Community outreach and ongoing education about the constitutional right to vote to diverse audiences

In addition, technology and public expectations drive and shape our work, and raise opportunities for business transformation.

## Role of the Chief Electoral Officer

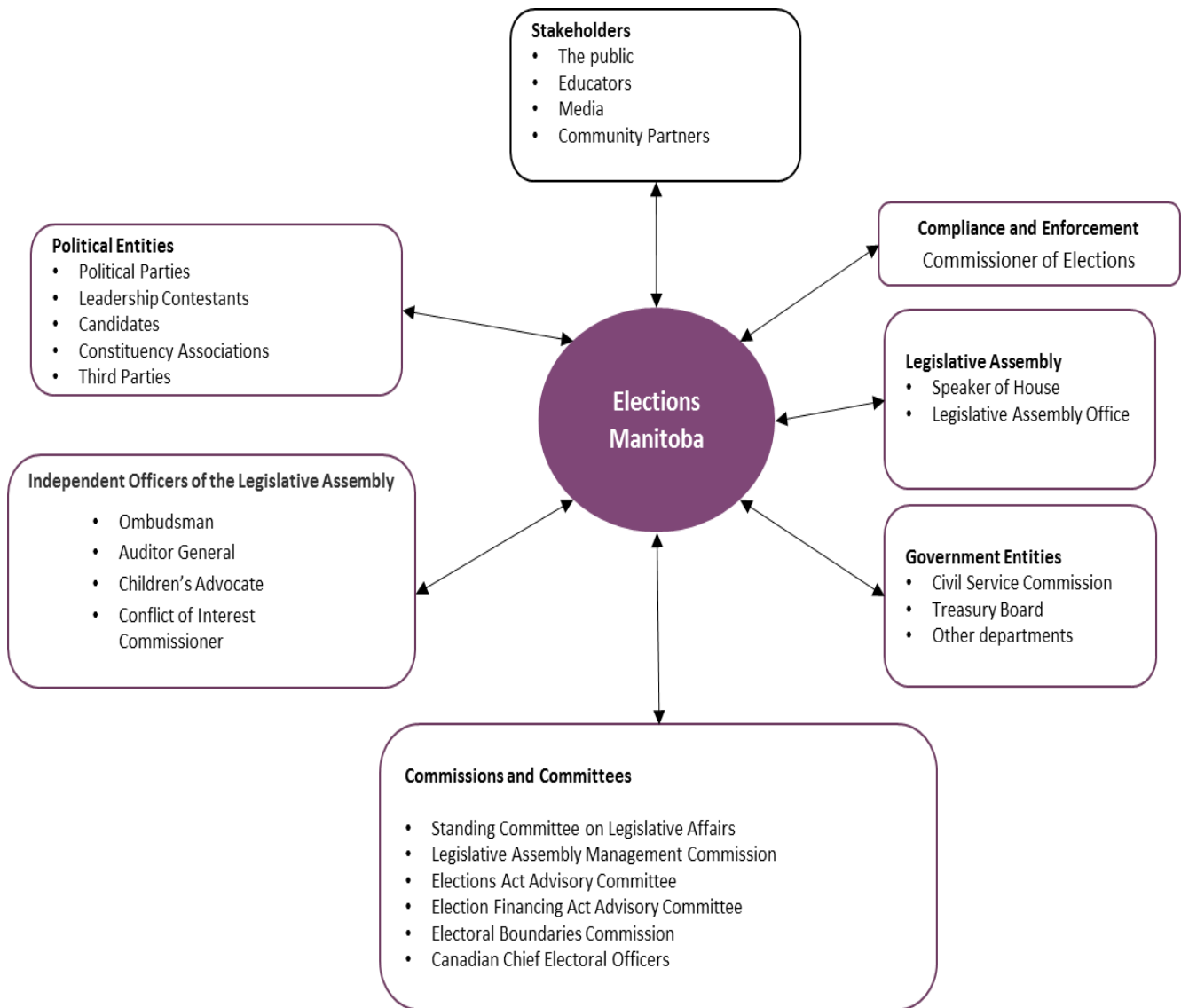
Manitoba's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and the staff of Elections Manitoba administer provincial elections to ensure they are fair and free of political influence. The CEO must be non-partisan and may not vote in any provincial election.

Elections Manitoba must be prepared at all times to conduct elections, by-elections and referendums. The CEO directs Elections Manitoba in facilitating participation in all aspects of provincial elections by:

- Providing a voting process that is straightforward, responsive and well-known to all voters
- Safeguarding fairness, impartiality and compliance by political entities and voters
- Providing assistance to political entities in fulfilling their legislative requirements
- Supporting and promoting democratic participation through province-wide public education and information programs

### Our Stakeholders

Elections Manitoba has a broad range of stakeholders as noted in the diagram below. Stakeholders include all Manitoban citizens, eligible voters, candidates, political entities, community partners, as well as the media, the Legislative Assembly, service delivery partners and other electoral agencies as depicted here:



# Our Mandate

Elections Manitoba’s mandate is to ensure free, fair and accessible elections – so all eligible voters in Manitoba have the opportunity to cast their ballot. The existing Mission and Vision statements of Elections Manitoba still resonate with the mandate and intent of the institution for the next four years. They remain compelling, clear and ambitious.

# Our Mission

To secure the democratic rights of all Manitobans through the conduct of free and fair elections by enhancing public confidence in and awareness of the electoral process and by ensuring compliance with political financing laws.

# Our Vision

To provide information, opportunities and resources to foster excellence, participation and fairness in the electoral process.

# Our Strategic Priorities

To achieve its mission and vision, Elections Manitoba has defined five strategic priorities and supporting actions to guide the activities of the next four years:

<b>Legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement legislative changes</li><li>• Recommend legislative changes to improve administrative practices</li><li>• Assist political entities and others to comply with legislation</li><li>• Monitor overall compliance with legislation</li></ul>
<b>Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide accessible voting opportunities to Manitobans</li><li>• Leverage technology innovations in service delivery</li><li>• Manage resources efficiently</li><li>• Maintain effective budget controls and reporting</li><li>• Provide assistance and training to stakeholders</li><li>• Provide ongoing training and resources to staff</li></ul>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop and implement a plan to meet the standards under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act to identify, remove and prevent barriers faced by person with disabilities.</li><li>• Build on plans to make voting accessible to all Manitobans</li></ul>
<b>Innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review, assess and change organizational practices where feasible to deliver services effectively and efficiently.</li><li>• Leverage technology to streamline organizational work</li><li>• Seek out new ways to improve performance</li></ul>
<b>Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain and strengthen existing partnerships with organizations, vendors and other stakeholders</li><li>• Continue to reach out to existing and future stakeholders, including youth and those disconnected from the voting process</li><li>• Identify new approaches to establishing partnerships and conducting effective outreach to support democratic practices.</li></ul>

# Our Core Values

Elections Manitoba has a set of core values that will guide the organization to fulfill its mandate. The activities and actions of staff and leadership of Elections Manitoba reinforce these core values as part of its culture.

An overview of the core values of Elections Manitoba are outlined below:

<b>Core Value</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Fairness	Being impartial, without favoritism, bias or discrimination, in the discharge of our duties
Integrity	Adherence to legal and ethical principles
Respect	Respect for voters, political entities, partners and each other
Excellence	Deliver excellent service
Participation	Encourage and support participation in democratic practices
Innovation	Develop new solutions to improve service and efficiency
Accountability	Focus on execution and ownership of responsibilities



# Our Environment

## Background

In order for Elections Manitoba to achieve its legislative mandate, a high degree of agility is required within the organization's internal operations. Significant amendments to both *The Elections Act* and *The Election Financing Act* in recent years have altered and expanded the mandate of Elections Manitoba. Further changes to legislation are likely to occur as the electoral process in Manitoba continues to evolve.

As an independent office of the Legislative Assembly, Elections Manitoba must operate in an impartial and non-partisan manner within a highly partisan and political environment. Independence in both fact and perception is essential to meeting stakeholder expectations and integral to the way Elections Manitoba does business and deals with political entities.

Elections Manitoba strives to deliver a fair process and encourage participation among all stakeholders and, in doing so, is seen by voters as a credible source of election information. While Manitobans may not necessarily know Elections Manitoba by name, they know their voting rights and are overwhelmingly satisfied with the voting process.

In developing our strategic priorities for the next four years, Elections Manitoba considered many factors, including participation rates, evolving voting patterns, attitudes about voting and satisfaction with the voting process. Our strategic plan is shaped not only by our analysis of the recent general election but also the larger electoral environment, especially emerging trends across other Canadian jurisdictions. Fundamentally, however, Elections Manitoba's priorities must reflect the needs and expectations of Manitobans while being responsive to potential changes in the legislative framework.

## Highlights of 41st General Election

### The 75-day Election Calendar

Enumeration	February 4 to March 7
Revision	March 10 to April 7
Writ issued and nominations open	March 16
Nominations close	March 29
Advance voting	April 9 to 16
Election day	April 19

### Participation

- A total of 221 candidates ran for election.
- The final voters list included 772,877 eligible voters, of whom 443,861 voters cast a ballot.
- Voter turnout was 57.43 per cent. Advance voting was held in 293 locations throughout the province, with voters being able to vote anywhere in advance. Advance voting continued to increase and accounted for 25 per cent of the votes, up from 18 per cent in the 2011 general election.

### Campaign Finance

- To support candidates and parties in their compliance with campaign finance requirements, Elections Manitoba staff held 18 information sessions for official agents, campaign managers and others.
- A total of 238 candidates and six registered parties were required to file financial statements. Of these, 155 candidates and three parties were eligible for reimbursement. All election financial statements, including originals/amended and final, as well as reimbursements, are posted on the website.

### **Cost of the Election**

- The total cost to administer the 41st general election was approximately \$13.7 million, within the projected budget. The projected cost of reimbursements and auditor subsidies is \$3.4 million. In comparison, the cost to administer the 40th general election was \$11.9 million, plus \$3 million for reimbursements and auditor subsidies.

### **Survey Findings**

- A survey of the population (sample size: 600) found that 93 per cent of voters were satisfied or very satisfied with their voting experience.
- Regardless of whether they voted in the 2016 election, most respondents said that it is important to vote. Interestingly, most non-voters (7 in 10) think voting is essential; however, they consider it less important that they personally do so.

### **Amendments**

Legislation guides the operations of Elections Manitoba and the delivery of free and fair elections. The organization recommends amendments that will improve the administration of elections and must also respond and adapt to legislative changes introduced by government.

One of the active recommendations for legislative change involves the development of a permanent voters list, known as the Manitoba Voter Register. This would be a substantive and ongoing activity that would help establish the voters list for the general election and by-elections. It has a significant ongoing impact on Election Manitoba operations and requires legislative changes to proceed. There has been substantial work on the concept of establishing the Manitoba Voter Register and the related legislative changes; however, legislation has not yet been introduced.

Legislation introduced in 2015 to collect gender and date of birth information during enumeration for the 2016 election supports the establishment of the Manitoba Voter Register. That change resulted in changes to processes, forms and other materials. Another legislative amendment reduced the number of eligible voter names required for nomination papers from 100 to 50.

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Every 10 years, the electoral division boundaries of the province are reviewed. The review process is led by a commission made up of the Chief Electoral Officer, the Chief Justice of Manitoba and the presidents of the University of Manitoba, Brandon University and University College of the North. As part of the process, the commission requests submissions from the public. The next boundaries commission will complete its work in 2018.

Any electoral division boundary changes recommended by the commission will require significant work in preparation for the 2020 election, including new maps for all affected electoral divisions, redistribution of voting areas, assignment of voting locations and the creation of new street keys and voting keys. In 2008, 56 out of 57 electoral divisions had their boundaries redrawn.

### **Challenges Facing Elections Manitoba**

With each election, Elections Manitoba faces a new set of challenges due to the constantly changing environment in which it operates. Over the next four years, the primary challenges are as follows:

- Responding to legislative changes
- Establishing the Manitoba Voter Register should legislation proceed
- Modernizing and updating operational systems and practices
- Delivering effective training for election officials
- Building on accessibility plans and practices
- Implementing new boundaries for electoral divisions

As a result of the strong foundation built from prior elections, the focus approaching the 2020 election will be on innovation and business transformation in the context of our mission, vision and values.

# Conclusion

Elections Manitoba is committed to conducting free, fair and accessible elections for all participants in Manitoba's electoral process. This commitment reflects the rich legacy of democratic values of Manitoba.

The strategic planning process employed is designed to keep the shared vision for the organization at the forefront while balancing what is realistic in terms of planning.

Elections Manitoba is facing a period of significant changes however under the same breath significant opportunities. This election cycle provides an exciting time to make a difference, redesign how Elections Manitoba promotes and delivers on the electoral process in order to serve all Manitobans. With this strategic plan as a foundation, Elections Manitoba can prepare for the next provincial election with a clear vision and tactical plan – looking forward to putting into action the values of democracy through excellence in execution and fuelling a positive environment for all.

# Deloitte.

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