

**Report to the Standing Committee
on Modifications to the Voting Process**

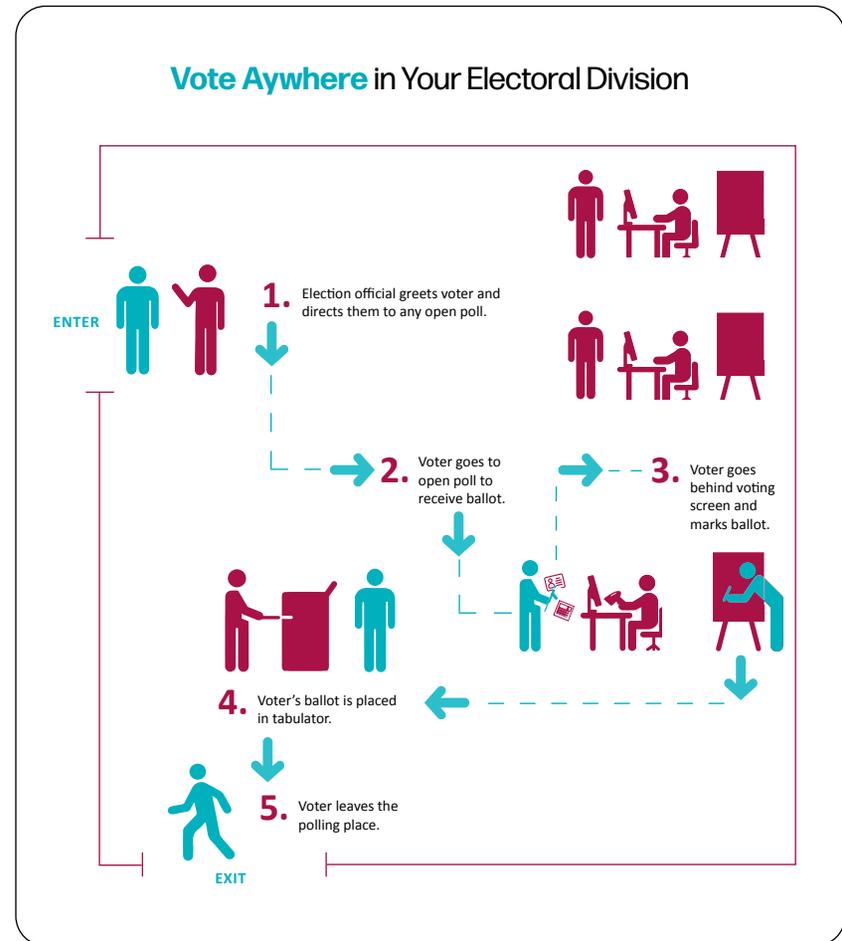
**Vote Anywhere in Your Electoral Division
on Election Day**

October 2024

Report to the Standing Committee on Modifications to the Voting Process

In 2021, Elections Manitoba proposed a process to modernize elections in Manitoba. The “vote anywhere in your electoral division” built on the successful modification introduced in the 2019 general election for advance voting. The 2019 proposal introduced more technology to improve services to voters and political participants. A summary of the “vote anywhere in your electoral division” proposal for 2023 is:

- › On election day, a voter can go to any polling place within their electoral division and be served at any poll.
- › A voting official would access the voters list on a secure laptop and perform the duties of both voting officer, and assistant voting officer. They would check ID, look up the voter electronically, print a label for insertion in the voting book, issue a ballot and strike the voter off the electronic voters list in real time.
- › The voter would mark their paper ballot behind a privacy screen.
- › The paper ballot would be inserted into a vote counting machine, also known as a tabulator.
- › A secure party portal would be established to provide registered parties with information on who has voted and general voting activity on a scheduled basis.
- › Tabulators would be used to securely record the ballot and count the vote. This would replace hand counting and provide quicker results.



What Changed

The proposal was adopted by the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs on October 13, 2021, and subsequently by the Legislative Assembly, with specific directions on how to best implement the “vote anywhere in your electoral division” proposal. The committee passed two motions regarding the proposal, summarized as follows:

1. The use of electronic strike-off could be implemented for all aspects of the upcoming 2023 general election to support the “vote anywhere in your electoral division concept” to provide quick service to voters and accurate tracking of voting activity.
2. Directed the development of legislation to be brought forward to implement all aspects governing the adoption of tabulators or vote counting machines for the 2023 general election.

Note: a third motion applied to a proposal for vote-by-mail for the Fort Whyte byelection due to the pandemic. The motion allowed for the use of expanded vote-by-mail up to April 1, 2022. A report back on the Fort Whyte byelection vote-by-mail modification was submitted as part of the 2021 annual report.

Following the decision of the standing committee, legislation was developed and introduced to amend *The Elections Act* and allow for the use of vote counting machines. The use of these machines, along with real-time strike-off is integral to successfully delivering “vote anywhere in your electoral division” on election day and anywhere in the province during advance voting. Introducing the use of vote counting machines resulted in changes to the ballot design, the way the ballot was cast and how ballots were counted. The legislation provided for both vote counting machines and traditional manual processes. It also allowed for real-time strike-off of voters during advance voting and on election day and simplified the process for advance voting for voters who could vote anywhere in the province.

Bill 11, *The Elections Amendment Act* received Royal Assent on March 16, 2022, with the unanimous support of all political parties in the Legislative Assembly. This legislation was crucial to delivering a vote anywhere in your electoral division model and paved the way for the implementation of the overall proposal.

Implementation

The vote anywhere modification applied to voting on election day and focused on voting within a voter’s normal electoral division. It builds on the flexibility already offered for advance voting where voters can vote anywhere in the province over the eight days of advance voting.

On election day during the 2023 general election, polls were set up to accept voters from anywhere within the electoral division. Voters didn’t have to go to a specific table with a specific poll number, they simply went to the next available polling station. Once the voter cast their ballot, the name was struck off the voters list indicating they had already voted. This information was shared with registered political parties and candidates through the online Political Information Portal. Even though a voter had not voted at a specific table with a poll number, also known as the voting area, this information could still be provided to parties and candidates as specific voting areas were tied to each voter, as per previous elections.

Voter Information Cards were distributed to all Manitoba voters and provided personalized information on voting opportunities during advance voting and on election day. Voters were provided with information on the poll that would normally serve them, and also encouraged to look at the Elections Manitoba website for other potential options located within their electoral division that may be more convenient. The look-up tool on the website provided a listing of addresses and maps to voters looking for voting options.

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The Results

This modification made voting more convenient and still provided political participants with the information they required. Of all election day votes cast, 18,715 voters out of the 278,316 who voted on election day chose to use a location other than their usual polling place. This is approximately 6.7% of the election day vote. It is the first time this option has been offered on election day and the numbers reflect the start of a new service. Anecdotally, EM received positive feedback from voters who appreciated the option and the flexibility it provided as they made their voting decisions.

The implementation of the legislative changes around vote counting machines, ballots and counting are part of the 2023 Annual Report and are not included in this report.



Modifications to the voting process must meet three objectives set out in legislation in section 28.1 of *The Elections Act*. Elections Manitoba reports that the objectives initially identified were met. They are:

Legislative Objectives per s. 28.1 of *The Elections Act*

Improve the voting process for voters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Convenience of voting at any location in electoral division › Shorter wait times at polls
Achieve administrative efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Streamlines processes › Faster and more frequent delivery of voting information to parties › Reduces the time to count
Preserve integrity of the vote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Voters still confirm identity with ID › Voters still cast ballot by hand › Secrecy is preserved › Paper ballots are available for recount

Recommendation

Elections Manitoba recommends that the modification to allow voters to cast a ballot at any polling place in their electoral division be permanently incorporated in legislation through an amendment to *The Elections Act*.