

ELECTIONS SASKATCHEWAN
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER'S DISCUSSION PAPER

Resolving the Municipal/Provincial Election Timing Problem in Saskatchewan

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Executive Summary

Elections are held across Canada at regular intervals to allow citizens to democratically elect their municipal, provincial and federal governments. Because of legislation introduced over the past 10 years, the exact timing of each jurisdictional election occurring in Saskatchewan is now scheduled in law.

Unfortunately, the currently legislated schedule for provincial and municipal elections overlaps in the Fall of 2020. This is a consequence of a five-month election delay that was required for the most recent provincial general election, which occurred because of a timing schedule overlap with the federal election that was held in the Fall of 2015.

The Fall 2020 municipal/provincial election timing conflict needs to be legislatively addressed to prevent major administrative challenges, public confusion, uncertainty about jurisdictional responsibility for political issues and an overall increase in election management costs.

Quite simply—it is not administratively tenable that the election periods for any of the three jurisdictional levels overlap. This reality has already been legislatively addressed in relation to conflicts in the timing of federal and provincial elections, but not in relation to municipal election timing.

While offering important background information, this paper identifies three workable options that could resolve the pending 2020 election timing conflict. Among the three, just one is recommended, however. **The proposed approach would involve delaying the 29th provincial general election by five months and, thereafter, reverting to the current legal schedule that requires provincial elections to occur on the first Monday in November four years following each most recent general election.**

My belief is that the public interest would be best served if federal, municipal and provincial elections are scheduled to be held in separate calendar years — the recommended option would result in that arrangement with immediate effect.

While planning for 2020 may seem a distant future, steps must be taken relatively soon to clarify the timing of provincial and municipal elections. The timing of elections within 296 of the province's rural constituencies is scheduled for the Fall of 2018. Any change to municipal or provincial election schedules should be formally decided well ahead of that time.



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1.0 Introduction – The Problem

Unless provincial law is changed, Saskatchewan’s currently scheduled municipal and provincial election campaign periods will significantly overlap in 2020. Municipal election day is statutorily scheduled for October 28, 2020. Provincial election day is legislated to occur on November 2, 2020—just five days later.

The current statutory timetable requires provincial advance voting to occur on municipal election day, but with different candidates, different voting hours, different assigned voters and completely different procedural requirements associated with voting.

Inevitably, problems of substantial voter confusion will occur. Misunderstandings in the following areas can be expected:

- differences in voting eligibility rules;
- differences in voter registration procedures;
- differences in assigned voting locations per election;
- differences in available voting times and dates for each election;
- differences in acceptable identification documents required to be shown before a ballot is issued; and
- differences in the official voting notices received for each election.

It can be predicted that many voters will attend municipal voting places expecting to cast a provincial ballot, and vice versa.

Difficulties for candidates and parties can also be expected, with an overlap in demands for campaign volunteers, office rental space, and other campaign resources such as sign printers and advertising space or time. More importantly, many voters will find themselves unsure of which jurisdictional level is responsible for which of the varying political campaign issues that will become topical within the overlapping election period — some of these issues will inevitably “drift” between the two different campaigns.

From an administrative perspective, the same voting locations (e.g., public schools, community halls) and temporary election workers (10,000+ required provincially) will be sought by election administrators at both jurisdictional levels. Because of public messaging overlaps and conflicts, voter education efforts will be compromised — less effective messaging will result in a less informed voting public.

Additionally, the U.S. federal election will occur on November 3, 2020 (the day following the scheduled provincial election) and the media will likely be saturated with election news and political advertising of a very different sort.

Overall, public confusion and general “election fatigue” could easily combine to produce a significantly lower voting turnout in both elections. And yet, because of the additional administrative and logistical challenges outlined above, the costs associated with each election can be expected to be greater than would be the case if they were held at separate times.

Because of the differences in legal frameworks, administrative responsibilities and electoral geography that define the electoral process at each jurisdictional level, opportunities do not exist to leverage operational work for mutual benefit and increased efficiency. **It is clear, therefore, that the legally set schedule for either the provincial election or municipal election must change — it is administratively untenable for Saskatchewan’s 2020 municipal and provincial election periods to be held concurrently.**

Fortunately, time is still available to proactively address this problem. However, to provide election date certainty for the public and the full range of Saskatchewan municipal and provincial election stakeholders, a public policy decision needs to be made relatively soon, along with supporting legislative amendments that formalize the new arrangements to be put in place.

2.0 Legislated Requirements and Other Factors

The current legal framework related to municipal, provincial and federal elections, and other factors that are directly related to election timing, determine the range of options available to provide an effective solution to this problem.

Municipal Election Schedule

Election cycles of four years’ duration were enacted for Saskatchewan’s 782 municipalities in 2015.¹

General elections in urban municipalities are now held every four years. The council of an urban municipality has a mayor (elected at large) and at least two councillors. Some urban municipalities are divided into wards and voters elect at least one councillor for each ward.

Each rural municipality is divided into numbered divisions. The council of a rural municipality has a reeve (elected at large) and a councillor for each division. Members of council are elected to four-year terms. General elections in rural municipalities are held every two years, on a rotational basis.

Some 422 urban municipalities and all 296 rural municipalities (electing Reeves and councillors representing odd-numbered divisions) had their most recent elections on Wednesday, October 26, 2016 — the next such elections are legally scheduled for Wednesday, October 28, 2020.

All 24 northern municipalities in the province also had local government elections in the Fall of 2016, selecting from various dates permitted in the legislation.² Their next elections are to be held in the Fall of 2020.

¹ Saskatchewan Legislature Bill No. 166, ‘*An Act Respecting Elections in Municipalities and School Divisions and Making Consequential Amendments to Other Acts*’, received Royal Assent on May 14, 2015.

² Section 10 of *The Local Government Election Act, 2015* provides Saskatchewan’s Northern Municipalities with the option of scheduling their elections every four years on either the second last Wednesday of September, the last Wednesday in September, or the first Wednesday of October.

The province also has 40 resort villages, designated as a special type of urban municipality, and their first four-year term elections were held on Saturday, July 30, 2016. Their next resort village elections are legally scheduled to occur on the last Saturday in July of 2020.

The Local Government Election Act, 2015 requires that elections be held in all even-numbered divisions within the province's 296 rural municipalities, to elect councillors for their first four-year election terms, on Wednesday, October 24, 2018.

Provincial Election Schedule

Provincial election cycles of four years' duration, with fixed general election dates, were legally enacted by the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly in 2008³.

Since that legislation came into effect, two provincial general elections have been held — the first fixed date election occurred on Monday, November 7, 2011, precisely four years following the previous general election of November 7, 2007. However, the most recent (28th) provincial election, originally scheduled by law to be held on Monday, November 2, 2015, was delayed by five months and held on Monday, April 4, 2016.

This delay was triggered by a legal provision related to preventing an overlap of election periods. Per section 8.1 of *The Legislative Assembly Act, 2007* for Saskatchewan, if a federal election is underway when a provincial election period is scheduled to occur, that provincial election is automatically re-scheduled to occur on the first Monday in April of the following year. However, no similar provision exists to accommodate any pending overlap with municipal elections.

While the potential requirement for an election delay was anticipated within the legislation that sets out fixed dates for provincial general elections, it is important to understand that “regular” election timing provisions automatically go back into effect following each such delay. *The Legislative Assembly Act, 2007* requires each subsequent provincial general election be held on the first Monday in November in the fourth calendar year following the **most recent** general election — meaning the date set for the next (29th) election is Monday, November 2, 2020.

Unless the next provincial election date is legally changed, the subsequent (30th) general election is scheduled to occur on Monday, November 4, 2024.

Federal Election Schedule

Federal general elections are also legally scheduled to occur on a fixed date every four years.⁴ Section 51.1 of the *Canada Elections Act* requires national elections to occur on the third Monday in October, in the fourth calendar year following the previous general election.

³ Saskatchewan Legislature Bill No. 4, *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2007*, received Royal Assent on April 28, 2008.

⁴ Canadian Parliament Bill C-16, *'An Act to Amend the Canada Elections Act'*, received Royal Assent on May 3, 2007.

Despite this law having been in effect since May 2007, only one federal general election has occurred on its scheduled fixed date — the most recent, held on Monday, October 19, 2015. The next federal general election is statutorily set to occur on Monday, October 21, 2019.

Timing of Canadian Public Elections

Since 2001, the Canadian federal level of government, and all provincial jurisdictions except Nova Scotia, have passed legislation fixing election dates. When legislation was being introduced in nine provinces and at the federal level, the policy reasons articulated in support of setting fixed dates focused on the need to ensure elections occur on a regular cycle, and underlined the importance of having the date for each forthcoming election be known with certainty by the public and all election stakeholders.

However, Canadian federal and provincial fixed date election legislation continues to provide the Governor General of Canada (on the advice of the Prime Minister of Canada) and the provincial Lieutenant Governors (on the advice of the relevant Premier) with the constitutional power to call a general election at any point before each fixed date. This power was amply demonstrated in the selected timing of both the October 2008 and May 2011 federal elections, as well as the Alberta election of May 2015. In each case, these elections occurred at least a full year ahead of their legally scheduled dates.

However, municipal elections across Canada do not feature any such discretion regarding their timing. This is because every province's legislation establishes a strict schedule as to when local government elections are to occur.⁵ Within this schedule, considerable variability exists across the country about the length of time permitted between municipal elections. Municipal elections can occur on the same date every two, three or four years depending on which province they are located in.

Public elections in Canada are traditionally not held (nor legally scheduled to occur) during the Summer or Winter months. During the Summer, it is difficult to conduct an effective political campaign, as many election participants, workers and voters consider it to be their vacation time. During the Winter months, the practical difficulties of campaigning and conducting the vote tends to make election logistics extremely challenging, and prevailing weather conditions can severely, and negatively, impact voter engagement and voting turnout levels.

Because of the perceived possibility of storms, flooding and highly unpredictable weather in the Spring, most scheduled election dates in Canada are set to occur in the Fall. Except for New Brunswick,⁶ all provinces schedule their municipal elections during the Fall season. Of the nine provinces with legally fixed election dates, all but

⁵ Municipal election timing across Canada is clearly presented in a chart available online at: https://www.muniscope.ca/research/municipal_facts/Elections/

⁶ Municipal elections in New Brunswick are scheduled to be held on the second Monday in May every four years.

three are scheduled during the Fall months.⁷ Federal general elections are scheduled to occur in the Fall as well.

Considerations for Changing Election Timing

To find a solution that addresses the problem of the overlap between Saskatchewan's scheduled provincial and municipal elections in the Fall of 2020, it is important to recognize that there are several legal constraints that limit the range of available options.

It is a constitutional requirement that a provincial election must be held, at a minimum, every five years. Section 4 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* states:

“. . . no legislative assembly shall continue for longer than five years from the date fixed for the return of the writs at a general election of its members.”

As a result, the next provincial election in Saskatchewan must be held not later than the end of April, 2021. This means that the currently scheduled provincial election date of November 2, 2020 cannot simply be moved to occur one year later to avoid the overlap with the scheduled municipal elections.

It is also important to understand that a federal election is legally scheduled to occur on Monday, October 21, 2019. This eliminates the possibility of rescheduling either the provincial or municipal elections to simply occur one year earlier, as this would only serve to produce a different type of election overlap.

In order to avoid an election period overlap in the Fall of 2020, it may be tempting to suggest a one-time legal exception that moves the 29th provincial general election to the Spring of 2020. However, doing so would simply result in recurring Fall municipal/provincial election schedule conflicts in 2024, 2028, 2032 and every four years thereafter. This is because the statutory schedule calls for provincial elections to be held on the first Monday in November in the fourth year following the most recent general election. If the provincial election is to be moved to the Spring of 2020, all subsequent provincial general elections should also be legislatively scheduled to be held in the Spring at four-year intervals to avoid future election overlaps.

What is clearly required is a public policy change which will correct the problem of scheduled election period overlaps between the three jurisdictional levels as effectively and permanently as possible within the existing legal framework.

⁷ British Columbia law requires provincial elections to occur every four years on the second Tuesday in May; Alberta law requires a provincial election to be held every four years between March 1 and May 31; Ontario recently changed their election dates with a 2016 legal amendment which now prescribes that Ontario provincial elections are to be held on the first Thursday in June every four years (instead of on the first Thursday in October, as previously required).

3.0 Three Solution Options

While other workable options certainly may exist, three clear alternatives were identified during analysis, each providing a potentially enduring solution. The details of specific timing within each of these options could certainly be modified, as the election dates indicated in the following schedule scenarios are meant to be illustrative of their general timing implications.

What follows is an explanation of each of the three identified options, a schedule per option regarding the associated election dates per jurisdiction over the next three electoral cycles, plus a list of the “pro” and “con” factors identified with each option:

Option 1 - Legislatively schedule all municipal elections to occur in the Spring every four years

One option is to amend *The Local Government Election Act, 2015*, modifying the date for municipal elections currently occurring in the Fall, and instead move them to the Spring. The 2020 urban, northern and odd-numbered rural division municipal elections could be moved to dates in either the Spring of 2020 or 2021, thereby eliminating the pending timing conflict with the provincial election.

Should it be decided to “bring forward” municipal elections from the Fall to the Spring of each currently scheduled municipal election year, the councilor elections in the even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities would need to move from Wednesday, October 24, 2018 to a selected date in the Spring of that year. To provide certainty regarding the date, it would be important that the public policy decision was announced and the legislative amendment process was completed well in advance of the 296 rural municipal elections (in even-numbered divisions) currently scheduled to occur in 2018.

Another possibility would be to extend each current municipal elected official’s term of office by approximately six months, and legally schedule all subsequent municipal elections to be “pushed back” and held on a fixed date in the Spring of the year following the currently scheduled election date.

If the schedule for Saskatchewan’s municipal elections were to be “brought forward” by six months to occur on the fourth Wednesday in April of the year in which they are currently scheduled, the dates of future municipal, provincial and federal elections for the next three electoral cycles would be as follows:

Year	Scheduled Election (if Municipal Elections “brought forward” six months)	Date
2018	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 25, 2018
2019	Federal election	Monday, October 21, 2019
2020	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 22, 2020

2020	Provincial election	Monday, November 2, 2020
2021	<i>No scheduled election</i>	
2022	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 27, 2022
2023	Federal election	Monday, October 16, 2023
2024	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 24, 2024
2024	Provincial election	Monday, November 4, 2024
2025	<i>No scheduled election</i>	
2026	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 22, 2026
2027	Federal election	Monday, October 18, 2027
2028	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 26, 2028
2028	Provincial election	Monday, November 6, 2028
2029	<i>No scheduled election</i>	

However, if the dates set for municipal elections were legislatively “pushed back” by six months to occur on the fourth Wednesday in April of the year following their current schedule, the dates for three cycles of future municipal, provincial and federal elections would be as follows:

Year	Scheduled Election (if Municipal Elections “pushed back” six months)	Date
2018	<i>No scheduled election</i>	
2019	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 24, 2019
2019	Federal election	Monday, October 21, 2019
2020	Provincial election	Monday, November 2, 2020
2021	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 28, 2021
2022	<i>No scheduled election</i>	
2023	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 26, 2023
2023	Federal election	Monday, October 16, 2023
2024	Provincial election	Monday, November 4, 2024
2025	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 23, 2025
2026	<i>No scheduled election</i>	
2027	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 28, 2027
2027	Federal election	Monday, October 18, 2027
2028	Provincial election	Monday, November 6, 2028
2029	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, April 25, 2029

The advantages and disadvantages of moving Saskatchewan municipal election dates to either the Spring before, or to the Spring following the year of their current four-year schedule are as follows:

OPTION 1	
PRO	CON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows the provincial election to occur on its “regular” early November schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disrupts a 4-year municipal election term transition process that is not yet complete and only started in 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates the requirement for two jurisdictions to compete for the same pool of workers, suppliers, voting locations etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring elections in rural municipalities (especially in late-April) may not be well-received by farming residents who may have seeding operations under way
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complicated communication regarding municipal election date changes (e.g. no change necessary for resort village election timing, but all others six months earlier/later)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features both the largest municipal election component, and the provincial election, occurring within a six-month period – potential for “voter fatigue” and reduced turnout in the provincial election
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential weather challenges with a Spring election

Option 2 - Legislatively schedule all provincial elections to occur in the Spring every four years

A second option is to amend *The Legislative Assembly Act, 2007* and make a modification to the scheduled dates for provincial general elections, having them occur in the Spring instead of the Fall every four years, starting with the Spring election that was held in 2016. This timing would be consistent with the four-year term intent of current legislation and would eliminate the pending timing conflict with municipal elections scheduled in the Fall of 2020.

If the provincial general election dates were to be moved to the first Monday in April, starting with a date four years following each most recent provincial election, the following three cycles of jurisdictional election dates would result:

Year	Scheduled Election (if Provincial Elections moved forward to occur in Spring every four years)	Date
2018	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 24, 2018
2019	Federal election	Monday, October 21, 2019
2020	Provincial election	Monday, April 6, 2020
2020	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 28, 2020
2021	<i>No scheduled election</i>	
2022	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 26, 2022
2023	Federal election	Monday, October 16, 2023
2024	Provincial election	Monday, April 1, 2024
2024	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 23, 2024
2025	<i>No scheduled election</i>	
2026	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 28, 2026
2027	Federal election	Monday, October 18, 2027
2028	Provincial election	Monday, April 3, 2028
2028	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 25, 2028
2029	<i>No scheduled election</i>	

The advantages and disadvantages of moving Saskatchewan’s provincial election dates to occur on the first Monday in April, every four years, are as follows:

OPTION 2	
PRO	CON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causes no disruption to the current transition of municipal election terms to four years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would see the October 2019 federal election followed by the provincial election in April 2020, and then followed with largest municipal election component election in October 2020 — all three elections occurring within one calendar year, produces considerable potential for “voter fatigue” and reduced turnout in the municipal elections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy to explain – four years since the last provincial election, and to continue to occur every four years going forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential weather challenges with every early Spring election

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates the possibility of a federal election overlap with a provincial election, should the federal level experience a one-year election delay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removes any future occurrence of “regular” Fall provincial elections, as was intended when fixed election date legislation was passed in 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates the requirement for two jurisdictions to compete for the same pool of workers, suppliers, voting locations etc. 	

Option 3 - Legislatively re-schedule the 29th provincial general election to occur in the Spring of 2021

Finally, a third option would be for the legislative assembly to pass a legal amendment to consciously make an exception to the current election schedule and set the date for the 29th general election to occur five years following the 28th provincial election. General elections thereafter would return to the previously established “regular” schedule of being held on the first Monday in November four years following the previous election. This approach would ensure that elections for each of the three jurisdictional levels of government were legislatively scheduled to be regularly held at the same time of year, but never within the same year.

Currently the 29th provincial general election date is set for November 2, 2020. Under the scenario presented within this option, the 29th Saskatchewan general election date would move five months to April 5, 2021. This would fully meet the constitutional requirement that no provincial legislature may sit for a period exceeding five years without holding an election of its members.

If the date for only the next scheduled provincial general election was to be legislatively moved to occur on the first Monday in April of 2021, but the schedule thereafter reverted to provincial elections being held on the first Monday in November every four years, the following three cycles of jurisdictional election dates would result:

Year	Scheduled Election (if 29th Provincial Election is delayed five months to the following Spring)	Date
2018	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 24, 2018
2019	Federal election	Monday, October 21, 2019
2020	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 28, 2020
2021	Provincial election	Monday, April 5, 2021
2022	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 26, 2022
2023	Federal election	Monday, October 21, 2023
2024	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 28, 2024
2025	Provincial election	Monday, November 7, 2025

2026	Local government election in even-numbered divisions of rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 28, 2026
2027	Federal election	Monday, October 18, 2027
2028	Local government election for northern municipalities, urban municipalities and reeves/odd-numbered divisions in rural municipalities	Wednesday, October 25, 2028
2029	Provincial election	Monday, November 5, 2029

The advantages and disadvantages of moving Saskatchewan’s 29th provincial election date to the first Monday in April of 2021, and thereafter revert to having subsequent elections scheduled on the first Monday in November every four years, are as follows:

OPTION 3	
PRO	CON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows provincial elections, after the 29th, to occur on their regular four-year schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results in a five-year term (instead of four years and seven months) for all currently elected MLAs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures that there is only one scheduled jurisdictional election in Saskatchewan per year, every year going forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will result in a four year and seven-month term for MLAs elected at the 29th general election (instead of usual four-year term)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not disrupt the municipal transition to four-year election terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential weather challenges during the Spring 2021 election
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permits elections, at all three jurisdictional levels, to be held at the same general time of year (Fall) but on alternating years, following the one “exception” of the 29th provincial general election 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates the requirement for two jurisdictions to compete for the same pool of workers, suppliers, voting locations etc. 	

4.0 Recommended Option

After careful consideration of the three options discussed above, the Chief Electoral Officer believes the third option presents the best available solution.

Moving the 29th provincial general election date by five months, from November 2, 2020 to April 5, 2021, is a relatively straightforward legislative and administrative change. The timing for provincial elections after 2021, on the first Monday in November every four years, provides more advantages, and fewer disadvantages, compared to the two other available options. In addition to avoiding scheduled election period overlaps, this option ensures that no two jurisdictions will have elections occurring in the same calendar year going forward. After 2021, it will ensure elections in Saskatchewan, for all three jurisdictional levels, are always held at the same time of year, but never in the same year.

Compared to modifying the election planning process for the many hundreds of separate municipal administrators and elected mayors, reeves and councillors, it would be much easier for Elections Saskatchewan and the provinces 61 MLAs to manage a change of provincial election timing. Preparations necessary for an election held in the Spring of 2021 instead of the Fall of 2020 are already well understood by elected Members, political parties and Elections Saskatchewan because of the five-month delay experienced with the 28th general election. That election was originally scheduled for November 2, 2015, but delayed until April 4, 2016.

Select municipal officials responsible for election management across the province have been consulted by the Chief Electoral Officer, and they are in unanimous agreement that a change of election dates is necessary to avoid the scheduled election overlap in 2020. They are also unanimous in expressing their preference that the provincial election date be the one that is moved instead of the newly implemented schedule of municipal elections at four-year intervals, for which the transition process is not yet fully completed.

5.0 Next Steps

Members of the provincial legislature, on both the Government and Opposition sides of the House, will need to be made aware of the Fall 2020 election timing overlap problem.

This discussion paper is meant to help policy makers understand the options available for its resolution and describes the logic that underlies the approach that the province's Chief Electoral Officer recommends as the most appropriate solution to best serve the public interest. That approach involves a five-month delay in the scheduling of the 29th provincial general election, followed by the resumption of the current statutory schedule where each subsequent provincial election will occur on the first Monday in November four years following the most recent election.

It is recognized that some legislators may ultimately disagree with this recommended option, which the Chief Electoral Officer chose for reasons based purely on administrative and public participation factors. The Members' debate on whether it would be politically prudent to move municipal elections, or permanently move provincial elections to the Spring every four years, or develop some other type of solution option, is not one that the non-partisan Chief Electoral Officer will or should become involved with.

After an agreed resolution to the 2020 election overlap problem is determined by Members of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enabling legislation will need to be passed into law. If the resulting legislative amendment affects the timing of currently scheduled rural municipal elections, set to be held in October of 2018, the intent of the new law should be announced at the earliest opportunity and a Bill should be introduced before the end of the Legislative Assembly's Fall session in 2017.

Once the legislative amendment has been passed, the consequential changes to the scheduled dates of provincial or municipal elections need to be effectively communicated to all affected electoral stakeholders. This includes voters, elected municipal representatives, potential municipal and provincial candidates, political parties, municipal election administrators, and provincial media outlets.