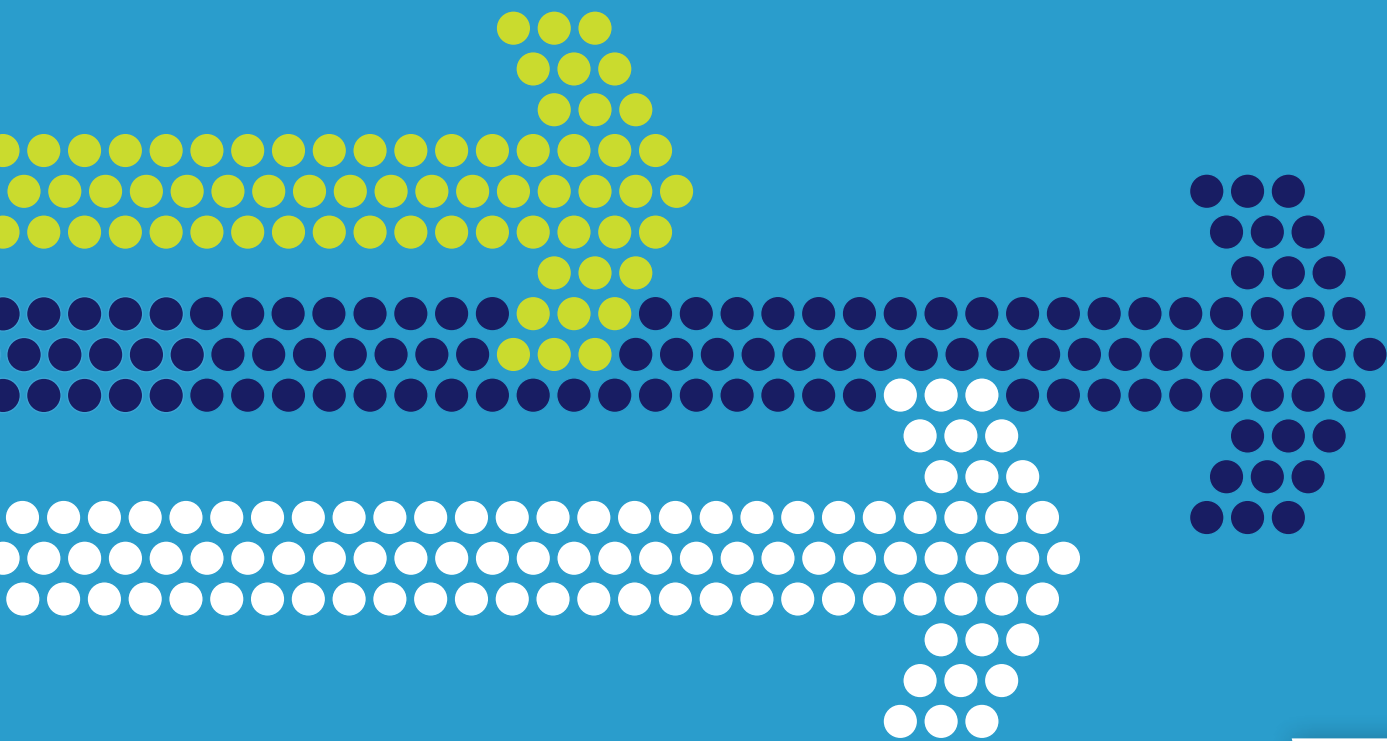


A REPORT ON THE THIRTIETH GENERAL ELECTION

VOLUME IV

Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform





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VOLUME IV - CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER'S
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE REFORM
(v1.0)



October 30, 2025

The Honourable Todd Goudy
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Room 129, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Mr. Speaker:

Pursuant to *The Election Act, 1996*, I am honoured to submit Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform, Volume IV in *A Report on the Thirtieth General Election*.

This volume offers the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations on how electoral legislation can be changed to more effectively serve voters, registered political parties, and other key stakeholders throughout Saskatchewan.

Respectfully submitted,

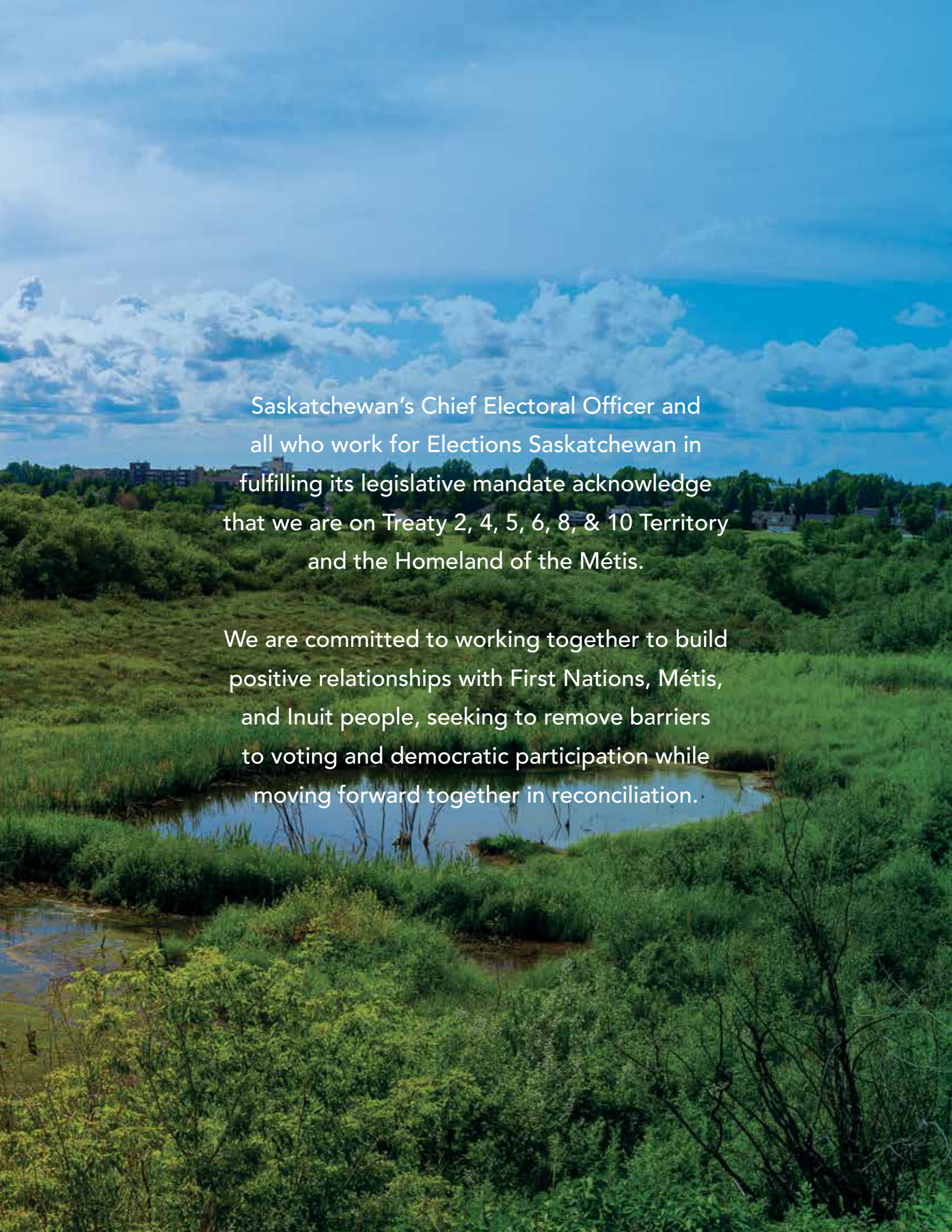
A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Michael D. Boda'.

Michael Boda, D.Phil., Ph.D.
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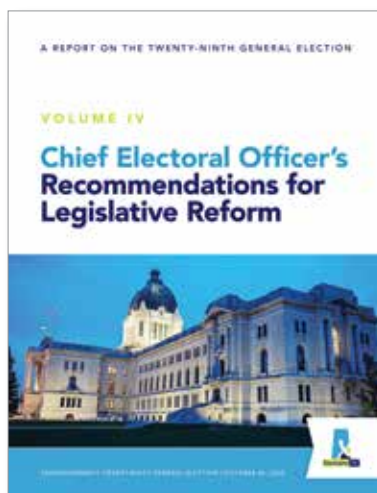
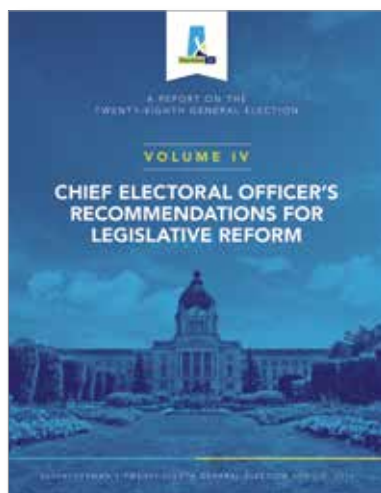


Saskatchewan's Chief Electoral Officer and
all who work for Elections Saskatchewan in
fulfilling its legislative mandate acknowledge
that we are on Treaty 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, & 10 Territory
and the Homeland of the Métis.

We are committed to working together to build
positive relationships with First Nations, Métis,
and Inuit people, seeking to remove barriers
to voting and democratic participation while
moving forward together in reconciliation.



Executive Summary



..... 2016 2020 2024

Following Saskatchewan's 28th General Election in 2016, the Chief Electoral Officer laid out a three-phase vision that would substantially update the province's system of administering elections. Successive series of legislative change recommendations would be made before elections in 2020, 2024, and 2028.

This current document, *A Report on the Thirtieth General Election, Volume IV: Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform*, fulfils the third and final phase, proposing improvements in advance of 2028. For a retelling of phases one and two and improvements made in advance of 2020 and 2024, see Chapter 3.¹

The vision presented herein for Saskatchewan's 31st General Election in 2028 is one of incremental improvement, building on the gains made in the past two elections. Elections Saskatchewan will continue to broaden access

to the ballot while still maintaining the necessary trust and integrity upon which our democratic system relies.

A key principle underlying the approach the Chief Electoral Officer has taken regarding his legislative change recommendations, and will continue to take, is the need for increased flexibility and a transition away from overly prescriptive legislation. In many Canadian jurisdictions, this flexibility has been provided by allowing Chief Electoral Officers to modify legislation using written tools that meet a set of legislated requirements. In Saskatchewan, this

¹ Both of the Chief Electoral Officer's previous Volume IV reports, outlining his legislative recommendations following the province's 2016 and 2020 elections, can be found on the Elections Saskatchewan's website at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications/>.

authority, which provides far greater flexibility and a solution to legislative prescriptiveness, is exercised using Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Directives.

During Saskatchewan’s 2024 election, the Chief Electoral Officer moved forward with a number of initiatives through CEO Directives. These were:

- the introduction of Voting Week, a unified voting period transitioning away from separate “advance” and “election day” voting opportunities;
- the use of electronic poll books in many constituencies and improved paper forms in constituencies where the use of technology was not feasible;
- a centralized Vote by Mail option, including the ability for voters to apply online and request a ballot kit;
- larger and more flexible Polling Division arrangements, allowing for greater efficiency in arranging groups of voters; and
- a centralized process for counting Hospital, Remand, and Temporarily Displaced (HRT) votes that reduced the transport of ballots around the province.

Given that all of the items introduced by CEO Directive in 2024 have proven to be successful, the Chief Electoral Officer is recommending that they be incorporated within *The Election Act, 1996* (the Act) as permanent amendments. Within the text of this document, they are referred to as **Category 1** changes. More information on Category 1 changes can be found in Chapter 4.

Category 2 changes are additional CEO Directives that the Chief Electoral Officer proposes to bring forward before the end of the second session of the current 30th Legislative Assembly. While CEO Directives do not need to pass through the Assembly, they must be approved by the Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) for use during a general election. There are two principal Category 2 changes proposed within these pages. The first would introduce a new voting option called Telephone Voting to increase accessibility to the voting process and bridge a longstanding gap between the end of the Vote by Mail application period and in-person voting to address the needs of certain voters. A second Category 2 change would significantly modify the current audit requirements for candidate election expense returns, simplifying the process while maintaining principles of legislative compliance and

transparency. Additional details on Category 2 changes can also be found in Chapter 4.

The final set of changes, or **Category 3** changes, describe amendments to the Act that are smaller in scale than Category 1 changes. Due to their scale, they do not demand the kind of testing required for Category 1 and 2 changes (typically facilitated by CEO Directive). The Chief Electoral Officer therefore suggests that the items found in this third category simply be incorporated as changes to the Act. Descriptions are provided in Chapter 5, with further details and suggested language included in Appendix B.

There is a limited amount of time between provincial elections. Legislative certainty allows Elections Saskatchewan to achieve operational certainty, a critical element of planning for the next event. With that in mind, and recognizing the established timelines the Legislative Assembly follows in putting forward and passing legislation, the Chief Electoral Officer has finalized Volume IV with the following timeline in mind:

Oct 2025	Tabling of <i>Volume IV: Recommendations for Legislative Change</i>
Oct–Dec 2025	Introduction of Bill, inclusive of CEO Directives accepted for 2024 provincial election (Category 1) and smaller changes proposed in Chapter 5 (Category 3)
May 2026	Passage of Bill, inclusive of Category 1 and Category 3 changes
May 2026	Submission to BOIE of new CEO Directives recommended for use in 2028 provincial election (Category 2)
Jun 2026	BOIE Agreement on new CEO Directives proposed in Category 2
Jun 2027 (or prior)	Potential additional CEO Directives based on lessons learned during election planning

This Volume not only sets the stage for the successful delivery of the next provincial election in 2028, but also represents the final phase of the three-phase plan first put forward by the Chief Electoral Officer following the province’s 2016 election. Should legislators agree with the recommendations, Saskatchewan’s system of delivering elections will continue to improve, offering broader access to voters while maintaining trust, integrity, and public confidence.



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CHAPTER ONE

Reporting on the General Election: Four Volumes

For more than 100 years, Saskatchewan’s provincial elections remained essentially unchanged. From the province’s first election in December 1905 until its 29th General Election in October 2020, voters had a brief opportunity each election to exercise their democratic rights at a single, assigned location. Stacks of paper, unpredictable wait times, and thousands of pencils were the hallmarks of the voting experience. Due to the system’s limitations, voter convenience was not, and could not be, a priority. That changed in 2024.

Saskatchewan’s 30th General Election, held on October 28, featured several improvements designed to make voting easier, quicker, and more accessible. Successful implementation of these changes led to an election marked by the broadest voter access in Saskatchewan’s history, all while safeguarding and strengthening the integrity of the province’s democratic system.

Elections Saskatchewan began laying the groundwork for the province’s 30th General Election shortly after the completion of the 29th General Election in October 2020. Its 2023–2025 strategic plan, *Service. Integrity. Innovation. Expanding Electoral Excellence in Saskatchewan*, outlined a focused and deliberate strategy to honour and uphold stakeholder confidence while improving voting methods.¹ Collaborative leadership and a strong focus on best practices were central to the plan.

Elections Saskatchewan’s 2023–2025 Vision

We are a collaborative leader in establishing and refining best practices in election management in Canada.

Strategic Imperative

Saskatchewan’s 30th General Election is modernized and positively perceived by stakeholders.

The updated strategic plan also underscored Elections Saskatchewan’s five core values:

- Integrity
- Impartiality
- Dedication
- Innovation
- Service

¹ Elections Saskatchewan. *Service. Integrity. Innovation. Expanding Electoral Excellence in Saskatchewan: A Strategic Plan for Elections Saskatchewan, 2023–2025* (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, April 2023) (“Expanding Electoral Excellence”). Elections Saskatchewan’s past and present strategic plans are available online at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/strategic-planning/>.

Expanding Electoral Excellence came to fruition in the 30th General Election, in which Elections Saskatchewan successfully improved service to voters while maintaining the integrity of its voting system. For the first time, Saskatchewan's provincial election featured a "Voting Week" of six full days of voting, resulting in 56 hours of in-person voting spread over six days: the longest voting window in the history of the province. Those who could not vote in person had improved opportunities to vote by mail, and homebound voting was made available to those who could not leave their house due to a disability.

Elections Saskatchewan was also able to broaden access through the careful deployment of modernized elements, such as the use of electronic poll books in more than half of provincial constituencies. The team carefully considered the realities of election administration in Saskatchewan to improve service throughout all regions of the province: for example, constituencies without the infrastructure to support electronic poll books were served with redesigned forms that eliminated significant amounts of repetition and handwriting. The result was an exceptionally organized and well-run election.

The story of Saskatchewan's 30th General Election will be told over the course of four volumes, each providing different insight into the successes and challenges involved in planning for, organizing, and implementing one of the largest events in the history of the province. Together, these four volumes will constitute **A Report on the Thirtieth General Election**:

- **Volume I – Statement of Votes** (published May 2025) provided data surrounding public participation in the 2024 electoral event. It collated information to provide a richer understanding of voting trends in the province. Volume I included information on candidates, registered political parties, historical data, and voting station by station results.
- **Volume II – An Administrative Review** (published October 2025) offered a detailed look at how the 30th General Election was conducted. The volume looked at two sides of the electoral event. First, it focused on how the electoral event was conducted based on in-person observations of voting throughout Voting Week and of other key activities, including vote counting. Second, the volume incorporated stakeholder perceptions, drawing conclusions from surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other sources of data.

- **Volume III – Statement of Expenditures** will capture and provide context for the four-year costs of the event. Such costs are incurred years in advance of the election and continue to be accumulated well after voting ends. This volume will look at spending related to reimbursements given to eligible registered political parties and candidates (established within *The Election Act, 1996*) and will provide the total cost of administering the 30th General Election in 61 constituencies.
- **Volume IV – Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform** (current volume) considers what has been learned over the course of the 30th electoral cycle in order to position the province—its voters, political parties, candidates, and provincial election management body—to conduct a successful 31st General Election. Volume IV has been published following a thorough review and assessment of how the 30th General Election was conducted, considering best practice and changes in electoral administration across the country. This volume offers the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations on legislative amendments to continue broadening access to voting while serving stakeholders more effectively.

While the publication of this four-volume report will fulfil the Chief Electoral Officer's statutory duty outlined in *The Election Act 1996*, its intent goes well beyond this. It will offer detailed information on election participation, finances, and conduct. It will put forward an in-depth review and assessment of Elections Saskatchewan's administration of the election before, during, and after voting took place. Finally, it will offer legislators a roadmap to continue broadening voter access and making Saskatchewan's election system work for all.

By shining a light on all aspects of the election system, Elections Saskatchewan seeks to equip legislators, registered political parties, and other key stakeholders to strengthen the democratic system that will serve the province for decades to come.



Michael D. Boda, D. Phil., Ph.D.
Chief Electoral Officer
Province of Saskatchewan



784,000

Number of Voter Information Cards
mailed in 2024

14,000

Number of Voter Information Cards
emailed in 2024

4,870

Number of Voter Information Cards
sent by SMS text in 2024

Election Overview

This chapter provides an overview of Saskatchewan's 30th General Election. It covers events leading up to the election, including Elections Saskatchewan's efforts to broaden access to voting.

The Election Overview also includes details on the call of the election, voter registration activities, and key dates in the election calendar. It provides summary information on registered political parties and candidates and the various ways voters could cast their ballots.

This chapter also provides general information regarding the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for legislative reform, arising from experience gained and lessons learned through the administration of the 30th General Election. Details of those recommendations are outlined in the following chapters and appendices of this volume.

Background

Saskatchewan's 30th General Election was held throughout October 2024, with Voting Week running from October 22 through 28.

The election was held in 61 constituencies throughout the province, each electing a member to the Legislative Assembly through a first-past-the-post (or single member plurality) electoral system. At the time of the election, the estimated population of Saskatchewan was 1,250,761 and Elections

Saskatchewan, working with Statistics Canada, estimated that there were 829,884 eligible voters in the province.

Broadening Access

Saskatchewan's 30th General Election featured several improvements designed to make voting easier, quicker, and more accessible, with the goal of reducing barriers to participation and broadening voter access. This was accomplished through the continued modernization of the province's system for administering voting, a multi-phase, multi-election plan that has been underway for nearly 10 years.¹

Election administration can often be restricted by overly prescriptive legislation, and Saskatchewan is no exception. *The Election Act, 1996* (the Act) provides detailed instructions on how voting should be conducted in this province. However, the Act also provides the ability for the Chief Electoral Officer to put forward alternate procedures, equipment, and technology that vary from those legislated instructions. These modifications are made through "CEO Directives," which must be approved by the Board of Internal Economy to be implemented during a general

¹ The Chief Electoral Officer first introduced a three-phase plan for modernizing Saskatchewan's system for conducting elections in Volume IV of *A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election: Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform* (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, April 2018). Full reports on all elections from 2007 onward are available on Elections Saskatchewan's website at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications>.

election.² Directives provide a valuable opportunity for Elections Saskatchewan to test new procedures, equipment, and technology within strictly controlled parameters, offering valuable information on the viability of a chosen approach. Once a modification has proven effective during a general election, the Chief Electoral Officer can better consider whether it should be included as a legislative change recommendation. Legislators, in turn, have data and information on how a proposed change will impact voters, candidates, and other stakeholders.

Following a series of communications between the Chief Electoral Officer and the Board of Internal Economy, five CEO Directives were approved on December 5, 2023, for implementation during the 30th General Election. The directives were designed to broaden access to the ballot, reduce the number of election workers needed, and improve the administration of the election, as follows:

- Polling Divisions (CEO Directive 2023-009): Directed changes to the traditional use of geographic sub-regions and allowed larger numbers of voters to be assigned to specific areas and voting stations than the 300-person limit outlined in the Act.
- Polling Period (CEO Directive 2023-010): Authorized a transition away from distinct advance and Election Day voting periods toward a unified, six-day Voting Week.
- Electronic Poll Books/Voting Record (CEO Directive 2023-011): Introduced technology to make it faster and easier to process an increased number of voters while enabling real time data sharing with political stakeholders. Also implemented the “voting record” form and modified the traditional duties of the poll clerk. Electronic poll books were used in 34 of the province’s 61 constituencies, consisting of the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, and Swift Current, and the constituencies of the Battlefords and Martensville-Blairmore.
- Vote by Mail (CEO Directive 2023-014): Continued use of the centralized Vote by Mail process developed for Saskatchewan’s 29th General Election, held on October 26, 2020, and used in subsequent by-elections. Also introduced the “Second Preliminary Count,” held two days after the last day of voting.
- HRT Counting (CEO Directive 2023-018): Amended vote counting procedures to allow for a central count of hospital, remand, and temporarily displaced voter ballots alongside remaining Vote by Mail ballots that were counted at the Final Count.

Volume II of this Report contained a thorough assessment of the impact of these changes on voting and vote counting in the 2024 election. The current volume translates those observations into recommendations for legislators to consider in advance of the province’s next election.

Constituency Boundaries

The provincial constituency boundaries in place for Saskatchewan’s 30th General Election were enacted with the dissolution of the 29th Legislative Assembly in accordance with *The Representation Act, 2022*. These boundaries were established based on the recommendations of the Saskatchewan Boundaries Commission, 2022, as established under *The Constituency Boundaries Act, 1993*. There are 61 provincial constituencies.

Maps for individual constituencies are included with constituency results in Chapter 9 of Volume I of this Report. Additional maps, including a provincial map and composite maps of urban areas, are available in Chapter 13 of Volume I.

In Saskatchewan, constituency boundaries are reviewed and adjusted every 10 years based on the census population of the province. The next provincial boundary commission is scheduled to form early in 2032.

Voter Registration

Saskatchewan’s 30th General Election was the province’s second general election with a Permanent Register of Voters (PRV) in place. The PRV was created using data collected in advance of and during the province’s 28th General Election held in 2016. Prior to that, a door-to-door enumeration was necessary before every election. The PRV is updated regularly via data exchange agreements with Elections Canada and eHealth.

While the PRV is maintained primarily through these regular updates, Elections Saskatchewan also undertook proactive voter registration activities throughout the election cycle. One key activity was “Voter Registration Month,” which launched in May 2023 and occurred again in May 2024. During Voter

² See *The Election Act, 1996*, sections 5.2 through 5.6 for more information.

Registration Month, Elections Saskatchewan promoted the importance of voter registration through paid advertising, social media posts, and media engagement. Elections Saskatchewan also promoted voter registration through activities such as sending birthday cards to Saskatchewan residents on or around their 18th birthday, encouraging them to add their name to the province’s voters list.

In advance of an election, Elections Saskatchewan sends Voter Information Cards (VICs) to all registered voters in the province. VICs include important information on where and when to vote as well as what ID is needed to cast a ballot. More than 784,000 VICs were mailed in October 2024, along with more than 14,400 by email and just over 4,870 by SMS text message.

Issuance of Writs of Election

On October 1, 2024, Saskatchewan’s 29th Legislature was dissolved pursuant to section 6 of *The Legislative Assembly Act, 2007* by the Honourable Russ Mirasty, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. Later that day, an order was passed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council directing the Chief Electoral Officer to issue a writ of election to each of the province’s 61 Returning Officers.

At dissolution, standing in the Legislative Assembly were 42 Saskatchewan Party MLAs, 14 New Democratic Party (NDP) MLAs, one Saskatchewan United Party MLA, and three independent MLAs. One constituency, Saskatoon Northwest, was vacant when the election was called.

Key Election Dates	
October 1	Writs of election issued
October 12	Nomination deadline
October 19	Last day to apply to Vote by Mail or as a homebound voter
October 22–26 & 28	Voting Week
October 28	Last day of voting and First Preliminary Count
October 30	Second Preliminary Count
November 9	Final Count
November 20	Return of the writs

Provincial Political Parties

Seven registered political parties fielded candidates in Saskatchewan’s 30th General Election. Pursuant to section 231 of the Act, the Chief Electoral Officer recognized the following parties in the register of political parties:

- Buffalo Party of Saskatchewan
- New Democratic Party, Sask. Section
- Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Green Party
- Saskatchewan Party
- Saskatchewan Progress Party
- Saskatchewan United Party

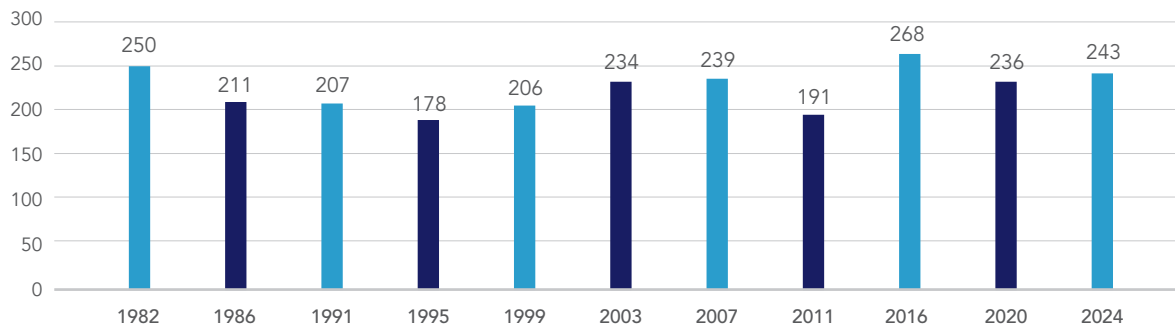
Candidate Nomination

The candidate nomination period ended at 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 12. At the close of nominations, 243 candidates had been nominated.

Registered Political Party	# of Candidates
Buffalo Party	16
New Democratic Party (NDP)	61
PC Party of Saskatchewan	11
Saskatchewan Green Party	58
Saskatchewan Party	61
Saskatchewan Progress Party	3
Saskatchewan United Party	31
Independent	2
Total	243



Nominated Candidates – 1982 to 2024



Overview of Voting in Saskatchewan's 30th General Election

This section contains information on all the voting opportunities available in Saskatchewan's 30th General Election. The key transition in the election was the movement to a Voting Week rather than separating Election Day from the advance voting period. To ensure that all voters had access to the ballot, regardless of circumstances, Voting Week was supplemented by Vote by Mail and a number of other Special Voting opportunities addressed in detail below.

Note that the transition to a unified Voting Week and away from a division between Election Day and advance voting periods means that data from the 30th General Election does not correspond exactly to data from previous elections. Throughout Volumes I to IV of this Report, it is noted where this shift has impacted the ability to make meaningful comparisons between current and historical election data.

Voting Week

The 30th General Election featured Saskatchewan's first transition from separate Election Day and advance voting periods to a unified Voting Week. The change, made possible through a CEO Directive, was designed to broaden access to the ballot, place the voter at the centre of the system, and allow people to vote at a time that worked for them rather than a specific date and time set by Elections Saskatchewan. A key communications goal was to help voters understand that they could vote at any point during the week, and to encourage them to do so rather than waiting until their very last opportunity.

Voting Week began on Tuesday, October 22. From October 22 through Saturday, October 26, voting took place from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., an increase of one hour per day from the province's 2020 election and two hours per day over the 2016 election. On the last day of voting, October 28, voting stations were open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Voting paused to update voting records and lists on Sunday, October 27, ensuring readiness for the last day of voting at all locations that did not use electronic poll books.

For the first five days of Voting Week, there were 303 voting locations open to serve voters. During those five days, voters could cast their ballot at any location in their constituency. On the last day of voting, all voters were assigned to a specific location. In urban locations that used electronic poll books, the same voting locations were used for all six days of Voting Week. In rural constituencies, an additional 413 voting locations were added on the last day of voting to ensure that no voter had to travel more than 30 minutes to cast a ballot.

Vote by Mail (VBM)

Before 2020, voting by mail (also called absentee voting) was a very small component of Saskatchewan's provincial elections. During Saskatchewan's 28th General Election in 2016, for example, a total of 4,420 absentee votes were recorded (one percent of all votes cast), including both mail-in ballots and votes cast directly in the Returning Office.

In 2020, during the province's 29th General Election, the volume of voters interested in voting by mail increased

greatly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To account for this, the Chief Electoral Officer opted to replace traditional absentee voting with a centralized and updated Vote by Mail process. An online application portal was created whereby voters could apply, upload the necessary identification documents, and complete the entire request process. In 2020, more than 56,000 voters used Vote by Mail. This constituted 12.7 percent of all votes cast in that election.

In 2024, the Chief Electoral Officer again opted for a centralized Vote by Mail process authorized by CEO Directive. Elections Saskatchewan's online Vote by Mail portal was opened for applications in early June and remained open until the application period closed on Saturday, October 19. Due to the timelines and the relatively short period available to administer the Vote by Mail process, a "write in" (or "Form B") ballot was provided as part of each Vote by Mail package. Voters could write in the name of the candidate they wished to vote for, or the name of the registered political party or leader of the party they wished to vote for.

While Vote by Mail was available to all voters, it was particularly valuable for specific groups. Seniors residing in independent living facilities were a primary audience, as these facilities frequently housed individuals who might have found it difficult to vote at their assigned location. To facilitate participation by this population, Elections Saskatchewan gathered data on more than 250 independent living buildings in the province, including information on the number of residents in each building and the existence of common areas where voting information could be displayed. Beginning in mid-summer, Elections Saskatchewan delivered outreach materials to each of these facilities explaining how to apply for a Vote by Mail package. Follow-up assistance was provided as needed.

In the end, 26,388 Vote by Mail votes were counted, about 5.6 percent of all votes cast. With the exception of the election held during the COVID-19 pandemic, this was significantly higher than the number or percentage of absentee (mail-in) ballots in any other election in the province's history.

Special Voting

By legislation, Special Voting refers to all voting opportunities that take place outside of traditional Election

Day voting. In practice, however, Special Voting refers more specifically to voting that takes place outside of standard in-person voting and Vote by Mail. Special Voting opportunities help ensure that every voter has an opportunity to cast a ballot, regardless of circumstances. Elections Saskatchewan administers Special Voting opportunities working closely with outside agencies such as Correctional Services Canada; the Saskatchewan Health Authority; and the provincial ministries of Health, Social Services, and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

During Saskatchewan's 30th General Election, Special Voting options included homebound voting, personal care facility voting, and voting in hospitals and remand centres. While legislation also provides Special Voting options for voters temporarily displaced due to fires, floods, or other emergencies, no polls were required for this purpose in 2024.

Homebound Voting

Homebound voting was introduced in 2016 in advance of Saskatchewan's 28th General Election on the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer. This option was available to voters who were unable to vote in person due to a medical condition or disability, or due to caring for an individual with a medical condition or disability. During that election, 574 voters cast their ballot without leaving their home. Voters were served by a team of two election officials who visited the voter at their home with a ballot and a ballot box and completed the voting process. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for election officials to visit voters in their homes, so homebound voting was offered as a form of Vote by Mail.

In 2024, homebound voting was once again offered in its original form, along with an additional approach informally referred to as "mobile homebound voting." Mobile homebound voting was offered when a high volume of individuals residing in the same building applied for homebound voting. In these cases, Elections Saskatchewan provided both a central voting station in the building and the option of visiting voters in their individual units.

Voting in Personal Care Facilities, Hospitals, and Remand Centres

Elections Saskatchewan works closely with outside agencies to offer in-person Special Voting opportunities in personal care facilities, hospitals, and remand centres.

The efficiencies and changes introduced through CEO Directives (such as the use of electronic poll books, the voting record, and larger polling divisions) meant that a much smaller number of election workers were needed to administer voting.

As defined in the Act, personal care facilities can be operated by the Saskatchewan Health Authority, licensed by the Ministry of Health, or overseen by the Ministry of Social Services. In the 30th General Election, voting was offered in 369 personal care facilities from October 22 to October 26, 2024.

In-person Special Voting was available in hospitals and remand centres on the final day of voting, October 28. This option was available to eligible voters who were being held in remand or were patients in hospital on that day. These voters received the Form B write in ballot form (also used for the Vote by Mail process) so their vote could be counted in the constituency where they normally resided. Voting was offered in 68 hospitals and remand centres throughout the province.

Vote Counting

Shifts in Saskatchewan's election administration over the past two election cycles have resulted in changes to how votes are counted.

Until 2020, Saskatchewan's traditional model for counting votes saw all Election Day, advance voting, and personal care facility votes counted after voting ended on election night. The remaining absentee, hospital, remand, and temporarily displaced votes were counted at the Final Count, 12 days after Election Day. All votes were counted in the field, either in voting locations or in constituency Returning Offices.

In 2020, due to a significant increase in Vote by Mail (i.e., absentee) ballots, the Chief Electoral Officer opted to introduce changes to ensure greater certainty and faster results for candidates, political parties, and the general public. During that election, the vote count on Election Day was referred to as the First Preliminary Count. A new count,

called the Second Preliminary Count, was held two days later and included most Vote by Mail ballots. This count was conducted centrally in Regina, and updated results were announced throughout the two days it took to count these ballots. The Final Count was held 12 days after Election Day, as required by legislation. During the Final Count, all the remaining Vote by Mail ballots were included, along with hospital, remand, and temporarily displaced voter ballots. With the conclusion of the Final Count, the results of the 2020 election became official.

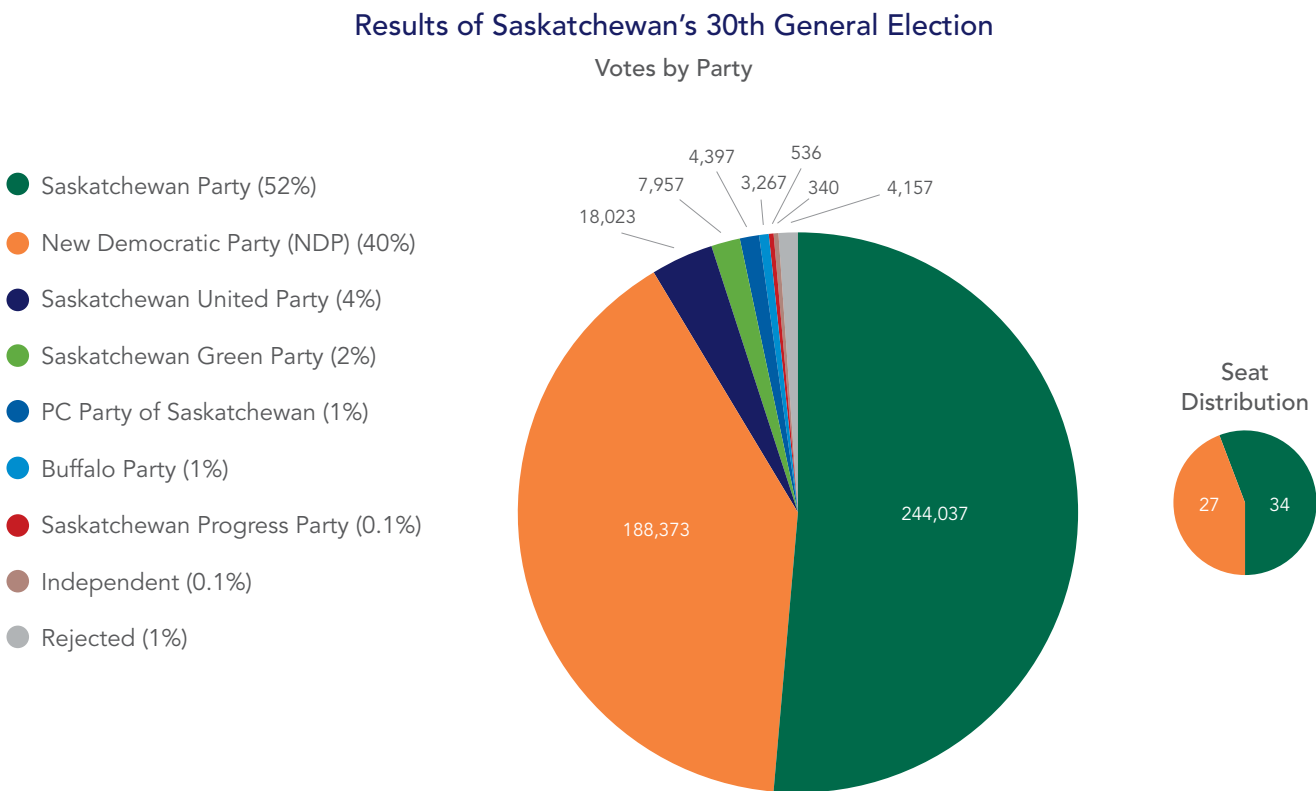
This same model was adopted in 2024: a First Preliminary Count held immediately after voting concluded, a Second Preliminary Count two days later, and a Final Count 12 days after the election. However, continued changes to election administration resulted in two additional modifications to vote counting processes.

The first change to the method of vote counting in 2024 flowed out of the introduction of electronic poll books at many voting locations. The efficiencies and changes introduced through CEO Directives (such as the use of electronic poll books, the voting record, and larger polling divisions) meant that a much smaller number of election workers were needed to administer voting. However, this would mean fewer workers available to count ballots once voting concluded, challenging the ability to deliver results in a timely fashion. Elections Saskatchewan addressed this by deploying additional teams of election workers whose only job was to assist with the counting of ballots. A total of 135 Count Teams were deployed to voting locations where the number of votes cast necessitated the extra assistance. More information on the use of Count Teams and their effectiveness is outlined in Chapter 4 of this Volume.

The second change to counting procedures was to include hospital, remand, and temporarily displaced votes in the central count held during the Final Count. Traditionally, the ballot boxes containing these votes had been shipped from each Returning Office to Elections Saskatchewan's head office. The ballot boxes were opened at head office, then the votes were sorted by constituency and sealed into new ballot boxes. Finally, these new boxes were shipped to the appropriate Returning Office and counted by the Returning Officer during the Final Count. During this past election, the Chief Electoral Officer issued a CEO Directive simplifying this process by permitting these votes to be counted only at the Final Count, along with the Vote by Mail ballots.

Election Results

After the Final Count, 34 Saskatchewan Party and 27 New Democratic Party (NDP) members were declared elected.



Overview of Proposed Legislative Reforms

The past decade has seen a transformation in how elections are delivered across the country. It has been perhaps the greatest era of electoral innovation in Canada's history, with technology and improved procedures broadening access to the ballot and strengthening system integrity and security. These valuable, timely, and necessary shifts followed a long era of stasis, in which voting remained essentially unchanged for most of the country's history. As a result of that inflexible approach, Canadian elections—including those in Saskatchewan—were increasingly failing to meet the needs of the twenty-first century voter.

Under Saskatchewan's traditional model of voting, every constituency's Returning Officer hired a small army of

election officials, most of whom worked one extremely long day implementing antiquated, paper-based processes unchanged by the advent of computers and information technology. A voting station was characterized by pencils, rulers, and stacks of paper, without a hint of the technological advancements made in the late twentieth (let alone the twenty-first) century.

This was not all bad. The paper ballot remains a secure, trusted way of voting that is likely to remain in use in Saskatchewan for many years to come. However, the traditional model failed to take advantage of a wide range of technological advances—from digital tools to revamped processes—that could significantly improve the administrative procedures surrounding the paper ballot.



This volume presents a vision of incremental improvement for Saskatchewan's 31st General Election, continuing to build on the gains made in the past two election cycles. If approved by the Legislative Assembly, this vision will broaden access to the ballot while maintaining the trust and integrity upon which the system depends.

By ignoring these available resources, the traditional model excluded several major opportunities to increase the system's security and integrity, improve access for voters, and strengthen trust in our democratic processes.

That traditional model is now undergoing a gradual but significant process of modernization. The coming election, scheduled for October 2028, represents the culmination of the Chief Electoral Officer's three-phase plan to implement a more secure, accessible, trusted election administration system. In this volume, the Chief Electoral Officer outlines recommendations for legislative changes designed to embed known improvements in the system, apply the knowledge gained through the modernization process, and complete the transformation of election administration in Saskatchewan.

The Vision: Saskatchewan's Election Administration in 2028

Following the 2016 election, the Chief Electoral Officer released *A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election, Volume IV: Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform* (referred to as "Volume IV (28th GE)"). Volume IV (28th GE) offered a vision for the future of Saskatchewan's provincial elections, outlining a series of recommended changes to be implemented over the following decade. The vision was designed to culminate in a significantly improved approach to election administration by Saskatchewan's 31st General Election in 2028.

The recommendations outlined in this current volume are aligned with that long-term vision for improved election administration, enabling smooth, efficient administration and the broadest voter access in the province's history. Should legislators agree with these recommendations, voters in Saskatchewan's 31st General Election in 2028 should experience a system increasingly aligned with their needs and wants, with fewer bureaucratic restrictions. There will be increased opportunities to vote, with expanded options for voters facing accessibility challenges. Electronic poll books will be used in a broader range of constituencies, offering faster service to voters, less time waiting in line, and a more efficient, streamlined process. The increased use of technology and redesigned processes will also improve the working experience for election workers, keeping them fresher and able to provide better service due to more frequent breaks and perhaps the option to work in shifts. In the long term, this will result in more workers returning in future election cycles, preserving knowledge and building toward a true "electoral service" for Saskatchewan. Greater workforce efficiency means not only hiring fewer workers, but also making better use of the workers that are hired and improving their working conditions.

Political stakeholders will continue to benefit from the presence of technology in voting locations, receiving real-time voter strike-off information that greatly assists their "get out the vote" efforts. The recommendations also support improvement of overall system integrity: voters struck off in one location will be struck off simultaneously in other locations through the use of technology, helping to prevent any individual from casting more than one ballot. Refined manual procedures will also support this outcome by quickly communicating updates to voting locations without full technology access.

This volume presents a vision of incremental improvement for Saskatchewan's 31st General Election, continuing to build on the gains made in the past two election cycles. If approved by the Legislative Assembly, this vision will broaden access to the ballot while maintaining the trust and integrity upon which the system depends. It will serve as the capstone of the three-phase plan first put forward following the province's 28th General Election in 2016.

Saskatchewan's traditional model for delivering elections was first implemented in the United Kingdom in the early nineteenth century. It was successful and reliable in its time,

serving the province well for more than 100 years. Now, however, the ubiquitous presence and impact of modern technology means that voters and political stakeholders expect more. By retaining the strengths of the paper ballot while also drawing on relevant, secure technology, Saskatchewan can move forward ensuring that its election administration system meets the expectations of voters, candidates, and political parties.

Proactively Managing Risks and Costs

One of the main drivers of electoral modernization in Saskatchewan and throughout Canada has been the need to manage both risk and cost by reducing the number of temporary workers required to administer an election. In both 2016 and 2020, Elections Saskatchewan hired around 11,000 workers, most of whom worked for only one day.

In 2024, Elections Saskatchewan successfully reduced that number to about 4,500, a decrease of nearly 60 percent. Moving forward, Elections Saskatchewan expects to require fewer than half of the workers it used to employ for an election. Election administrators across Canada have struggled in recent years to recruit enough workers, so this lower staffing requirement will significantly reduce Elections Saskatchewan's operational risks. It will also have a dramatic impact on overall staffing costs, which have been increasing markedly between each general election.

As outlined in Volume IV (28th GE), Elections Saskatchewan's incremental approach to modernization was an intentional risk management strategy. Implementing the full scope and scale of the proposed modernization activities within a single election cycle would have introduced an extreme





level of risk and seriously challenged the province's ability to deliver the subsequent election successfully. Breaking the planned innovations into three phases allowed for gradual, smaller-scale introduction of changes to reduce the degree of risk at any given time, learn from each event, and apply those learnings to gradually strengthen processes in each successive election cycle.

The three-phase approach was also critical to balance risk with cost considerations. Substantial investments were necessary in advance of the 2020 and 2024 general elections. Further investment will be required as the next election approaches in October 2028. Those investment needs will be described in Elections Saskatchewan's annual budget submissions for the coming years.

The final cost of the 2024 election will be presented in *A Report on the Thirtieth General Election, Volume III: Statement of Expenditures*, which will be published following Volume IV.³

Additional Phase Three Legislative Recommendations

Much of this volume focuses on recommendations to continue advancing the three-phase vision first put forward by the Chief Electoral Officer in Volume IV (28th GE). However, this volume also addresses three other areas requiring consideration by legislators, namely:

1. Political finance and political stakeholder regulation;
2. Increasing collaboration with municipalities and Indigenous communities; and,
3. Digital communications, disinformation, and democracy.

This volume also reiterates the Chief Electoral Officer's previous recommendations regarding the province's current referendum/plebiscite framework and the constituency boundary delimitation process. Further information on these areas can be found in Chapter 5.

Contents of this Volume

This volume provides details on the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for changes to be made in advance of the province's 31st General Election in 2028.

Chapter 3 looks back on the Chief Electoral Officer's original three-phase plan for modernizing Saskatchewan's system of delivering elections. It provides a summary of all three phases, before delving into details on the changes made before the province's 2020 and 2024 elections.

Chapter 4 takes a closer look at the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for transformation of the voting process, providing a timeline and proposed plan for legislative change within the current election cycle. The changes recommended in Chapter 4 fall into two categories:

- **Category 1:** these changes were implemented in the 30th General Election in 2024 through the use of CEO Directives, and are now recommended for permanent incorporation within the Act.
- **Category 2:** these new initiatives have yet to be implemented during a general election, so the Chief Electoral Officer recommends that they be authorized via new CEO Directives in advance of the 31st General Election in 2028.

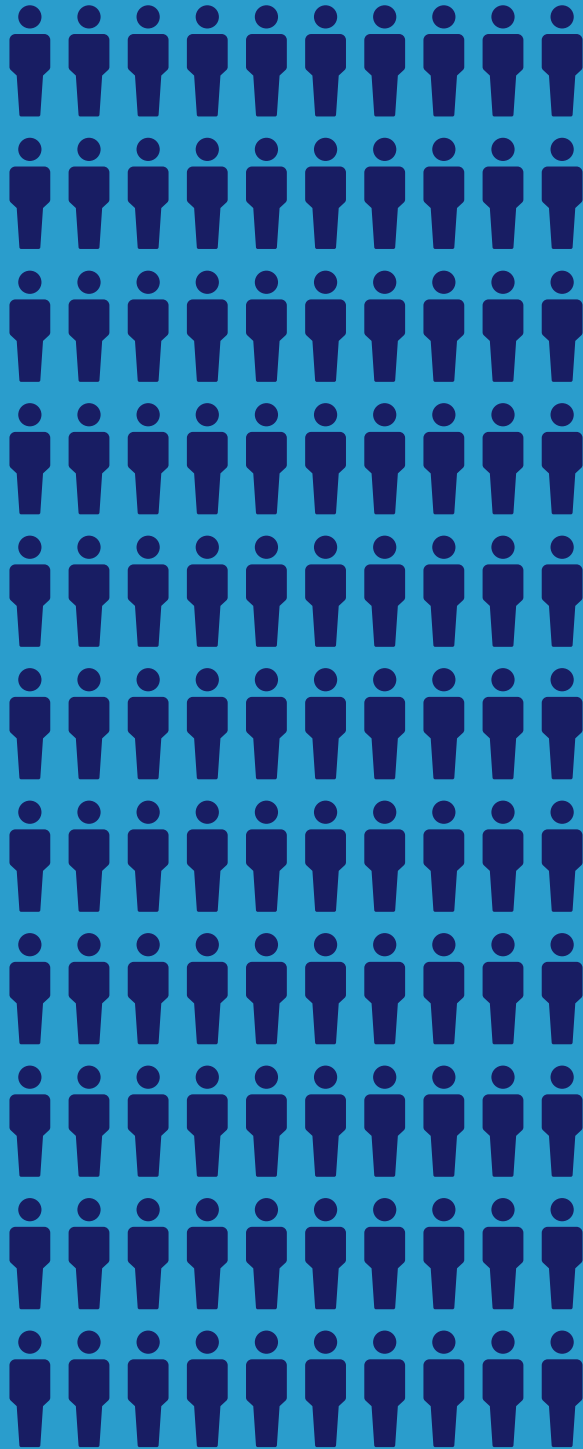
Chapter 5 delves into recommendations for legislative change in areas other than the voting process. These changes, referred to as **Category 3** changes, address Elections Saskatchewan's regulatory role, relationships with municipal election administrators, and the ongoing problem of disinformation and digital communications as they relate to democratic principles.

Finally, **Chapter 6** offers concluding remarks and takes a brief look beyond 2028 to consider what further changes may be possible following the 31st General Election.

Appendix A provides a list of the updates to clauses, subsections, and sections of *The Election Act, 1996* required to fully implement Category 1 changes.

Appendix B offers a small additional set of recommended amendments to *The Election Act, 1996* that would improve Elections Saskatchewan's services to voters, registered political parties, and candidates. Some of these changes relate to the broader themes described throughout this document, while others are smaller, stand-alone changes. Information and rationale are provided for each.

³ Production and finalization of *Volume III: Statement of Expenditures* depend on the candidate/political party reimbursement process, which can take up to one year following the last day of voting. Therefore, to work within the Legislative Assembly's timelines, Volume IV is in this instance being finalized and tabled before Volume III is completed. Moving forward, the Chief Electoral Officer intends that internal administrative changes will result in Volume III being published sooner.



11,000

In both 2016 and 2020, Elections Saskatchewan hired about 11,000 workers to conduct the General Election.



4,500

In 2024, Elections Saskatchewan hired about 4,500 workers to conduct the General Election.

Summary of Phase One and Two Modernization Activities

In April 2018, the Chief Electoral Officer published *Recommendations for Legislative Reform, Volume IV* of his *Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election* (“Volume IV (28th GE)”).¹ That document outlined a three-phase plan to gradually introduce modernized election and voting processes in Saskatchewan over the next three general elections, scheduled for 2020, 2024, and 2028.

As Volume IV (28th GE) described, Saskatchewan’s system of administering voting in 2016 had been substantially unchanged for more than 100 years. Well into the 21st century, elections were still based on a set of processes designed in the late 1800s. Approximately every four years, Elections Saskatchewan hired a small army of temporary workers—more than 11,000 in 2016—to administer voting. These workers carried out their responsibilities using pencils, rulers, and paper

forms. There were no computers or other technological advancements in voting locations. Voter convenience and the needs of political stakeholders were not, and could not be, at the forefront of design considerations. By 2016, both the administration of voting and the act of voting itself had become an unnecessarily cumbersome, time-consuming process desperately in need of the prudent introduction of technology accompanied by strong security and integrity controls.

¹ Full reports on all elections from 2007 onward are available on Elections Saskatchewan’s website at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications>.

Modernizing in Phases

The Chief Electoral Officer’s original plan for updating Saskatchewan’s voting processes outlined the methodical, gradual introduction of a series of adjustments in 2020, 2024, and 2028. This phased-in approach ensured that lessons learned during one event could be applied to the next. This meant that the plan would necessarily undergo a certain amount of evolution over time as Elections Saskatchewan observed and responded to the outcomes of real-world implementation.

The following table, first published in Volume IV (28th GE), summarizes the original proposed content and timing of each of the three phases:

Phase	Proposed Timing	Features
Phase 1	• CEO recommendations published in early 2018 • Legislative changes to <i>Election Act</i> made in early 2019 • New and amended provisions apply at the 29th General Election in November, 2020	• Technology support to streamline advance voting and efficiently count advance votes • Ability for Chief Electoral Officer to pilot modernized voting procedures • Administrative inefficiencies and problematic requirements of current election rules addressed with housekeeping amendments
Phase 2	• CEO recommendations published in 2021 • New election legislation enacted in 2022 • New provisions apply at the 30th General Election in November, 2024	• New <i>Election Act</i> for Saskatchewan provincial elections • Modernized, technology-assisted voting services available at all advance voting and most Election Day voting locations • Polling division maximum population size increased • Postal voting packages automatically issued to registered voters living in lightly populated remote and rural areas of the province • Standard hours, voting service approach for both advance voting and Election Day voting
Phase 3	• CEO recommendations published in 2025 • Amendments to election legislation enacted in 2026 • New provisions apply at the 31st General Election in November, 2028	• Ability for voters to ‘Vote Anywhere’ at any voting location in the province • Introduction of Voting Week, seven consecutive days of voting • Provisions to allow electronic collection of voting results from vote counting equipment used across the province • Online voting (with central printing of paper ballots) made available for disabled voters, out-of-province voters, and Canadian Forces voters posted overseas

The Chief Electoral Officer’s original plan for updating Saskatchewan’s voting processes outlined the methodical, gradual introduction of a series of adjustments in 2020, 2024, and 2028.



A Summary of Phase One Activities (2017–2020, culminating in 29th General Election)

Phase 1 started in 2017, concluding with the completion of the 29th General Election in 2020. The Chief Electoral Officer's original plan for Phase One began by revamping the way services are provided during advance voting, a component of elections in which there had been rapid change and expansion. In Saskatchewan's 2011 Provincial Election, about 66,000 people voted in advance. By 2016, that number rose to more than 110,000, and it has continued to increase in 2020 and 2024.²

In Phase 1, the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for updates to Saskatchewan's voting services focused on three key areas:³

- Addressing errors, omissions, contradictions, and administrative challenges in *The Election Act, 2016* (the Act) and its regulations;
- Enabling Elections Saskatchewan to undertake pilot projects to test planned innovations in a limited implementation environment; and
- Streamlining the advance voting process by introducing electronic poll books and vote counting equipment.

The Chief Electoral Officer provided legislators with a long list of recommended improvements to the Act in November 2018, addressing many of the errors, omissions and contradictions. Most of these improvements were passed into law, resulting in legislative processes that were easier to implement and easier for stakeholders to understand and comply with.⁴

One of the most significant amendments to the Act in Phase 1 was the Legislative Assembly's approval of provisions enabling the Chief Electoral Officer to pilot modifications to election legislation in by-elections and in

general elections.⁵ The provision has been put to good use since its introduction. It has proved especially valuable in by-elections, allowing Elections Saskatchewan to test new procedures, processes, and technology at a much smaller scale and much lower cost than during a general election. Quite simply, the recent successful introduction of new processes during provincial elections could not have been achieved without the flexibility and opportunities provided by this piloting arrangement.

Implementation of the third recommendation—adoption of electronic poll books and vote counting equipment during advance voting—was inhibited by two unexpected events. Hints of the possibility of an early election call in the spring of 2020, followed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, led the Chief Electoral Officer to postpone this initiative. The result was a more traditional election event in 2020, without the new technology.

While some changes were delayed by the pandemic, others were fast tracked. For example, the more robust Vote by Mail system originally planned for Phase 2 became immediately relevant with the onset of the pandemic. Rapid changes in the months leading up to the October 2020 election accordingly resulted in the implementation of a centralized Vote by Mail system four years earlier than intended. This included introduction of an online application portal that served more than 56,000 voters in 2020, a tenfold increase over the number of voters who used traditional absentee voting in 2016.⁶

A Summary of Phase Two Activities (2021–2024, culminating in 30th General Election)

Phase 2 of the Chief Electoral Officer's three-phase plan for modernization was detailed in Volume IV of his *Report on the Twenty-Ninth General Election* ("Volume IV (29th GE)").⁷ That volume summarized the outcomes of Phase 1 and outlined the path to Saskatchewan's 30th General Election, scheduled for October 2024.

² The number of advance voters increased to 184,742 for the 2020 General Election, and to 272,600 early voters during the 2024 General Election.

³ Complete details on the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for Phase 1 can be found in Chapter 3 of Volume IV (28th GE), available at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications>.

⁴ The CEO's entire set of recommended improvements can be found at <https://cdn.elections.sk.ca/upload/2018.11.23-CEO-Supplementary-Rec-v1.0-FINAL.pdf>.

⁵ *The Election Act, 1996*, SS 1996, c E-6.01, s. 5.1–5.2.

⁶ Historically, absentee voting was administered by the Returning Officer from their constituency Returning Office and was designed to serve only a small number of voters. Vote by Mail redesigned the process, centralized it, and implemented an online application portal and consistent, province-wide standards.

⁷ *A Report on the Twenty-Ninth General Election, Volume IV: Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform* (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, October 2022) ("Volume IV (29th GE)"). Full reports on all elections from 2007 onward are available on Elections Saskatchewan's website at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications>.



Volume IV (29th GE) outlined three high-level areas for improvement:

- Transitioning from an Election Day to an election period;
- Modernizing election processes and administration, including revisiting the use of electronic poll books and vote counting equipment; and
- Broadening access to voting through improved Vote by Mail, Special Voting, and extraordinary voting processes.

In Phase 2, the Legislative Assembly granted the Chief Electoral Officer authority to modify legislation via CEO Directives for the purposes of a particular election event.⁸ This approach, which has been used in other provinces, allows the Chief Electoral Officer to propose modifications to the processes and procedures found in legislation and submit them to the Legislative Assembly's Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) for approval.



In advance of the 2024 General Election, the Chief Electoral Officer presented a suite of CEO Directives to the BOIE with the intention of addressing the areas of improvement listed above. Those CEO Directives were as follows:

Polling Divisions CEO Directive 2023-009	Directed changes to the traditional use of geographic sub-regions and allowed larger numbers of voters to be assigned to specific areas and voting stations than the 300-person limit outlined in the Act.
Polling Period CEO Directive 2023-010	Authorized a transition away from distinct advance and Election Day voting periods toward a unified, six-day Voting Week.
Electronic Poll Books/Voting Record CEO Directive 2023-011	Introduced electronic poll books to make it faster and easier to process an increased number of voters while enabling real time data sharing with political stakeholders. Also implemented the "voting record" form and modified the traditional duties of the poll clerk.
Vote Counting Equipment CEO Directive 2023-012	Introduced the use of vote counting equipment to optically scan hand marked ballots and count them.
Vote Anywhere CEO Directive 2023-013	Allowed certain voting locations (with both electronic poll books and vote counting equipment) to be treated as "Vote Anywhere" locations that could serve any voter from any constituency in the province.
Vote by Mail CEO Directive 2023-014	Continued use of the centralized Vote by Mail process developed for Saskatchewan's 29th General Election and used in subsequent by-elections. Also introduced the Second Preliminary Count, held two days after the last day of voting.
HRT Counting CEO Directive 2023-018	Amended vote counting procedures to allow for a central count of hospital, remand, and temporarily displaced voter ballots alongside remaining Vote by Mail ballots counted at the Final Count.

⁸ *The Election Act, 1996*, SS 1996, c E-6.01, s. 5.3–5.6.

The CEO Directives were designed to work together, collectively supporting implementation of a cohesive system of voting for the 30th General Election. Directive 009's increase in the size of polling divisions, for instance, aligned with the transition away from separate advance voting and Election Day voting contained in Directive 010. The larger polling divisions resulting from Directive 009 also aligned with Directive 011's electronic poll books, which greatly increase an election worker's capacity to serve voters. At the back end, Directive 012's vote counting equipment would enable the processing of a very large number of ballots while producing quick and accurate results, matching the front-end efficiencies introduced by Directive 011's electronic poll books. And having voters cast a ballot outside their home constituency in keeping with Directive 013—known as the Vote Anywhere process—was only administratively feasible when paired with both Directive 011's electronic poll books and Directive 012's vote counting equipment.

In the end, the BOIE chose not to approve the use of vote counting equipment in Saskatchewan's 2024 General Election. Elections Saskatchewan had previously used vote counting equipment in three by-elections in 2023, demonstrating that the equipment was not only reliable, but able to produce results much more quickly than hand counting.⁹ However, the BOIE was unwilling to approve its use in a general election, citing a belief that ballots cast by hand should be counted by hand and that hand counting better preserves the integrity of the voting process.¹⁰ This rejection required the revision and resubmission of several CEO Directives. It also meant that the Vote Anywhere process could not be implemented.

Although vote counting equipment did not receive BOIE approval, most of the other directives were put into effect, implementing the bulk of the CEO's recommendations for improvement for the 2024 election. Advance voting and the last day of voting were combined into a unified period known as Voting Week; public-facing communications emphasized that voters could cast their ballot at a time that suited them during any day that voting was offered, removing the emphasis on the last day of voting historically known as Election Day. Electronic poll books were used

in more than half of the province's constituencies. Polling division size was increased to a more flexible upper limit dependent on a number of factors, such as distance to travel between communities.

These changes led to a significant drop in the number of election workers required to staff the 30th General Election. In both 2016 and 2020, Elections Saskatchewan hired about 11,000 workers to conduct the event. In 2024, the number of required workers fell to about 4,500 with no discernable impact on the service provided to voters, in spite of increased voter turnout.

Not all of the items originally proposed for Phase 2 ultimately moved ahead. The creation and passage of a new *Election Act*, for instance, was not feasible in the wake of COVID-19. The non-approval of vote counting equipment by the BOIE is discussed above. Finally, although the Chief Electoral Officer recommended standardizing voting hours throughout the entirety of Voting Week, legislators chose to leave the hours on the last day longer, running from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. These inconsistent hours complicated communications with voters and distracted from the ultimate purpose of Voting Week—i.e., to treat all days of voting the same, so no day of Voting Week is better or worse for a voter to cast their ballot.

In spite of these challenges, Elections Saskatchewan's many successes, learnings, and adjustments in Phases 1 and 2 put it in a strong position to continue improving the election system, introducing elements of modernization, and broadening access to the ballot as the province enters Phase 3.

Polling division size was increased to a more flexible upper limit dependent on a number of factors, such as distance to travel between communities.

⁹ Following these by-elections, Elections Saskatchewan completed a "ballot count confirmation" to confirm the accuracy of vote counting equipment. This confirmation was overseen by Justice John Klebuc, Former Chief Justice of Saskatchewan, and Dr. Keith Archer, Former Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia and candidates. Registered political party representatives were also invited to attend. The review process found that the results produced by the equipment matched the hand counted confirmation exactly.

¹⁰ See, for example, "Province rejects use of electronic vote counting machines in 2024 election," *Regina Leader-Post*, August 21, 2023, by Trillian Reynoldson, and "Sask. govt. rejects recommendation to use vote counting machines in elections," *CBC News Saskatchewan*, August 19, 2023, by Adam Hunter.



56,547

Total number of votes cast by mail in
the 2020 General Election

28,601

Total number of votes cast by mail in
the 2024 General Election

Phase Three Modernization: 31st General Election Category 1 and 2 Legislative Amendments

This chapter outlines the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for Phase 3 in the modernization of Saskatchewan's processes for delivering voting. Phase 3 is designed to run from 2025 to 2028, culminating in the 31st General Election scheduled for October 2028. If these plans are supported by legislators, that election will offer the broadest access to voters, and the best service for political stakeholders, in the province's history.

Following Saskatchewan's 28th General Election in 2016, the Chief Electoral Officer laid out a three-phase plan for progressive improvements to the province's system of delivering elections.¹ That plan was designed to be implemented gradually over the three elections scheduled to take place in 2020, 2024, and 2028. With the completion of the 30th General Election in 2024, Phases 1 and 2 are now complete. The significant progress achieved over those two phases has been reported in Chapter 3 of this volume.

Due to the new learnings and unforeseen circumstances—particularly the pandemic—encountered in the first two phases, some elements of the plan have been implemented ahead of schedule, while others have not moved ahead. This was expected; the multi-phase approach was designed to ensure that lessons learned in earlier phases could be taken into consideration in later ones.

¹ See Volume IV of *A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election* ("Volume IV (28th GE)") for the original three-phase plan, and see Volume IV of *A Report on the Twenty-Ninth General Election* ("Volume IV (29th GE)") for further details. Full reports on all elections from 2007 onward are available on Elections Saskatchewan's website at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications>.

For example, Volume IV (28th GE) suggested that the following changes would take place in Phase 3:

- Introduction of seven consecutive days of voting – Voting Week;
- Ability for voters to vote at any voting location in the province – Vote Anywhere;
- Provisions to allow for electronic collection of voting results from vote counting equipment across the province;
- Online voting (with central printing of paper ballots) available for disabled voters, out-of-province voters, and Canadian Forces voters posted overseas.

In fact, Voting Week has already been implemented successfully in 2024's 30th General Election, when Elections Saskatchewan deemphasized the last day of voting and made it clear that voters should cast their ballot when it suited them. The vote anywhere option was initially proposed for 2024 as well, but had to be withdrawn after vote counting equipment—originally planned for 2020 but postponed due to the pandemic—did not receive approval from legislators to move forward in the 30th General Election. Other ideas, such as the implementation of telephone voting in special circumstances, were not explicitly mentioned in Volume IV (28th GE), but have arisen as options that may prove more effective than items (such as online voting) addressed in the original plan. More information on amendments not included in Volume IV (28th GE)'s original three-phase outline can be found in this chapter under the heading, "New CEO Directives for Saskatchewan's 31st General Election in October 2028."

As we enter into Phase 3, Elections Saskatchewan has already made significant progress in how it administers voting. The Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for 2028 build on those changes to continue broadening access to voting.

Legislative Approach for Saskatchewan's 31st General Election in October 2028

This volume will be tabled and presented to legislators early in the fall of 2025, about a year after the 30th General Election. While the Chief Electoral Officer can make recommendations based on best practice and lessons learned from past events and other jurisdictions, only members of the Legislative Assembly can decide which recommendations should be made into law.

The most significant set of proposed changes to the Act are found here in Chapter 4, broken into two categories. A third category is outlined in Chapter 5.

Category 1: Legislating CEO Directives from 2024: The first category consists of changes that were made via CEO Directive with BOIE approval in advance of the 30th General Election in 2024. Having tested and proved their effectiveness in that general election, the Chief Electoral Officer is now recommending that Category 1 changes be integrated permanently into the Act.

Category 2: New CEO Directives for 2028: The second category of changes have yet to be tested in Saskatchewan. The Chief Electoral Officer plans to introduce them to the Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) via CEO Directive in May 2026, with the intention of implementing them for the 31st General Election in 2028.² As in Phase 2, the CEO Directives approved by the BOIE would be tested in the general election and then assessed. Those deemed successful would then be recommended by the CEO for permanent inclusion in the Act.

Category 3: Minor Amendments: Chapter 5 of this volume introduces a third category of recommended legislative amendments. These are smaller, independent changes that can be made without the extensive testing required by the type of changes addressed in Categories 1 and 2. The Chief Electoral Officer therefore suggests that Category 3 items be incorporated into the Act. Details and suggested language are outlined in Appendix B.

Timeline for Legislative Amendments

If legislators are willing to adopt some or all of the Category 1 and 3 recommendations outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 of this volume, a bill should be introduced in the Legislative Assembly during the fall 2025 session to that effect. The bill should be passed into law in the spring 2026 session. The Chief Electoral Officer would then deliver any CEO Directives in support of Category 2 changes before the end of the spring 2026 sitting for consideration by the BOIE.³

Subject to the BOIE's availability to consider and respond to the CEO Directives, this timeline would ensure a two-year period of legislative certainty for Elections Saskatchewan and all political stakeholders leading up to the next general

² For greater clarity, this volume offers only a high-level description of the proposed Category 2 recommendations that will serve as a foundation for the CEO Directives. It does not provide an appendix outlining the specific CEO Directives. The directives will not be available until they are submitted to the BOIE in May 2026.

election, scheduled for October 2028, which is consistent with electoral best practice.

Legislative Approach Timeline	
Oct 2025	Tabling of Volume IV: Recommendations for Legislative Change
Oct-Dec 2025	Introduction of Bill, inclusive of CEO Directives accepted for 2024 Provincial Election (Category 1) and smaller changes proposed in Chapter 5 (Category 3)
May 2026	Passage of Bill, inclusive of Category 1 and Category 3 changes.
May 2026	Submission to BOIE of new CEO Directives recommended for use in 2028 Provincial Election (Category 2)
Jun 2026	BOIE agreement on new CEO Directives proposed in Category 2
Jun 2027 (or prior)	Potential additional CEO Directives based on lessons learned during election planning.

Need for Flexibility: Use of CEO Directives

A key principle that continues to underpin the Chief Electoral Officer’s approach to legislative change recommendations is the ongoing need for increased flexibility in the context of election administration. Historically, election legislation has been extremely prescriptive, making it difficult—if not impossible—to implement simple improvements and efficiencies. Since many details are legislated, up to and including step-by-step instructions on how election officials should complete their work, Elections Saskatchewan has no choice but to follow them, even if there is a better, simpler way of completing the same administrative activity.

Another reality is that Elections Saskatchewan’s four-year cycle does not always align with the Legislative Assembly’s bill drafting and approval process. Many other jurisdictions have addressed this issue by granting the Chief Electoral Officer authority to modify legislative provisions outside of the typical amendment process. Provinces including Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba have all moved ahead in providing this type of authority, which

allows an election management body to move away from the extreme prescriptiveness found in typical legislation without rewriting entire pieces of election legislation.

Saskatchewan’s legislature has provided a partial solution to legislative prescriptiveness via Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Directives, which offer important flexibility within specific parameters outlined in sections 5.1 to 5.6 of *The Election Act, 1996* (the Act). While CEO Directives have proven very useful, they are referred to as a “partial solution” due to drawbacks discussed in more detail below, and because they are time limited. Directives apply only to a specified electoral event, after which they fall out of force and the Act again takes precedence. A certain amount of flexibility is also available pursuant to the emergency powers addressed in section 7 of the Act; however, those sections have limited applicability as they are relevant only in the case of an emergency.

Currently, section 5.1 of the Act empowers the Chief Electoral Officer to issue CEO Directives to test alternate procedures, equipment, or technology during by-elections. Section 5.2 of the Act provides similar—though more constrained—authority in the context of general elections. Sections 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5 outline specific areas, and impose certain requirements, for the further use of CEO Directives. Section 5.6 addresses the Chief Electoral Officer’s accountability to inform registered political parties and the public of the changes, including reporting responsibilities.

All directives issued by the Chief Electoral Officer must describe in detail the alternate procedure, equipment, or technology that will be used in the election. They must also refer to the provisions within the Act or the Regulations that will be varied or not complied with.

The Act imposes fewer restrictions on the use of directives during a by-election than in a general election. For a by-election, the Chief Electoral Officer is required only to notify the relevant bodies, providing a detailed description of the proposed directive to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the BOIE at least four weeks before the by-election is called, and informing registered political parties and the public of the proposed changes.⁴ In the context of

³ It is possible that additional CEO Directives would need to be submitted to the BOIE after this date based on lessons learned during election planning. It is expected that these would be limited and that relevant stakeholders, including registered political parties and the BOIE, would be informed on this as soon as possible.

⁴ As noted in Chapter 3, this ability to “pilot” modifications to the Act during by-elections has proven essential to facilitating thoughtful, methodical change over the past several years. For example, electronic poll book technology was tested extensively in by-elections before being deployed in the last general election.



a general election, however, the directives do not take effect unless and until approved by the BOIE.

While highly valuable, CEO Directives are not an effective or appropriate tool in all circumstances. First, section 5.2, which provides the broadest authority, is applicable only “during a general election.” It does not apply to Elections Saskatchewan’s significant array of responsibilities that extend beyond that limited time frame, such as the oversight of registered political parties. Second, there are issues that could technically be addressed using CEO Directives, but require significant internal work with ongoing costs and impact enduring well beyond the year of an election: for example, changes to the province’s permanent register of voters and to the type of data it holds. For these reasons, the Chief Electoral Officer is recommending that a number of changes be made directly by the Legislative Assembly rather than being trialed first through CEO Directives. Those changes fall into Category 3, and are addressed in Chapter 5 of this volume.

The current chapter addresses Category 1 and 2 changes – i.e., the kinds of changes that lend themselves to testing via CEO Directives.

During the 2024 election, the Chief Electoral Officer moved forward with a number of initiatives in this way, including significant changes such as the implementation of Voting Week and the adoption of electronic poll books.⁵ Given that these practices all proved successful, he is now recommending that they be permanently incorporated into the Act as Category 1 changes. As they have been approved by the BOIE, tested in a general election, and proven to work, the Chief Electoral Officer believes the province would be well-served to incorporate these practices into future elections.

Including these changes in legislation has significant benefits. As the default set of instructions, they would apply for future by-elections and general elections without the need to develop and submit CEO Directives. This is especially important in time-sensitive situations: for example, if a by-election is called shortly after a seat becomes vacant, or if a general election is held outside

of the legislated schedule. Incorporating these updated processes into the Act will also provide certainty for Elections Saskatchewan’s planning. Currently, the office is required to maintain preparations to run a “traditional” event based entirely on the legislative processes (without modifications made via CEO Directive) while also planning for the events it is most likely to administer—i.e., a modernized event aligned with Category 1 changes.

There are also Category 2 changes: i.e., those that have not yet been successfully used in an election, which the Chief Electoral Officer intends to introduce via CEO Directives in the coming election. Category 1 and 2 changes are described below with additional details and instructions in the appendices.

Category 1: 2024 CEO Directives Now Recommended for Inclusion in *The Election Act, 1996*

This section lists and briefly describes each of the changes that were tested through issuance of a CEO Directive in the 2024 election and are now being recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer for incorporation within the Act. The sections and subsections of the Act that require amendment to implement these changes are listed in Appendix A, found on pages 48 to 51.

Vote by Mail

Elections Saskatchewan first offered the province’s voters a modern, centralized Vote by Mail voting opportunity during the 29th General Election, necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, the Chief Electoral Officer had no authority under the Act to issue a directive in a general election, and Vote by Mail procedures were not addressed in the Act. However, the Chief Electoral Officer was permitted to establish a modified procedure pursuant to the emergency powers outlined in section 7 of the Act and section 2 of the Regulations. Accordingly, the Chief Electoral Officer declared that an emergency existed and voters with health and safety concerns were permitted to cast their ballots without having to attend an in-person voting location. With this mail-in voting procedure in place, the Chief Electoral Officer also suspended the pre-existing absentee voting process, which was no longer required.⁶

⁵ For a complete listing, refer back to Chapter 3.

⁶ Prior to the introduction of Vote by Mail, absentee voting was not a widely used voting option. During the five provincial elections from 1999 to 2016, an average of just over 2,700 voters per event engaged in absentee voting, comprising both “in-person” absentee voting at the Returning Office and postal ballots mailed out by Returning Officers. These numbers can be found in Chapter 11 of *A Report on the Thirtieth General Election, Volume I: Statement of Votes* (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, May 2025), available at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications/>.

Vote by Mail succeeded in the 2020 General Election, proving to be very popular with voters. This voting method was used by 56,547 voters (12.7 percent) in 2020. Subsequently, Elections Saskatchewan piloted substantially similar Vote by Mail procedures in multiple by-elections under the authority of subsection 5.1(2) of the Act. Because of the popularity of this voting opportunity, and with the necessary directive-making authority in place, the Chief Electoral Officer again offered mail-in voting in the 2024 General Election, serving 28,601 voters (6.1 percent).

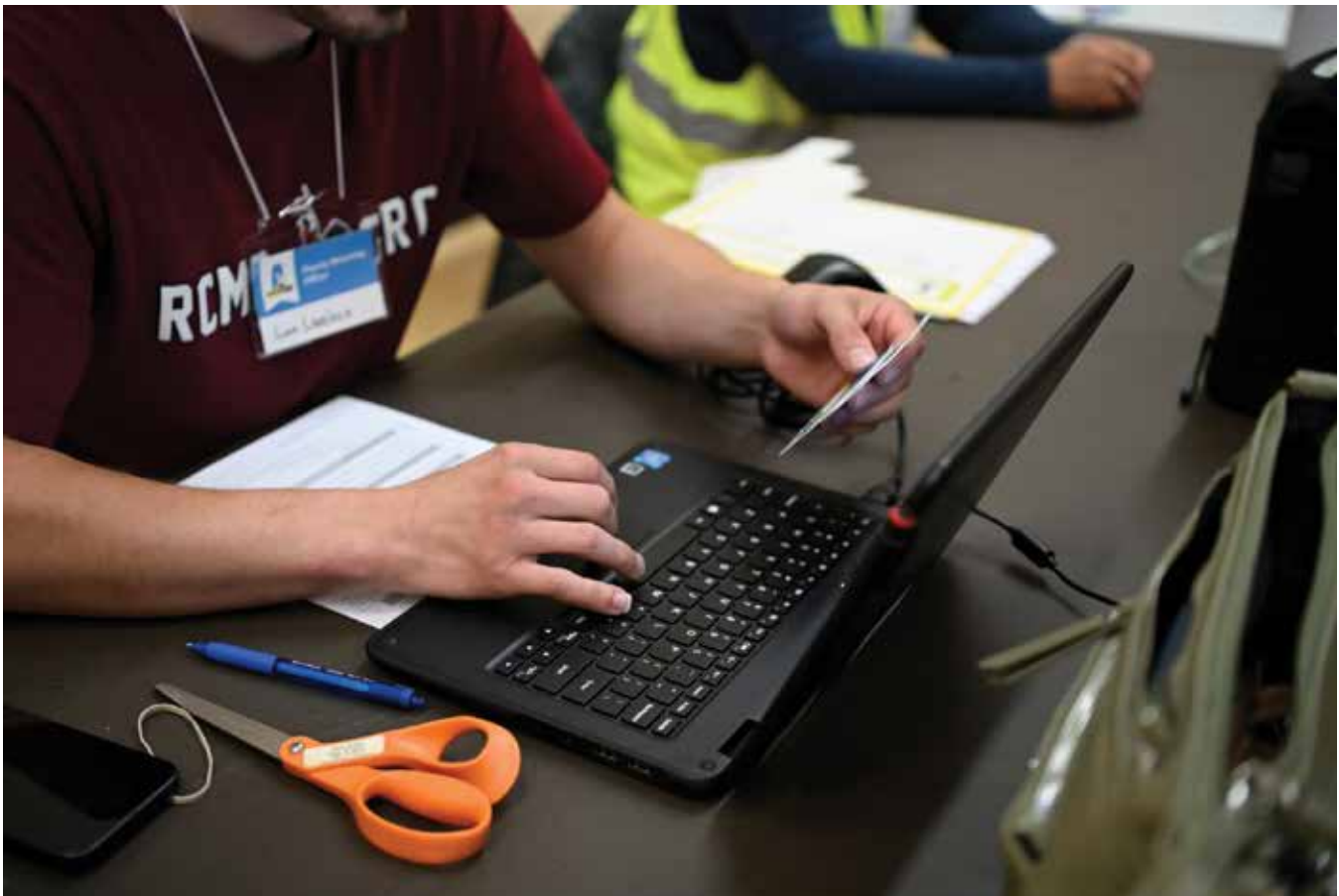
Vote by Mail is superior to the absentee voting provisions of the Act for a number of reasons. It is centralized as opposed to being administered in each constituency, meaning that the service provided is consistent to all voters regardless of where they reside in the province. Elections Saskatchewan has created an easy-to-use online application portal, eliminating the need for voters to complete paper applications and submit photocopies of ID documents.

The use of experienced outside vendors also makes the online portal scalable to serve as many voters as needed during an election event.

CEO Directive 2023-014, which authorized the use of Vote by Mail in the 2024 General Election, also provided for a Second Preliminary Count. This count, which begins two days after the last day of voting, allows all Vote by Mail ballots received by a specified date to be counted well in advance of the Final Count. This provides results sooner than the currently legislated Final Count, benefiting voters, candidates, political parties, the public, and media stakeholders.

Electronic Poll Books and Voting Records

Under section 5.4 of the Act, the Chief Electoral Officer has specific authority to direct that the poll book used at a voting location be in electronic format. He is also authorized to adapt any section of the Act and the Regulations to facilitate the use of this electronic poll book.



An electronic poll book incorporates the content of Saskatchewan's paper-based poll book into a searchable database of voters. The electronic poll book allows election workers to use a laptop computer to search for the names of eligible voters on the voters list, strike off the names after the voter has been issued a ballot paper, and maintain an electronic record of voter information and interactions at the voting location. Voting locations that use electronic poll books do not require a poll clerk to record voter data, creating significant human resources efficiencies.

At voting locations where it is not feasible to use electronic poll books due to limited internet connectivity or a very small number of voters, a voting record is used. The voting record is a paper-based form that combines elements of the legislated poll book and the voters list. Both the electronic poll book and the voting record have been found to speed up the voting process and reduce data entry and transcription errors.

Electronic poll books and voting records have been used successfully in by-elections and during the 2024 General Election. The Chief Electoral Officer proposes to expand the footprint of electronic poll books in 2028 beyond the 34 constituencies that used them in 2024. The final number of constituencies that would adopt the technology in 2028 has yet to be determined, as the 27 constituencies that have not yet used electronic poll books must each be examined for network connectivity, availability of adequate tech support resources, and other logistical considerations. Given that not all parts of the province will possess the necessary infrastructure, the voting record will continue to offer significant improvements over the traditional combination of a poll book and a voters list.

Polling Period (Voting Week)

Under section 5.3 of the Act, the Chief Electoral Officer has specific authority to direct that polling day and the days of advance polling be combined into a polling period of seven consecutive days.

In CEO Directive 2023-010, the Board of Internal Economy authorized the establishment of a "polling period" as an alternate procedure for organizing and conducting voting in the 2024 General Election. The polling period, which was referred to publicly as Voting

Voting Week removes the distinction between "advance" and Election Day voting, greatly expanding access to the ballot by encouraging voters to cast their ballot at the time and assigned location that works for them, rather than encouraging them to wait until the last day.



Week, consisted of five consecutive days of voting, followed by one-day of non-voting,⁷ and concluding with the last day of voting. For the first five days (referred to publicly as “Early Voting”), voting stations were open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; on the last day, however, they were open for an extended period from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.⁸

The purpose of adopting a unified polling period (Voting Week) instead of distinguishing between advance polls and the last day of voting (known as Election Day in previous elections) was to simplify public communications and prioritize a streamlined, voter-focused voting experience. The previous system treated voting on the last day as the standard or preferred approach, implying that anything before that was an exception. Voting Week removes the distinction between “advance” and Election Day voting, greatly expanding access to the ballot by encouraging voters to cast their ballot at the time and assigned location that works for them, rather than encouraging them to wait until the last day.

Polling Divisions

Provisions within the Act currently require constituencies to be divided into relatively small polling divisions of no more than 350 voters. On polling day, voters are required to vote at a specific polling place within their polling division based on the voter’s place of ordinary residence. This geographic grouping of voters is primarily for the benefit of election administrators, ensuring that only a limited, manageable number of voters are eligible to vote at a particular polling place.

In the 2024 General Election, the BOIE approved CEO Directive 2023-009, authorizing a new procedure for organizing voting and eliminating the need for Returning Officers to divide constituencies into polling divisions. In most urban constituencies, polling divisions were eliminated altogether and the number of voters was managed through a combination of electronic poll books, modifications to voting procedures, and the introduction of Voting Week. In other (typically rural) constituencies, small polling divisions were replaced with “catchment

areas,” established with reference to factors including the number of voting locations, distances for voters to drive to those locations, and geographical/topographical conditions.

By allowing greater flexibility in arranging voting, these kinds of modifications enable implementation of other changes as well. Larger groupings of voters make it more efficient to introduce electronic poll books, which in turn speeds up the voting process for each individual voter. When implemented at a province-wide scale, this greatly broadens access to the ballot and strengthens service to voters.

Central Counting of HRT Ballots

The Act currently requires all Form B ballots (or blank/write-in ballots) from hospital, remand centre, and temporarily displaced voter (HRT) polls to be sent from constituency returning offices to the Chief Electoral Officer for sorting and then returned to the appropriate returning offices for counting by the Returning Officer during the Final Count. The logistically complicated, time-consuming process also poses the risk of potentially lost or misdirected ballots.

During the 2024 General Election, CEO Directive 2023-018 was used to define an alternate procedure whereby the completed Form B Ballots were sent to the Chief Electoral Officer by the Returning Officers from each constituency in which HRT polls were held. The Form B ballots were then counted centrally, and count totals were added to the Final Count by the Returning Officers. By transporting ballots only once and then storing them securely at an Elections Saskatchewan facility, this new procedure greatly reduced the risks of ballots being lost or mishandled before being counted. This strengthened the integrity of the election while also improving its efficiency.

The Chief Electoral Officer also used CEO Directive 2023-018 to extend the type of acceptable marks (political party leader name) that were permitted on Form B (absentee voting) ballots to the Form B ballots used at Vote by Mail, hospital, remand centre, and temporarily displaced voter

⁷ A one-day pause between the five days of Early Voting and the last day of voting is required to update voters lists and complete strike-off before the last day of voting, ensuring updated voters lists at non-technology voting locations. This is an important security and integrity step that cannot yet be eliminated.

⁸ In an initial CEO Directive provided to the Board of Internal Economy (BOIE), the Chief Electoral Officer proposed that standard hours of 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. be used across the entire Voting Week, including the last day of voting. This would have greatly simplified public communications and reinforced the message that all days of voting were equal and, further, that no day was better or preferred over another. The BOIE rejected the recommendation, requesting that voting be available on the last day from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. As part of the implementation of Voting Week, the Chief Electoral Officer is once again recommending consistent voting times of 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. for the entirety of Voting Week. Further details are available in Appendix B.

polls. This made it easier for Vote by Mail and HRT voters to cast their ballots correctly.

Category 2: New CEO Directives for Saskatchewan's 31st General Election

The previous section outlined Category 1 changes: recommendations for amendments to the Act that reflect the content of CEO Directives already approved by the BOIE and successfully implemented during the 2024 General Election.

This section offers a general description of Category 2 recommendations. Subject to the approval of the BOIE, the Chief Electoral Officer plans to test these recommendations in the 2028 General Election through the issuance of CEO Directives. Category 2 changes will not give rise to amendments to the Act until after that election. Instead, the recommendations will be refined in the months ahead and detailed in a series of CEO Directives to be provided to the BOIE in May 2026.

Telephone Voting

In every election, some voters find themselves unexpectedly unable to vote. They may discover, after the Vote by Mail application deadline has passed, that they need to be away for work during the election. They may have been planning to vote on the last day, but unexpectedly find themselves attending to a family member in the hospital in a neighbouring community—hospital voting is offered only for patients, not family members or facility staff. There are many reasons, but the end result is a voter who is disenfranchised and unable to cast their ballot. While this gap in the system has been evident during previous election cycles, no feasible solution was available that would be compliant with the Act.⁹

For several years now, media and members of the public have speculated that online voting could one day solve this problem. With such a system, they suggest, a voter could conceivably cast their ballot from wherever they happen to be during Voting Week. However, online voting is still subject to too many problems and potential issues to be

a realistic option. It is not something the Chief Electoral Officer recommends Saskatchewan explore or consider at present.

A more acceptable solution could be to permit “gap” voters to cast their vote using the telephone. This option is particularly attractive due to the near-universal presence of cellular or land-line telephones. Telephone voting is available in several other jurisdictions, including British Columbia and Australia, for voters who are unable to vote by other means due to sight loss, a disability, or an underlying health condition that prevents them from voting independently. It is also available in these jurisdictions for voters who are unable to vote by any other means near the voting deadline and are unable to vote by mail.

Depending on the criteria established for telephone voting, voters could either vote independently over the phone or receive assistance from a telephone operator. In either case, Elections Saskatchewan would follow necessary and robust procedures to ensure the secrecy of the ballot for voters voting by telephone. In jurisdictions that have adopted telephone voting, this usually requires a team of election workers: one who takes the voter's information, and another who records the vote.

Telephone voting is not completely new for Saskatchewan. In February 2022, during a by-election in the constituency of Athabasca, the Chief Electoral Officer used a CEO Directive to authorize assisted telephone voting. The pilot project was designed to test the use of telephone voting, particularly its value as a way to provide access for individuals who had missed the Vote by Mail application period but knew they would be unable to vote in person.¹⁰ While only a small number of voters used this option during the by-election, Elections Saskatchewan learned valuable lessons to help ease adoption should the BOIE approve its use.

The Chief Electoral Officer intends to put forward a CEO Directive authorizing the use of telephone voting for the 2028 General Election. Several questions remain to be answered: e.g., who would be eligible, the time period during which the option would be available, and how

⁹ During the province's 2020 election, for example, individuals affected by COVID-19 during the voting period did not have an option to cast a vote remotely, a gap acknowledged by Premier Scott Moe. “First-time Sask. voter says it's ‘heartbreaking’ she can't vote due to isolation,” *CBC News Saskatchewan*, October 25, 2020, by Morgan Modjeski, available at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/isolation-no-ballots-1.5776366>.

¹⁰ Full details on Elections Saskatchewan's test of telephone voting can be found in “Report of the Chief Electoral Officer pursuant to subsection 5.1(6) of *The Election Act*, 1996 regarding actions taken during the constituency of Athabasca by-election,” which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in August 2022. Full reports on all elections from 2007 onward and all by-elections from 2014 onward are available on Elections Saskatchewan's website at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications>.

candidates/parties would observe the voting process. These issues will be addressed in the forthcoming CEO Directive.

Elimination of Audit Requirement

Several sections of the Act relate not to the voting process but rather to the Chief Electoral Officer's important role as a regulator of political stakeholders. This role includes the oversight of political finance.

Currently, the Act stipulates that all candidate election expense returns meeting a certain threshold must be audited by a licensed auditor in accordance with "generally accepted accounting principles" or GAAP,¹¹ prior to submission. Despite proactive efforts by Elections Saskatchewan to introduce tools that would assist auditors in completing this work (such as developing audit checklists and supplementary report requirements), the overall quality of the returns post-audit is not satisfactory.

After every return has been audited, Elections Saskatchewan reviews them to assess compliance with the requirements of the Act. This team frequently identifies significant errors and omissions that should have been detected and corrected by the licensed auditor. Examples of these issues include missing supporting documentation (e.g., proof of advertising or proof of payment), inclusion of ineligible expenses within the return, and omission of contributions, either in part or in full.

Simply put, the current framework for auditing has not resulted in candidate expense returns of sufficient quality. The approach has also proven very costly, both to taxpayers (every auditor is eligible to be reimbursed a fee that increases annually with inflation, equal to \$1,179 in 2024) and to candidates and political parties (actual audit costs have been as high as \$7,700).

There is no consistent pan-Canadian approach to candidate expense audits. Some provinces require candidate expense returns to be audited, while others do not. Alberta, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island do not require an external audit at present. However, discussions with colleagues in jurisdictions that do require an external audit have revealed similar challenges to those experienced in Saskatchewan.

The Chief Electoral Officer therefore proposes eliminating the current audit approach and replacing it with a mandatory preliminary review conducted by individuals who are hired

by each registered political party and trained by Elections Saskatchewan on the requirements of the Act. Their primary focus would be to ensure complete and organized documentation for all candidates who meet the threshold for reimbursement.

This change would likely not result in increased costs, as the funding currently used to reimburse candidates for audit expenses could be redirected to political parties to offset the additional cost of these temporary resources. Funding for parties could be based on a set amount per eligible candidate, up to a designated maximum amount not to exceed actual costs incurred.

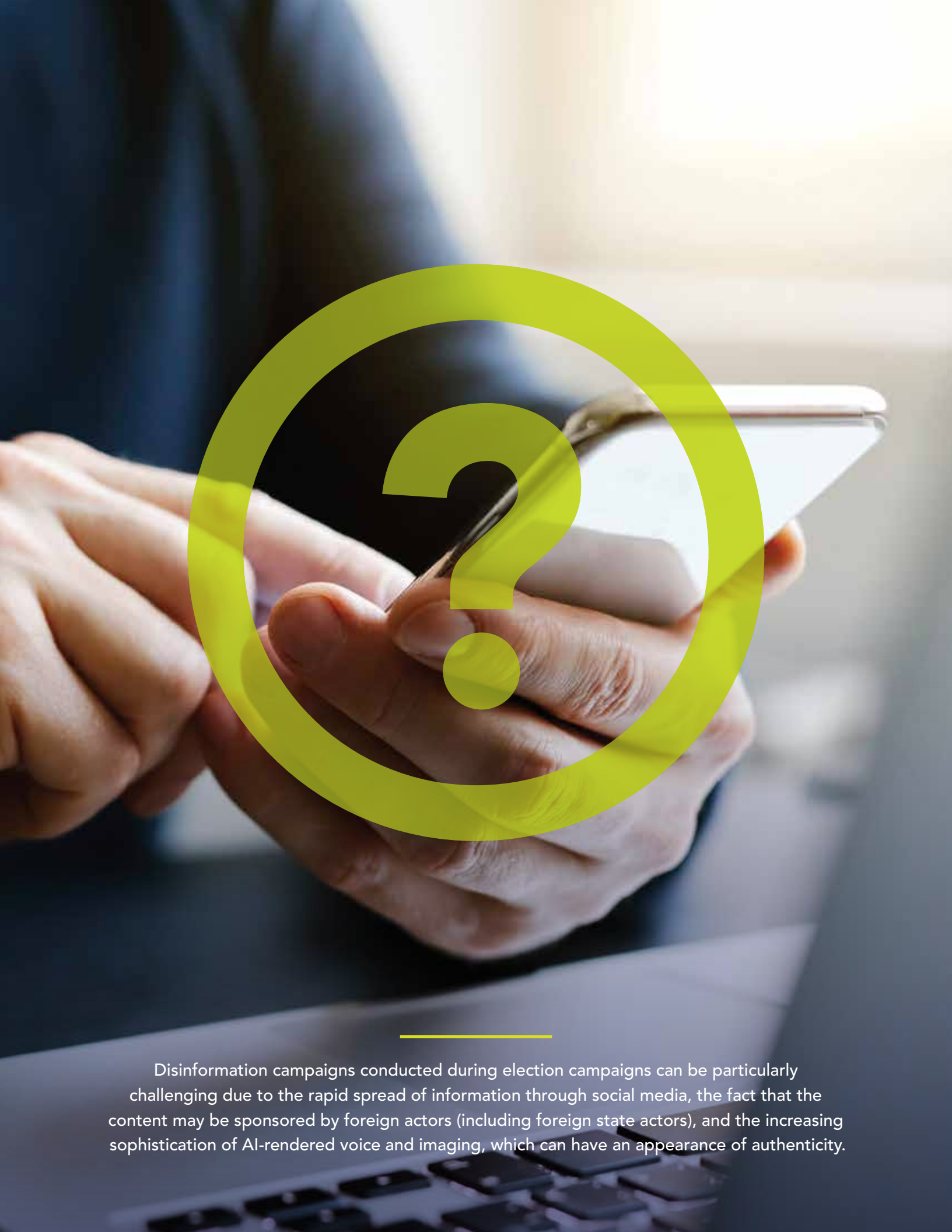
It is expected that the revised process would result in better-quality submissions. However, Elections Saskatchewan would continue its practice of detailed review and examination of each candidate return after submission.

The Chief Electoral Officer also proposes slight extensions to some of the timeframes in the Act. This is because additional time may be required by the resource(s) hired by the political parties, as each party's returns will be required to flow through a limited number of people as opposed to each candidate hiring their own auditor. If approved by the BOIE, the CEO Directive will extend the deadline for submitting candidate election expense returns from three months after the last day of voting to four months. It will also recommend extending the time period in which a disputed claim could be brought forward against a candidate to 120 days.

In spite of these extensions, the revised process is not expected to increase the overall time it takes for candidate election expense returns to be reviewed and posted to Elections Saskatchewan's website. While the initial preparation may take slightly longer, the involvement of the party's reviewer should mean the returns are more complete once filed, requiring fewer adjustments and questions.

If this CEO Directive is approved by the BOIE, the Chief Electoral Officer intends to monitor the timelines for completing reviews of candidate election expense returns after the next election, measuring them against the timelines from 2020 and 2024. If the process takes longer than it did in those previous elections, adjustments will be made for future events.

¹¹ More information on the requirements for the audit of a candidate expense return can be found in sections 222, 238, and 261 of *The Election Act, 1996*.



Disinformation campaigns conducted during election campaigns can be particularly challenging due to the rapid spread of information through social media, the fact that the content may be sponsored by foreign actors (including foreign state actors), and the increasing sophistication of AI-rendered voice and imaging, which can have an appearance of authenticity.

Further Phase Three Modernization: 31st General Election Category 3 Legislative Amendments

This chapter (in conjunction with Appendix B) addresses Category 3 changes to *The Election Act, 1996* (the Act), i.e., changes that do not require initial testing via CEO Directive, but can be made directly and relatively easily.

The majority of the recommendations within this volume are focused on improving the delivery of voting services to ensure that people can cast their ballot without barriers and that candidates and registered political parties can participate equitably. However, Elections Saskatchewan's mandate also extends into a range of options beyond the delivery of voting services. While these items may not relate directly to Elections Saskatchewan's modernization efforts, they are very important for ensuring integrity, security, and efficiency in the province's democratic framework.

The three primary areas addressed by the Category 3 changes discussed in this chapter are:

1. Political finance and political stakeholder regulation
2. Increasing collaboration with municipalities and Indigenous communities
3. Digital communications, disinformation, and democracy

These three areas were also addressed in the recommendations for legislative change contained in

Volume IV of the Chief Electoral Officer's *Report on the 29th General Election* (Volume IV (29th GE)). This alignment is intentional, allowing Elections Saskatchewan to build on improvements that have already been made and reissue recommendations that, though not yet acted upon, remain relevant.

A small number of the items included in Appendix B do not relate to the three areas identified above. Most of these items are relatively non-controversial, either simplifying cumbersome procedures that add little value (e.g., posting election proclamations in municipal offices) or streamlining needlessly complex processes for voters (e.g., modifying homebound voting procedures). These items are referred to as "stand-alone recommendations" in Appendix B. They are not discussed in this chapter; instead, details are provided in the Appendix.

This chapter closes by reiterating and reinforcing the Chief Electoral Officer's prior recommendations for amendments to *The Referendum and Plebiscite Act* and *The Constituency Boundaries Act, 1993*.

Political Finance and Political Stakeholder Regulation

While the administration of voting and elections is the most visible part of the Chief Electoral Officer's responsibilities, the ongoing regulation and oversight of registered political parties and the province's political finance regime are also important functions of this office. Effective regulation of these stakeholders ensures that they comply with legislation, helping to assure the public that the broader democratic system is free of manipulation and fair to all participants. This in turn reinforces trust.

Following the province's 29th General Election in 2020, the Chief Electoral Officer conducted the first ever administrative review of the province's political finance system, publishing it as part of his *Report on the Twenty-Ninth General Election, Volume III: Statement of Expenditures*.¹ That review resulted in a set of administrative commitments to improve the services provided to political parties, candidates, and financial agents. The Chief Electoral Officer will conduct

a similar administrative review of the political finance process for the 30th General Election; however, due to the timeframe involved in collecting and finalizing the financial figures, Volume III will not be published until after this current volume has been tabled in the Legislative Assembly. When it is released, Volume III will outline a set of administrative commitments that can be implemented by Elections Saskatchewan without legislative amendment.

The current volume addresses changes that do require legislative change. Notably, this volume's recommendations relating to political finance focus on strengthening the administrative system and improving the system for stakeholders, not on reforming or revamping the policy framework under which political finance operates in this province. This is consistent with the Chief Electoral Officer's overall approach to recommendations for legislative amendment. For example, his proposed amendments to sections governing voting are restricted to recommendations regarding how voting should be administered; he does not comment on the province's "first past the post" electoral system. Big picture changes to the province's electoral system should first be brought forward by legislators.

This is equally true in the area of political finance. The Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations focus on administrative practices, rather than the foundational policies undergirding those practices.

The most significant legislative amendments the Chief Electoral Officer proposes in the area of political finance relate to the treatment and reporting of contributions to constituency associations. The Act requires that registered political parties disclose the names of contributors who contribute over \$250 in any given calendar year on their fiscal period return. Similarly, candidates' financial agents are required to disclose the names of contributors who contribute over \$250 to the candidate's campaign on the candidate's election expense return. This means that in an election year, some contributions are disclosed on both the party's annual return and the candidate's election expense return.

¹ Elections Saskatchewan conducted its first administrative review of its work following the province's 2016 election, primarily looking at the activities surrounding voting and serving voters. In 2020, the administrative review was expanded to include political finance processes. This detailed look at Elections Saskatchewan's oversight of political finance processes can be found in Chapter 12 of *A Report on the Twenty-Ninth General Election, Volume III: Statement of Expenditures*. While this was published in Volume III, it was part of the broader review that was described and published in *A Report on the Twenty-Ninth General Election, Volume II: Administrative Review*. Both Volume II and Volume III can be found at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/reports-publications/>.

The most significant legislative amendments the Chief Electoral Officer proposes in the area of political finance relate to the treatment and reporting of contributions to constituency associations.



There is currently no legislative requirement for constituency associations to report or otherwise disclose contributions received. However, for contributions made to a constituency association to be eligible for a tax receipt, the contribution must be forwarded to the party and recorded as a contribution on the party's fiscal period return. If the contributor is not eligible for, or does not want, a tax receipt, the funds may not be forwarded to the party. As a result, the contribution may never be disclosed, as the legislation does not require a constituency association to submit any financial or contribution reports to Elections Saskatchewan.

This creates two problems. First, there is a potential lack of transparency, as contributions made to a constituency association may never be disclosed on a political party's fiscal period return or on a candidate's election expense return. Second, it has resulted in a burdensome, cumbersome process for candidates, financial agents, and party Chief Official Agents.

The Chief Electoral Officer's recommended solution to both of these problems is to require that all contributions received by constituency associations (including proceeds from fundraising events) be forwarded to the political party for processing in the fiscal year in which the original contribution is received by the constituency association, regardless of whether the contributor is eligible for, or asks for, a tax receipt. This would ensure that all contributions are reported and recorded appropriately on each political party's fiscal period return, increasing transparency in the province's political finance system. It would also eliminate the need for candidates' financial agents to disclose the names of contributors whose contributions flowed through the constituency association, as these contributions would have already been disclosed on the party's fiscal period.

Implementing this change regarding contributions to constituency associations would require amendments to several sections of the Act, as well as numerous additions. Given that this change relates to the ongoing operations of registered political parties and are not directly related to an election, the Chief Electoral Officer recommends that they be immediately incorporated into the Act, rather than being addressed via CEO Directives. The recommended changes are detailed in Appendix B, Table 1.1.

The Chief Electoral Officer has also proposed a minor amendment to the candidate nomination process in order to avoid an issue that has arisen in other jurisdictions. A group referring to itself as the "Longest Ballot Committee" has been responsible for securing nominations for a significant number of candidates in several recent elections, resulting in ballots that are extremely long or, in one case, forcing Elections Canada to use write-in (or Form B) ballots for all voters.² This problem has not yet been seen in Saskatchewan, and it is possible that the province's nomination deposit requirements would prevent such an idea from gaining traction. However, there are simple solutions that can assist in prevention. Specifically, the Chief Electoral Officer recommends that each financial agent be restricted to serving one candidate in each constituency. While a single financial agent could serve candidates in multiple constituencies, they could not serve more than one candidate in the same constituency. Suggested language is provided in Appendix B.

² There was considerable media attention to the longest ballot committee's efforts during both the April 2025 federal election and the August 2025 Battle River-Crowfoot federal by-election. See, for example, *CBC News*, July 27, 2025, "Over 200 candidates sign up for Poilievre's byelection—doubling previous record," available at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/over-200-candidates-on-single-ballot-byelection-canadian-history-1.7592185>.

Several other proposed amendments to the political finance, political party, and candidate regulatory system are set out in Appendix B. One key amendment is the recommendation to reduce the candidate nomination deposit from \$500 to \$250, addressing concerns raised before the 30th General Election that finances could be a barrier for some who might wish to serve as candidates. More details are set out in Appendix B.

Increasing Collaboration with Municipalities and Indigenous Communities

Over the past several election cycles, Elections Saskatchewan has increasingly collaborated with municipal partners in the province. Municipalities, both urban and rural, conduct their own elections, by-elections, and sometimes even referenda or plebiscites. Increased collaboration between provincial and municipal election officials will help to strengthen democracy and election administration in Saskatchewan.

While provincial elections are governed by *The Election Act, 1996*, municipal elections are primarily governed by *The Local Government Election Act* with additional information found in *The Municipalities Act, The Cities Act, and The Northern Municipalities Act, 2010*.

The most significant item for legislators to consider when it comes to provincial-municipal collaboration remains the significant overlap between provincial and municipal election periods. Since these election dates began to align in 2020, the events have typically been held about two weeks apart.³ In 2028, the last day of voting for the province's election will be Monday, October 30, with municipalities scheduled to hold their Election Day on Wednesday, November 8, less than two weeks later.

The Chief Electoral Officer has offered a variety of options to resolve this ongoing overlap over the past decade.⁴ Overlapping provincial and municipal election periods benefit no one and have significant drawbacks. The overlap has proven confusing for voters, who must juggle information for both events. Candidates, especially those at the municipal level, have reported that it can be difficult

Overlapping provincial and municipal election periods benefit no one and have significant drawbacks. The overlap has proven confusing for voters, who must juggle information for both events.

to attract attention to their campaigns. It is also difficult for election administrators at both the provincial and municipal level, who often rely on the same people to work and use the same facilities to serve as voting locations.

The Chief Electoral Officer has proposed a solution to this problem: i.e., moving municipal elections to the spring, leaving the fall months every four years for provincial campaigns.⁵ Discussions are ongoing with city clerks and other municipal officials to determine the best path forward. Once this has been determined, the Chief Electoral Officer, along with interested municipal officials, will bring a proposal to legislators for their consideration, in the hope of resolving this ongoing issue.

While the overlap of provincial and municipal election dates is the primary concern in this area, additional changes to legislation could also facilitate greater collaboration. For example, it would be beneficial to increase the types of data collected and retained in Elections Saskatchewan's register of voters to include information related to school board choice (public or Catholic). This information would be very useful for municipal election administrators, who typically oversee voting for both their community and their local school board elections. In 2024, both urban and rural municipalities reached out to Elections Saskatchewan to receive extracts from the register of voters for their communities. Collecting school board data would make this data even more useful.

³ In 2024, the last day of voting for the Provincial Election was October 28 while municipal Election Day was November 13. Some communities, such as Moose Jaw, Warman, and Melfort had advance voting beginning on October 29 before the results of the Provincial Election were even finalized.

⁴ The Chief Electoral Officer released a first paper on this issue in May 2017, offering legislators three possible solutions, all of which would alleviate the problem. When no action was taken, he offered an updated paper in August 2021 which again addressed the overlap, including survey and observational data from the 2020 General Election on the impact of the closeness of the two events.

⁵ While the CEO's August 2021 recommended solution was to move municipal elections to May as opposed to early November, he did suggest that rural municipalities could leave their elections in the fall if they preferred. Problems and confusion are most prevalent in larger cities and urban centers which are advertising competing voting opportunities such as Vote by Mail, advance voting, etc. alongside Elections Saskatchewan's public campaigns.

Elections Saskatchewan is also increasingly considering how it can partner with, learn from, and help train election officials for First Nations communities and with the Metis Nation-Saskatchewan. As with municipal officials, these individuals are working in the same area as Elections Saskatchewan, share many of the same concerns, and have the same opportunities for improvement. While there are no immediate legislative recommendations in this area, they may arise after future events.

Digital Communications, Disinformation, and Democracy

In his previous Volume IV (29th GE), the Chief Electoral Officer pointed to a need for new legislative tools to address the growing risks and challenges caused by the rapid transition in online communications about elections and politics. At that time, the proposed changes included language providing the Chief Electoral Officer with stronger tools to confront disinformation and false statements about all aspects of the election, including those against or about candidates and political parties. Legislators did not act on this recommendation following the 29th General Election. Since that time, the need for such tools has continued to increase.

Traditional, in-person forms of communication historically used by political stakeholders have been increasingly replaced by online communications, particularly through

social media. While this has benefits, such as lower costs and the ability to reach supporters directly without a “middleman,” it also has significant drawbacks. Key among these are cyber threats and the possible spread of incorrect and harmful information through online channels. These issues are exacerbated by the rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI). The Communications Security Establishment, the federal government’s technical expert on cyber security, says that it is likely that, over the next two years, AI will be used in attacks against political figures and election management bodies.⁶

This increase in the use of social media related to political communication has given rise to concerns about the accuracy of information conveyed online about elections, political campaigns, and candidates for office. Misinformation is information that is factually incorrect. A person may hold a misinformed view without realizing it is incorrect. In fact, they may believe that the information is correct, even though it is not. Disinformation, in contrast, also is factually incorrect, but is circulated (often through social media) by people or organizations who know the information is incorrect. Disinformation campaigns are typically viewed as malicious, whereas spreading misinformation may simply be naïve. Malinformation, which is a newer term than the other two phrases, refers to information that stems from the truth, but which is exaggerated in a way that misleads and can lead to potential harm.



Misinformation – Information that is factually incorrect. A person may hold a misinformed view without realizing it is incorrect.

Disinformation – Information that is factually incorrect, but is circulated (often through social media) by people or organizations who know the information is incorrect.

Malinformation – Information that stems from the truth, but which is exaggerated in a way that misleads and can lead to potential harm.

⁶ For more information, the CSE’s Cyber Threats to Canada’s Democratic Process, 2025 Update report can be found online at <https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/cyber-threats-canadas-democratic-process-2025-update>.

Disinformation campaigns conducted during election campaigns can be particularly challenging due to the rapid spread of information through social media, the fact that the content may be sponsored by foreign actors (including foreign state actors), and the increasing sophistication of AI-rendered voice and imaging, which can have an appearance of authenticity. The relatively short duration of an election campaign and the speed with which information travels online also pose significant challenges.

One example of how AI could be used to influence voters was seen in January 2024, when several thousand people in New Hampshire received phone messages from an AI-generated version of then-President Joe Biden's voice discouraging them from voting in the state's presidential primary election.⁷ Another example comes from Slovakia, where a fake audio recording depicted a politician speaking to a journalist about manipulating the outcome of the country's election. The timing of this deception, just two days before the country's election, made it difficult for experts to determine the nature of the recording and have it dealt with by social media companies.⁸

Closer to home, in Saskatchewan, the voice and likeness of Premier Scott Moe has been used to promote cryptocurrency in an AI-generated scheme.⁹ Twice in 2025 (in March and August), the Premier spoke out about these deepfakes and urged the public to ignore them.

With these challenges in mind, the Chief Electoral Officer is again proposing additions to the Act that would provide greater authority for Elections Saskatchewan to respond to disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation. Candidates are already protected against certain forms of false statements under section 204 of the Act. The recommended amendments would offer an important expansion of those protections, extending them to include knowingly making false statements about the administration of voting or about the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Recognizing that legislators chose not to move forward with this recommendation last election cycle, the Chief Electoral

Officer has limited his recommendations for this cycle to primarily focus on misinformation and disinformation related to the administration of voting or the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. However, given the increasing presence of generative AI in online communications and its use (and misuse) in political spheres, an additional recommendation focusing on providing an authority to confront this problem has been included.

Legislators will need to carefully consider these proposed restrictions and balance them against the right to free expression guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The rise of online disinformation campaigns and their impact on broader democratic activities points to another gap in Saskatchewan's election legislation. Unlike in many other provinces (including B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario), Saskatchewan's Chief Electoral Officer does not have clear, overt authority to communicate publicly about election events or to provide educational materials or programs to the public.

The Chief Electoral Officer is recommending that language be added to the Act clearly stating that this falls within his office's responsibility. A key component of this would be positioning Elections Saskatchewan as the definitive source of information about voting in provincial elections and about the administration of elections more generally. A sub-component would be providing educational materials to the public, including civics-related materials for the education system and other groups that face barriers to democratic participation. Proposed language, based on similar authority provided to Chief Electoral Officers in Alberta and Manitoba as well as electoral best practice, can be found in Appendix B.¹⁰

Additional Areas for Consideration: Referenda and Boundaries

The administration of provincial elections and voting in the province occasionally moves beyond the Act and into other pieces of legislation. Two examples of this are *The Referendum and Plebiscite Act* (the Referendum Act) and

⁷ More information can be found at "Fake Biden robocall tells voters to skip New Hampshire primary election," *BBC News*, January 22, 2024, by Max Matza, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-68064247>.

⁸ See "A fake recording of a candidate saying he'd rigged the election went viral. Experts say it's only the beginning," *CNN News*, February 1, 2024, by Curt Devine, Donie O'Sullivan, and Sean Lyngaas, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/01/politics/election-deepfake-threats-invs>.

⁹ For more information, see "Scott Moe speaks out against AI-generated videos of him circulating online," *CBC News*, August 4, 2025, by Chris Edwards, available at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/scott-moe-speaks-out-against-ai-generated-videos-of-him-circulating-online-1.7600976>.

¹⁰ The specific provisions from Alberta and Manitoba can be found in subsection 4(2) of *The Election Act*, R.S.A. 2000 c. E-1, and in section 29 of *The Elections Act*, C.C.S.M. c. E30.

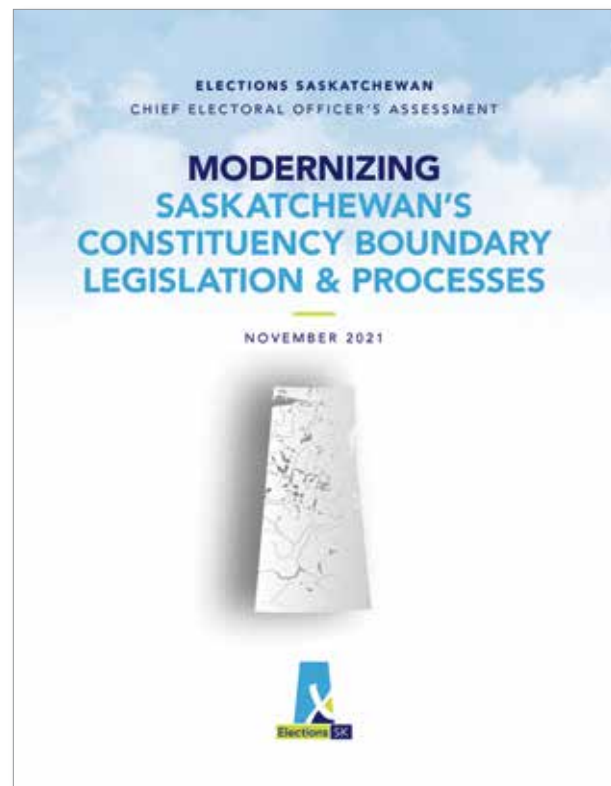
The Constituency Boundaries Act, 1993 (the Boundaries Act). The Chief Electoral Officer has published Assessment Series documents examining both Acts and offering recommendations.¹¹ To date, those recommendations have not been acted upon.

In September 2019, the Chief Electoral Officer published *Modernizing Saskatchewan's Referendum Legislation*, which offered legislators a path forward to update how Saskatchewan conducts "ballot question votes." As noted in that document, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Elections Saskatchewan to administer a referendum or plebiscite within the parameters of the existing legislation. While Saskatchewan has not conducted either type of ballot question vote in more than 30 years, the possibility of such a vote continues to be raised publicly and in the media.¹² Throughout 2025, there was speculation and interest in gathering signatures for a petition to eventually force a plebiscite vote.

Given the ongoing interest in and possibility of either a referendum or plebiscite, the Chief Electoral Officer recommends that legislators consider updating the Referendum Act to ensure that Elections Saskatchewan can administer an efficient, secure vote if instructed to do so.

Secondly, the Chief Electoral Officer strongly encourages legislators to update the Boundaries Act. In November 2021, he published *Modernizing Saskatchewan's Constituency Boundary Legislation and Processes*, outlining 10 recommendations to improve the process for setting provincial constituency boundaries. These recommendations were not acted upon before Saskatchewan's most recent Constituency Boundary Commission was established and completed its work in 2022. The Chief Electoral Officer is now reiterating his recommendation that legislators consider updating the Boundaries Act.

It is important to address this issue before establishment of the next Boundary Commission. Legislators should be aware that, due to the timeline for provincial general elections established in *The Legislative Assembly Act, 2007*, Saskatchewan is currently scheduled to hold a provincial



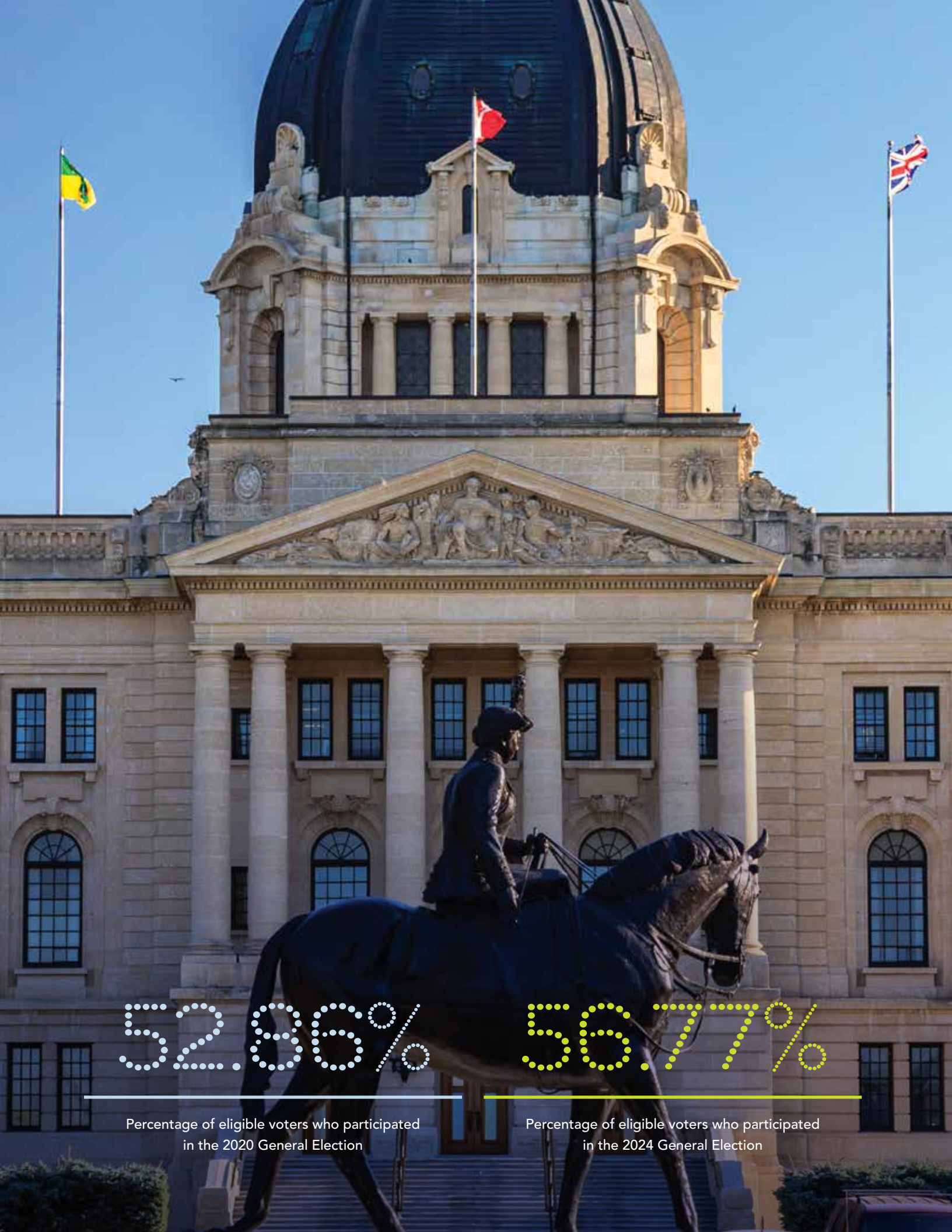
The Chief Electoral Officer offered 10 recommendations for improving the province's constituency boundary delimitation process in November 2021.

election in October 2032. The timeline for reviewing constituency boundaries would see a Boundary Commission formed early in 2032, with a final report and recommended boundaries also due in October 2032.

This overlapping timing raises multiple concerns. First, it means that the province's 2032 election would be contested using the same boundaries that were in place for the 2024 and 2028 elections, a break from the informal tradition which has seen them updated after every second election. Second, the prospect of an impartial, independent Boundary Commission completing its work in the leadup to a provincial election raises several significant concerns, including confused voters and concerned candidates and political parties. The Chief Electoral Officer therefore recommends addressing this issue well before the next Boundary Commission is established.

¹¹ *Modernizing Saskatchewan's Referendum Legislation* (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, September 2019) and *Modernizing Saskatchewan's Constituency Boundary Legislation and Processes* (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, November 2021) are available on Elections Saskatchewan's website at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/reports-data/ceo-assessment-series/>.

¹² Saskatchewan's last ballot question vote consisted of three plebiscite questions asked in conjunction with the province's 1991 General Election. In recent years, the idea of conducting ballot question votes related to the potential sale of Crown corporations, the public response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and provincial independence have all been discussed publicly and in the media.



52.86%

Percentage of eligible voters who participated
in the 2020 General Election

56.77%

Percentage of eligible voters who participated
in the 2024 General Election

Conclusion

This volume sets the stage for the successful delivery of Saskatchewan's 31st General Election in October 2028. It also represents the end of the three-phase plan the Chief Electoral Officer first put forward following the province's 2016 election.

What comes next—after the implementation of Phase 3 legislative amendments and the successful delivery of the next election—remains to be seen. Certainly, the province's election system will be stronger than it was. Elections Saskatchewan's reliance on more than 10,000 workers will be cut in half. Election work will be simpler and less demanding due to the adoption of technology and better designed paper forms. Political parties and candidates will have digital access to real-time data on who has voted, greatly aiding their "get out the vote" campaigns. Most importantly, the system's overall integrity and security will be maintained and improved, assuring its long-term stability.

Even as we move forward with a strengthened system, there will be significant issues to confront. Democracy is, and will remain, threatened around the world. Foreign actors will continue attempting to influence politics and elections. It will be critical to carry on strengthening Saskatchewan's institutions and system to counteract those attempts.

It is easier to maintain trust than to regain it once lost. And yet maintaining trust will be increasingly challenging as the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and resulting deepfakes

make it more and more difficult for the public to rely on what they see and hear. Again, Saskatchewan's and Canada's institutions must be ready and able to call out disinformation and to force its removal from online platforms.

Closer to home, voter turnout remains a significant concern in Saskatchewan, despite improvements in 2024. The percentage of eligible voters who participated in the general election increased from 52.86 percent in 2020 to 56.77 percent in 2024. In raw numbers, more than 26,000 additional voters turned out in 2024 as compared to 2020. Still, these numbers mean that less than three-fifths of the population is casting a ballot in spite of having more voting opportunities and options than ever before. In 2024, voters had access to 56 hours of in-person voting spread over six days, plus a widely-advertised Vote by Mail option that was available to anyone. Still, despite more options and greater convenience, voter turnout numbers have not risen substantially.

The issue of declining voter participation and turnout has been a critical concern for the Chief Electoral Officer throughout his tenure. And turnout among certain demographic groups is even more concerning. Young

people vote less than older people do. Turnout numbers in some First Nations communities are extremely low when compared to other communities.

These turnout and participation issues can be addressed only by cooperation between many different actors. The Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Saskatchewan play a vital role in removing barriers and broadening access, ensuring that anyone who wants to vote can do so. Political parties and candidates must be involved, motivating their supporters and attempting to reach segments of the public that have tuned out political messaging. The media, the school system, and the academic community also play a role in educating society about the importance of voting and democratic participation.

One item that the Chief Electoral Officer has repeatedly highlighted in his post-election legislative recommendations¹ is the need for a new *Election Act*. As that goal has not yet been realized, the need for updated, comprehensive, plain-language election legislation remains. While the current Act was passed in 1996, many of its sections were pulled directly from legislation passed years and even decades before that. In addition to being outdated, the Act is extremely prescriptive and can be difficult to administer. Saskatchewan needs a new Act to govern elections in the province, and creating such a piece of legislation will require significant investment from stakeholders including the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ministry of Justice, political stakeholders, and others. Moving ahead with new legislation should be a top priority shortly after the province's next general election in October 2028.

This four-volume report does not provide a vision or preview of the new legislation that could be adopted following the delivery of Saskatchewan's 31st General Election in October 2028. Those recommendations will wait until after that event is administered, ensuring that the new legislation is shaped and informed by the lessons learned from all three phases of the Chief Electoral Officer's plan.

Saskatchewan's 31st General Election: October 2028

If the Chief Electoral Officer is able to pursue the improvements described in this report, Saskatchewan's 31st General Election will be administered smoothly

and efficiently. Voters will notice that the system seems increasingly aligned with what works for them rather than a rigid set of bureaucratic rules.

Electronic poll books will be used to an even greater extent than they were in 2024, offering faster service to voters and a more efficient, streamlined process with less waiting in line. The increased use of technology and redesigned processes will allow election workers to have more frequent breaks, possibly even working in shifts of reasonable length, keeping them fresher and able to provide better service. In the long term, this will result in more workers returning in future election cycles, preserving knowledge and building toward a true "electoral service" for Saskatchewan.

Traditional in-person, and even mail-in voting, don't work for all voters. In 2028, telephone voting could bridge the gap for some of these people, as well as offering another option to allow voters with disabilities to cast their ballot independently. Lessons learned in a previous Saskatchewan by-election as well as from other jurisdictions show that telephone voting can be a secure, trusted method to serve small groups of voters. Improvements to the homebound (or possibly homebased) voting opportunity will also make that option more appealing to voters and easier for election workers to administer.

After the election is over, the removal of the external audit requirement will make it easier for candidates and their financial agents to complete their post-election work. Detailed reviews by Elections Saskatchewan will ensure the integrity of the system and maintain the same standards that are in place today.

The vision presented for Saskatchewan's 31st General Election is one of incremental improvement, building on the gains made in the past two election cycles. It will continue to broaden access to the ballot while maintaining the necessary trust and integrity on which the system depends. It will also serve as the capstone of the three-phase plan first put forward following the province's 2016 General Election. While it will always require effort to ensure Saskatchewan's system of administering voting and elections remains stable, Elections Saskatchewan has done the work to evolve the system and ensure its longevity into the future.

¹ See Vol IV (28th GE) and Vol IV (29th GE).

APPENDIX A

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ELECTION ACT, 1996 INCORPORATING CHANGES MADE VIA CEO DIRECTIVE IN OCTOBER 2024 (CATEGORY 1 CHANGES)

In Saskatchewan's October 2024 election, the Chief Electoral Officer used CEO Directives to modify certain parts of *The Election Act, 1996* (the Act). These changes included the implementation of Voting Week, the authorization to use electronic poll books in voting locations, and a centralized Vote by Mail process, among others. Based on the successful administration of that event, he is now recommending that these modifications be incorporated into the Act. These are fully described in Chapter 4, pages 30 to 33, where they are referred to as Category 1 changes.

This Appendix provides a list of the sections, subsections, and clauses of the Act that require amendment to fully incorporate those Directives into legislation, along with a brief description of the necessary changes. Complete details on the changes made via CEO Directive can be found within the text of each directive (available on the Elections Saskatchewan website).¹

CEO Directive 2023-009 Polling Divisions

This CEO Directive authorized the use of a new procedure for organizing voting and sorting voters into geographic sub-regions, with the intent of creating a more efficient and convenient system. Many of the proposed amendments relate to the elimination of the term "polling division," or broadening the concept of a polling division and making it apply to an entire constituency as opposed to only a portion of it.

The following clauses, subsections, and/or sections would require legislative change. Full details can be found in Appendix A of CEO Directive 2023-009.

Clause 2(1)(ff) – Interpretation

Subsections 16(4) and (4.1) – Who is entitled

Section 18 – Rules respecting ordinary residence:

Subsection 18.1(2) – Ordinary residence – Canadian Forces

Subsection 18.7(1) and Clause 18.7(3)(e) – Use of register of voters – preparation of voters' list

Section 19 – Polling divisions to be established

Subsections 25(4) and (6) – Preparation of voters' list

Subsection 34(2) – Election Proclamation

Section 36 – Polling places

Section 37 – Supervisory Deputy Returning Officer

Section 38 – Polling subdivisions

Subsection 54(2) – Candidate's representative

Section 61 – Where voters are to vote

Sections 88 and 89 – Voting procedures and post voting procedures

Subsection 89.3(11) – Voting procedures – homebound voters

Clauses 93(1)(e) and 93(3)(a) – Duties of Deputy Returning Officer at mobile poll

¹ All CEO Directives are available on Elections Saskatchewan's website at <https://www.elections.sk.ca/candidates-political-parties/bulletins-circulars/>.

CEO Directive 2023-010 Polling Period

This directive authorized the establishment of a “polling period” as an alternate procedure for organizing and conducting voting. The polling period, which was referred to publicly as Voting Week, consisted of five consecutive days of voting, followed by one day of non-voting before resuming for the final day of voting in the polling period. These modifications relate primarily to the incorporation and definition of new terminology, such as terms “polling period,” “first day of the polling period,” and “final day of the polling period,” and establishing the hours of voting during the first five days of voting and the last day of the polling period. It should be noted that in Appendix B, the Chief Electoral Officer recommends standardizing the hours of voting for the entire polling period to assist with communication and to create a consistent system across all days of voting.

The following clauses, subsections, and/or sections would require legislative change. Full details can be found in Appendix A of CEO Directive 2023-010.

- Clauses 2(1)(a), (o), (ee), & (mm) – Interpretation
- Subsection 7(6) – Chief Electoral Officer – emergency powers
- Subsection 10(3) – Deputy Returning Officer
- Subsection 12(3) – Election clerks
- Subsection 13(4) – Poll clerk
- Clauses 16(1)(a) & (b) – Who is entitled
- Clause 29(1)(c) – Voter Information Card
- Section 31 – Lieutenant Governor in Council to commence elections
- Section 32 – Issuing a writ
- Section 34 – Election proclamation
- Subsection 41(4) – Delay in nomination
- Clauses 42(2)(c) & (d) – Qualifications of candidates
- Clause 51(2)(c) – If more than one candidate nominated
- Subsection 52(1) – Withdrawal of candidate
- Section 53 – Death of candidate – new nomination
- Subsection 58(1) – Posting of notices

- Subsection 60(1), (2) & (3) – Employees entitled to vote
- Subsection 62(1) – Hours of voting
- Sections 84, 85, 86, 87, 88 and 89
- Subsections 89.1(2) & (3) – Homebound voting
- Subsection 89.2(2) – Application – Homebound voting
- Subsections 89.3(1) & (2) – Voting procedures – homebound voters
- Subsection 91(1) – When mobile polls are to be held
- Subsections 92(1), (2) & (10) – Voting at mobile polls
- Subsections 93(2) & (3) – Duties of Deputy Returning Officer at mobile poll
- Subsections 122(1) & (2) – Alternative hours of voting (Hospital & Remand Centres during by-elections)
- Subsection 125(1) – Statement of voters making a voter’s declaration
- Subsection 126(2) – Dealing with ballot boxes
- Sections 129 – 135 – Advance polls
- Subsection 143(1) – Returning Officer to receive and deal with ballot boxes
- Clause 171(1)(a) – Return to writ of election
- Subsections 190(1), (2) and (5) – Prohibited displays, devices and actions during the polling period
- Clause 171(1)(a) – Return to writ of election
- Subsections 190(1), (2) and (5) – Prohibited displays, devices and actions during the polling period
- Clause 220(h)(iii) – exempt election expenses – definition
- Subsection 221(6) – Calculation of adjusted amounts
- Subsection 251(1) – Party’s election expenses return
- Subsection 256(1) – Time limit to enforce claims against candidate
- Section 257 – Time limit to pay bills
- Subsections 261(1) & (5) – Candidate’s election expenses
- Subsection 267(4) – Reimbursement of auditing expenses

APPENDIX A

CEO Directive 2023-011 Electronic Poll Books/ Voting Record

This CEO Directive adapted the Act to allow a poll book to be in an electronic format. For voting locations where the use of an electronic poll book was not feasible, the Directive prescribed the use of a new form, called a Voting Record, which combined elements of the poll book and voters list. The modifications described within relate primarily to the description of the electronic poll book and the Voting Record, the elimination of the poll clerk election official position from most in-person voting opportunities, the creation of a new election official position called a “ballot box officer,” and the appointment of additional Deputy Returning Officers only for counting ballots once voting ends.

The following clauses, subsections, and/or sections would require legislative change. Full details can be found in Appendix A of CEO Directive 2023-011.

Clauses 2(1)(dd), (rr) and (NEW)

Section 5.4 – Directive re: voting modifications, electronic poll book, etc.

Section 13 – Poll clerk

Section 38 – Polling subdivisions

Section 63 – Who is entitled to be in polling place and at counting of votes

Section 66 – Poll book

Section 71 – Taking voter’s declaration

Section 72 – When individual not entitled to ballot paper or to vote

Section 74 – Marking ballot

Section 75 – Examination and deposit of ballot

Section 77 – Voter may request assistance in marking ballot

Section 78 – Interpreters

Section 81 – Voting outside polling place

Section 82 – If impersonation alleged

Section 85 – Statement of all voter’s declarations required

Section 134 – Sealing ballot box after close of advance poll

Section 135 – Procedures on close of advance poll

Section 141 – Preliminary count after close of polls on polling day

Section 142 – What are rejected ballots

Section 159 – Election officers and others to attend

Section 167 – If judge required to undertake recount or appeal

Section 177 – Public inspection of election documents and voter data

Section 205 – False returns

Section 206 – Unlawfully destroying documents

CEO Directive 2023-014 Vote by Mail

This CEO Directive defined an alternate procedure to implement Vote by Mail in place of absentee voting. These modifications relate mainly to the existing absentee voting provisions, voting procedures, and the Preliminary and Final Counts. Notably, this CEO Directive was used to implement an additional count of ballots, referred to as the Second Preliminary Count, which began two days after the last day of the polling period and continued until complete. At this count, all Vote by Mail ballots received by a set date were counted, reducing uncertainty for candidates and the general public as to the election results. As the number of mail-in ballots has increased significantly, leaving all of those ballots uncounted between the reporting of the Preliminary Count results (immediately after voting ends) and the Final Count (12 days later) could cause public confusion and lead to skepticism and mistrust in processes.

The following clauses, subsections, and/or sections would require legislative change. Full details can be found in Appendix A of CEO Directive 2023-014.

Subsection 84(1.1) – When voting is deemed to be done

Section 86 – Absentee voters – definition, eligibility

Section 87 – Application – absentee voters

Section 88 – Voting Procedures

Section 89 – Post voting procedures

Section 89.3(2) & (3) – Voting procedures – homebound voters

Subsections 141(15-22) and subsections 141(24-26) – Preliminary count after close of polls on the final day of the polling period

Subsection 145(8) – Final Count by Returning Officer

Subsections 146(1) & (4) – Counting votes cast using Special Voting procedures

Clauses 287(1)(a.11) & (a.2) – Regulations

CEO Directive 2023-018 Central Count of HRT Ballots

This CEO Directive defined an alternate procedure for the management and counting of hospital, remand, and temporarily displaced voter ballots. This directive also extended an amendment to the Act as to the acceptable marks (political party leader name) that can be counted on Form B ballots for absentee voting, to also apply to the Form B ballots used at vote by mail, hospital, remand centre, and temporarily displaced voter polls.

The following clauses, subsections, and/or sections would require legislative change. Full details can be found in Appendix A of CEO Directive 2023-018.

Section 88(1)(a)(iii)(A) – Voting Procedures (Absentee voting)

Subsection 96(1) – Ballot paper for temporarily displaced voters

Subsection 99(7) – Voting Procedures (Temporarily displaced voters)

Subsections 101(8)-(12) – Handling of ballot boxes with ballot envelopes (Temporarily displaced voters)

Subsections 102(1) & (2) – Preserving ballots until Final Count (Temporarily displaced voters)

Subsection 104(1) – Ballot paper for hospital voters

Subsection 107(7) – Voting Procedures (Hospital voters)

Subsections 109(8)-(12) – Handling of ballot boxes with ballot envelopes (Hospital voters)

Section 110 – Preserving ballots until Final Count (Hospital voters)

Subsection 112(1) – Ballot papers for remand centre voters

Subsection 115(7) – Voting Procedures (Remand voters)

Subsection 117(8)-(12) – Handling of ballot boxes with ballot envelopes (Remand voters)

Section 118 – Preserving ballots until Final Count (Remand voters)

Subsection 146(1) – Counting votes case using Special Voting procedures

APPENDIX B

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ELECTION ACT, 1996:
ADDRESSING ISSUES IN THE ACT FOR SASKATCHEWAN’S 31ST
GENERAL ELECTION

Chapter 5 provides descriptions of several recommended changes to *The Election Act, 1996* beyond the broader efforts described in Chapter 4. These changes are grouped into three primary areas within this appendix. The tables below are arranged in the same manner as found in Chapter 5, listing first the three primary areas of recommended changes and then a small number of independent, stand-alone changes.

The three primary areas covered below are:

- 1. Political Finance and Political Stakeholder Regulation (Table 1.1)
- 2. Increasing Collaboration with Municipalities (Table 1.2)
- 3. Digital Communications, Disinformation, and Democracy (Table 1.3)

Table 1.4 lists a number of stand-alone, independent items, each of which would improve election administration in the province.

Table 1.1 Political Finance and Political Stakeholder Regulation

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Interpretation	2	NEW	“constituency association” means a constituency association that is recognized by the leader or Chief Official Agent of a registered party or an independent member as the official association of that party or that member in the constituency.
Qualifications of candidates	42(2)(d.1)	... “the following persons are not qualified to be candidates: (d.1) a person who was a candidate in a previous election and failed to have an election expenses return filed pursuant to section 261.”	This subsection is intended to help ensure that candidates complete the required expense return process. However, there should be a remedy for a candidate who fails to file a return before the deadline without asking for an extension, but then does complete their return. An option, which is used in other jurisdictions, would be to allow a candidate to run in elections after they have remedied the deficiency and completed the expense return.

Table 1.1 Political Finance and Political Stakeholder Regulation – continued

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Qualifications of candidates	42(2)	This subsection provides a list of individuals who are not qualified to serve as candidates.	This subsection should be amended to add that a candidate cannot serve as a financial agent for another candidate. The role of candidate and the role of financial agent are different, and both require time and attention if they are to be completed in accordance with the requirements of the Act. A candidate cannot be expected to campaign and adequately complete the work of the financial agent, and the reverse is also true: a financial agent cannot adequately complete their work and serve as a candidate.
Qualifications of candidates	42 NEW	This section lists the qualifications to be a candidate in subsection 42(1) along with a list of persons who are not qualified to serve as a candidate in 42(2).	At present, there is no explicit restriction on an individual being nominated as a candidate in more than one constituency. Adding this clarification to the legislation would be beneficial. Suggested language would be: “At any one time, a person is not eligible to be nominated as a candidate for more than one constituency.”
Financial agent required	43(3)	“A financial agent may act as financial agent on behalf of more than one candidate.”	This should be amended to clarify that a financial agent can only serve in that role for one candidate in each constituency. A financial agent could continue to serve in that role for more than one candidate, provided the candidates are in different constituencies. This recommendation is designed to help address issues seen in other jurisdictions related to the “longest ballot committee,” in which an individual serves as financial agent for many candidates in the same constituency.
Deposit required	46	Subsection 46(1) reads: “A nomination paper is valid only if accompanied by a deposit of \$500.”	Following consideration and discussion with registered political parties, the Chief Electoral Officer is recommending that the amount of the nomination deposit be lowered to \$250.
If more than one candidate nominated	51(2)(a)	“On or immediately after nomination day, the Returning Officer shall publish the following information: (a) the names, political affiliations, if any, and addresses of the candidates nominated;	The requirement to publish an address for each candidate should be removed. This information holds little value and has been cited frequently as a privacy concern.

Table 1.1 Political Finance and Political Stakeholder Regulation – continued

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Candidate's financial agent	236(1)	This section lists the duties of the candidate financial agent.	Require that the financial agent track transfers from constituency associations. Include requirement prohibiting financial agents from accepting funds from a constituency association unless those funds have been transferred and properly processed by the party.
Use of agents to make contributions	240		Remove constituency associations from section 240.
Use of agents to make contributions	240(2)(a)		Clarify that a constituency association is not an "agent."
NEW	NEW		Require constituency associations to forward all contributions to party for reporting, and require constituency association treasurers to certify that all funds received by the constituency association have been transferred to the party. Stipulate that a constituency association cannot transfer funds to a candidate unless those funds have been transferred and recorded by the party and then returned to the constituency association. Include a requirement for registered political parties to ensure that contributions from constituency associations comply with legislation, and forfeit anonymous contributions to the Chief Electoral Officer as per section 241(4). Repeat subsections (11) through (13) in new clause and have them be specific to constituency associations.
Annual return	250(2)		Add subsection to include constituency associations.
NEW	NEW	NEW	Specifically exclude transfers from constituency associations to candidate campaigns from the definition of a contribution and classify it as a transfer of funds.
Candidate's election expenses return	261(3)(h.1) NEW		Add requirement for candidates to report the value of funds transferred from a constituency association to the candidate campaign.

Table 1.1 Political Finance and Political Stakeholder Regulation – continued

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
If contributions exceed election expenses	269(3)	This subsection details what happens if a candidate's total contributions exceed their total election expenses.	This subsection should be amended to read: "If a candidate is endorsed by a registered political party and the value of all contributions and transfers from constituency associations and the registered political party exceeds the candidate's election expenses..."
If contributions exceed expenses – independent candidate	270	This section is similar to the one directly above but outlines what happens if an independent candidate's total contributions exceed their total expenses.	Same change as above.
No publication of information during an election	277(6) & 277(7)	This subsection requires that every broadcaster and/or publisher file a solemn declaration setting out whether they have published (or broadcast) any information from a government ministry (subject to certain requirements).	This requirement to file a solemn declaration with the Chief Electoral Officer is of no practical use and is not often complied with. This subsection should be repealed.
Inspections	280(2)	This subsection requires that every registered political party, candidate, and financial agent make their offices and certain materials available to the Chief Electoral Officer for inspection.	Amend to include constituency association records.

Table 1.2 Increasing Collaboration with Municipalities

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Establishment and maintenance of register of votes	18.2(4)	This subsection provides a list of data elements that the register of voters may contain.	To allow for increased collaboration with municipalities and to improve the services that Elections Saskatchewan can offer to municipalities, this list should be expanded to include additional data elements: - school board choice (e.g., public or separate), - residency eligibility, and - residency versus property ownership. It would provide considerable additional flexibility if the Chief Electoral Officer were given the authority to add additional data elements to the register of voters without requiring legislative change. A blanket statement such as the one shown below could provide this flexibility and authority: - any other information that the Chief Electoral Officer considers should be included in the register.

Table 1.3 Digital Communications, Disinformation, and Democracy

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Chief Electoral Officer – powers and responsibilities	NEW	This section lists the Chief Electoral Officer's powers and responsibilities within the Act.	Given the increasing presence and risks posed by disinformation, language should be added to the Act making it clear that the Chief Electoral Officer has a mandate to communicate with the public about the election process (including voting, voter registration, requirements to vote/be a candidate, etc.) and to provide educational materials related to voting and the election process. Proposed language related to this amendment is: The Chief Electoral Officer may: (a) provide the public with information about the electoral process, the right to vote, the right to be a candidate and the operation of this Act; and (b) implement public education and information programs to make the electoral process better known to the public

Table 1.3 Digital Communications, Disinformation, and Democracy – continued

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
False Statements before or during an election	204	(1) Before or during an election, no person shall knowingly make or publish a false statement of the withdrawal of a candidate at the election for the purpose of promoting or securing the election of another candidate. (2) Before or during an election, no person shall knowingly make or publish any false statement in relation to the personal character or conduct of a candidate for the purpose of affecting the return of the candidate at the election. (3) A contravention of this section is a corrupt practice.	Online disinformation and misinformation are becoming an increasing problem for election administrators around the world. The Act should be amended to provide the Chief Electoral Officer with additional authority to counter disinformation and misinformation against the electoral process and against his office. The Chief Electoral Officer would propose that the following text be considered by legislators for inclusion within the Act. “No person or entity, including foreign persons and entities, shall knowingly make false statements about the voting process, including about voting, vote counting procedures, voting eligibility, or the dates, times, and locations of voting, in order to disrupt the conduct of the election or to undermine the legitimacy of the election or its results. No person or entity shall intentionally impersonate or make false statements about the Chief Electoral Officer or his office.” The Chief Electoral Officer is also recommending that consideration be given to providing additional authority to address the use of generative AI, the creation of deepfakes, and the subsequent sharing of these materials online. This legal authority could then be referenced by the Chief Electoral Officer when contacting social media companies to have this material removed.

Table 1.4 Other Stand-Alone Recommendations

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Election proclamation	34(4)(b) & 34(4.1)	A Returning Officer is required to deliver one copy of the election proclamation to “the council of each municipality wholly or partly situated within the constituency.” The council of the municipality must then post the proclamation in a conspicuous place in the municipality.	The requirement to provide a copy of the proclamation to each municipal council and to then have them post it is unnecessary, as there are better and more efficient ways to share the information provided on the proclamation. Both 34(4)(b) and 34(4.1) should be repealed.
Ballot papers	35(3)(b) & (c)	The Act currently requires that the political affiliation of the candidate or their independent status be included on the ballot paper “in brackets” beneath their name.	The requirement to have the political affiliation or independent status of the candidate printed in brackets creates technical and logistical problems as these are considered “special characters” and are treated differently by certain computer programs. The political affiliation or independent status should remain; however, the requirement for it to be inside brackets should be removed.
Hours of voting	62(1)	“...every polling place is to be open for voting between the hours of 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.”	This section sets the voting hours for polling day while the hours for advance voting are set in section 132 (at 12 noon until 8 p.m. each day). The CEO Directive creating a polling period changed the hours for the first five days to run from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and recommended that these hours also be used on the last day, creating consistency across all voting days and assisting in communications with voters. This recommendation was not agreed to by the BOIE, who asked that voting hours on the last day run from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. The Chief Electoral Officer is once again recommending that standard hours of 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. be used across all the days of voting. Elections Saskatchewan’s data shows that, after a certain point, increased hours do not result in higher turnout, but rather spread out voters over more time. The benefit of communicating consistent voting times across every day during Voting Week far outweighs any benefit of an increase of one hour on the last day of voting.

Table 1.4 Other Stand-Alone Recommendations – continued

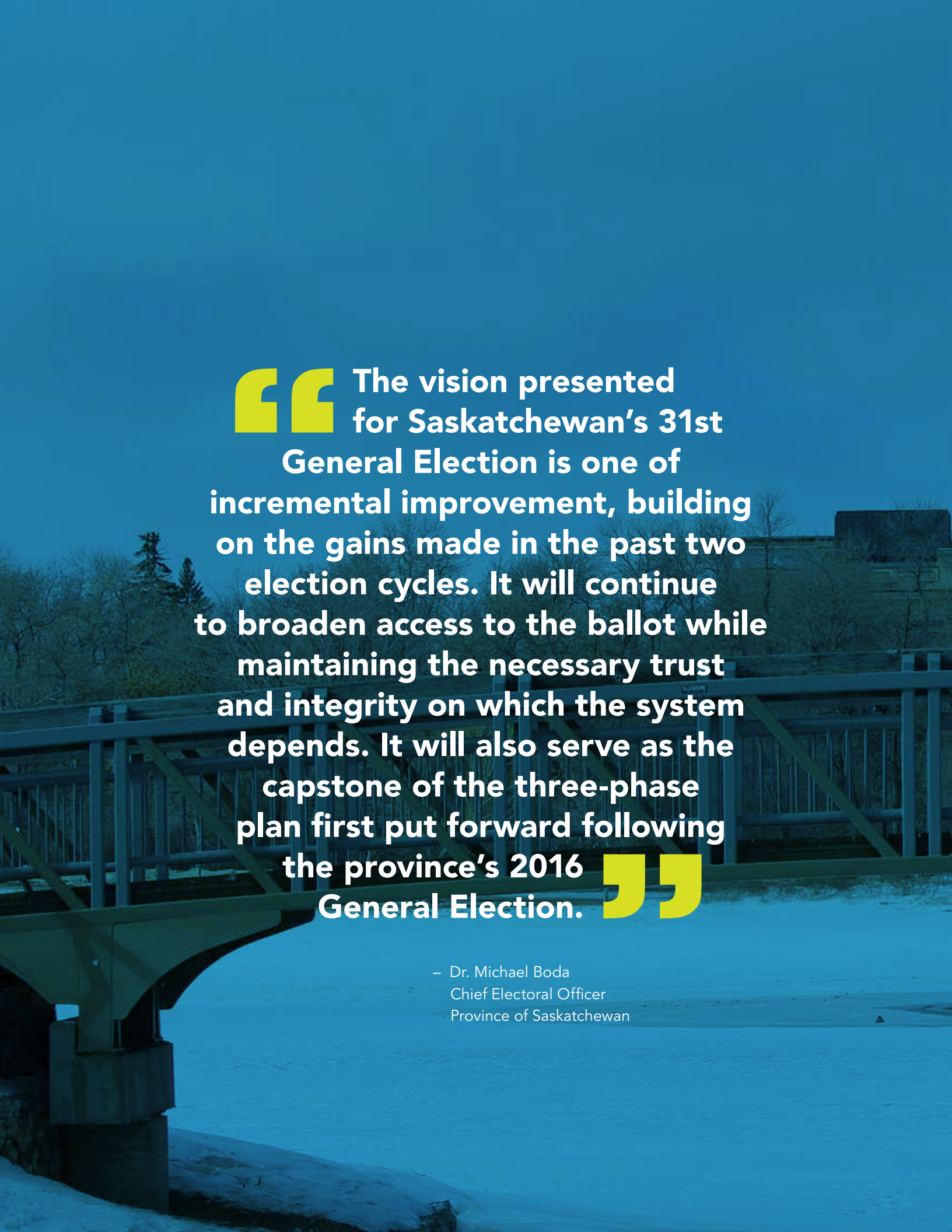
Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Voting procedures – homebound voters	89.1 to 89.3	These sections outline the homebound voting process, describing in detail who is eligible to use this option, how they can apply, and the process that election officials must take to administer homebound voting.	Following several elections during which this voting option has been offered, a number of changes are recommended. The first is to rename this voting option as “home-based” voting. Multiple disability advocacy groups have said that the term “homebound” is no longer appropriate and should be replaced with a term such as “home-based.” The Act is not currently clear as to which type of ballot a homebound voter should use. Clause 89.3(4)(a)(iii) makes reference to a ballot similar to the one described in section 35, which is the traditional “Form A” ballot. However, 89.3(9)(a) could refer to a ballot marked with the “political affiliation” of a candidate, which could be a “Form B” ballot. The Act should be clarified that “Form A” ballots are used by all homebound voters. Homebound voters are also currently required to complete a declaration upon applying and to complete a certificate of eligibility with election officials while voting (89.3(4)(c)). This is duplicative, as is the need to place the marked ballot into a ballot envelope. This process could be made simpler by simply having the homebound voter mark and fold their ballot (with assistance if needed) and then deposit the folded ballot into the ballot box. The Act also allows a homebound voter to be designated an absentee voter by the Returning Officer if it is not practicable for them to have an election officer visit. With the Chief Electoral Officer’s recommendation to move to Vote by Mail as a replacement for absentee voting, all references should be changed to put forward Vote by Mail as an alternate option (assuming Vote by Mail is introduced into the Act).

Table 1.4 Other Stand-Alone Recommendations – continued

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Handling of ballot boxes with ballot envelopes	101(3), 109(3), 117(3)	"...the Chief Electoral Officer shall do the things prescribed in this section five days after polling day, at 10 a.m."	These three subsections prescribe a specific date and time at which hospital, remand, and temporarily displaced votes can be sorted and distributed to the appropriate constituencies. The exact date and time requirement should be removed and replaced with a requirement that the Chief Electoral Officer inform registered political parties and candidates of when redistribution will occur. This change must be incorporated with other changes to this section stemming from CEO Directives.
Request when automatically entitled	155(1)	"If, after the Final Count, the margin of victory of the candidate declared to be elected is less than the total number of all unopened ballot envelopes, rejected ballots and ballots objected to, any candidate or the financial agent of any candidate is entitled to request a recount or an addition."	Saskatchewan's current formula for determining if a candidate is entitled to an automatic recount is not intuitive and is very difficult for a candidate/their financial agent/ the public to understand and become aware of, as it relies on data only available internally at Elections Saskatchewan. A better option would be to have a recount formula similar to many other jurisdictions, which is a numerical difference between the leading and second-place candidates as the determiner for whether a recount should occur. The Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation would be that if the margin is 25 votes or less, the Returning Officer will automatically apply for a recount; if the margin is between 25 and 50 then a candidate or their financial agent is entitled to apply and the request will be automatically granted; if the margin is 50 or more, then the candidate or their financial agent can apply but will need to provide evidence as to why a recount should be granted.

Table 1.4 Other Stand-Alone Recommendations – continued

Section Heading &/ or Description	Section/ Subsection	Current Language or Brief Description	Proposed Changes
Destruction of election papers and documents	176	This section outlines the Chief Electoral Officer's responsibilities when it comes to the retention and eventual destruction of election materials. Generally, the Act requires that most election materials be destroyed one year after the last day of voting.	The introduction of electronic poll books and the increasing use of technology in election administration means that certain materials that only existed as physical documents that could be stored in ballot boxes can now also be created and stored electronically. Clause 5.4(5)(e) of the Act recognizes that data stemming from electronic poll books may be retained electronically; section 176 could be amended to clarify that some election materials are no longer stored in ballot boxes and returned to the Chief Electoral Officer by the Returning Officer. This does not apply to items such as ballots, voter declarations, physical ballot boxes, etc., which continue to be destroyed one year after the last day of voting per legislation.



“ The vision presented for Saskatchewan’s 31st General Election is one of incremental improvement, building on the gains made in the past two election cycles. It will continue to broaden access to the ballot while maintaining the necessary trust and integrity on which the system depends. It will also serve as the capstone of the three-phase plan first put forward following the province’s 2016 General Election. ”

– Dr. Michael Boda
Chief Electoral Officer
Province of Saskatchewan



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