



A REPORT ON THE
TWENTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ELECTION

VOLUME II

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW





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ISBN 978-0-9921510-8-9

VOLUME II - ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW
(v1.0)



November 27, 2017

The Honourable Corey Tochor
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Room 129, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3

Mr. Speaker:

In the spirit of Section 286 of *The Election Act, 1996* I am honoured to submit Volume II of *A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election*.

This volume provides an administrative review of the election, and includes the results of field study analysis undertaken by election administration experts from across Canada along with measurements of stakeholder perceptions regarding the election's delivery. Information was collected impartially and independently via a combination of poll observations, surveys, interviews and facilitated debriefing sessions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Michael D. Boda'.

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REPORTING ON THE GENERAL ELECTION: FOUR VOLUMES

The period leading to Saskatchewan’s 28th General Election, held on April 4, 2016, was one of transition for both the statutory Office of the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Saskatchewan, the provincial election management body that supports this office. Both continued a process of reassessment and renewal that had begun in 2009. Both continued to carefully consider what it means to administer free and fair elections in the context of Saskatchewan.

In 2009, the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly had commissioned a review¹ of the organizational structure and operational environment of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, leading to the appointment of Dr. Michael Boda as the province’s Chief Electoral Officer and head of Elections Saskatchewan on June 1, 2012.

In the months following this appointment, Dr. Boda consulted with key stakeholders within the province, a process that led to describing a “path for renewal”² – the approach by which the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer would alter its management methods, restructure its staff,

and evolve the institution’s operation to be consistent with electoral best practice in Canada and in leading democratic jurisdictions around the world. This path would include three key tenets for organizational renewal:

- Professionalizing Saskatchewan’s election management body;
- Improving the delivery of provincial electoral events; and
- Placing greater focus on democratic stewardship in the province.

¹ David M. Hamilton, *The Recount: Report of the Review of the Operational Environment and Accountabilities of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer for Saskatchewan* (The Hamilton Report) (Regina: March 2009).

² Michael D. Boda, *Election Administration in Saskatchewan: ‘A Path for Renewal’* (Estimates for Fiscal Year 2013-2014) (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, 2013).

Once the team that would lead Elections Saskatchewan into the 28th General Election was established, the organization undertook strategic planning for the years 2014-2016³ to determine how the three key tenets could be transformed into a set of goals and strategic objectives that would lead to a successful general election and a much-strengthened election management body.

Elections Saskatchewan's leadership team reflected on the values found in election management bodies across the country and throughout the world. Six core values were identified and their adoption helped guide the organization through the province's 28th electoral cycle and general election:

- Independence;
- Impartiality;
- Professionalism;
- Accountability;
- Innovation; and
- Service Orientation

The story of Saskatchewan's 28th General Election, held on April 4, 2016, will be told over the course of four volumes, each providing different kinds of insight into the overall success and challenges involved in planning for, organizing and implementing the province's largest ever event. Together, these will constitute **A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election**.

- **Volume I – Statement of Votes** (published in January 2017) was designed to provide data surrounding the public's participation in the 2016 electoral event. It collated information with the intent of providing a richer understanding of voting trends in the province. Information on candidates, registered political parties, and historical data was also included;
- **Volume II – Administrative Review** (the current volume) offers a firmer grasp of the manner by which the 2016 general election was conducted. This volume looks at two sides of the electoral event. On the one hand, it focuses on how the electoral event was conducted based on an assessment of election administrator colleagues from across the country who were in Saskatchewan during the election period to evaluate the process. On the other, this volume looks at stakeholder perceptions of the implementation of the general election, drawing conclusions from surveys, focus groups, interviews and other sources of data;

- **Volume III – Statement of Expenses** will address another important component of the 2016 electoral event, one of capturing the overall costs related to the 2016 electoral event. While not often understood, such costs continue to be accumulated well after election day and the final results of the election are reported. This volume will provide insight on spending in two key areas, including spending related to reimbursements given to Saskatchewan's eligible registered political parties and eligible candidates, all of which is outlined within *The Election Act, 1996*. In addition, it will provide figures related to the cost of administering the 2016 general election in 61 constituencies across the province; and, finally;
- **Volume IV – Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform** will take into account what has been learned over the course of the 28th electoral cycle in order to position the province – its voters, political parties and candidates and its provincial election management body – to conduct the 29th General Election. It will be published following a thorough review and assessment of how the 28th General Election was conducted in light of electoral best practice and changes being observed across the country. This volume will offer the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation on how the Election Act should be changed to more effectively serve electoral stakeholders across the province.

While the publication of this report in four volumes will fulfil the Chief Electoral Officer's statutory duty outlined in Section 286 of *The Election Act 1996*, its intent goes well beyond this. Saskatchewan has demonstrated a competence in governance since its founding in 1905. Around the globe, the province and its partners in Confederation are categorized among the world's most successful democracies. The hope is that the information offered in this report will lead to a heightened awareness of the state of democracy in Saskatchewan by placing a microscope on one facet of it — a general election. The report aims specifically at providing a variety of tools that can encourage the residents of Saskatchewan to reflect on how the democratic traditions they cherish can be fine-tuned and improved for the future.



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

³ Elections Saskatchewan. *A Strategic Plan for Saskatchewan's Election Management Body, 2014-16* (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, January 2014).



1,200+

Observations of the provincial voting process were recorded.



Please ask if you have additional needs for marking your ballot, such as magnifying sheets, pencil grips, or extra lighting.

ADMINISTRATIVE OVERVIEW

This volume reports on the findings of the first-ever assessment of the quality of administrative preparations and delivery of a provincial general election in Saskatchewan. The review was designed to establish a baseline of performance, and create some useful measures and evaluations regarding the most important legally mandated functions Elections Saskatchewan must perform in the preparation and delivery of a general election.

If Saskatchewan's democratic electoral practices are to be maintained and strengthened in the future, assessment and evaluation of the administration of each electoral event will be necessary to ensure appropriate efforts and continuous improvements are being made. Administrative reforms will continue to be necessary to meet the evolving needs and expectations of electoral stakeholders. Establishing a performance baseline is an essential step for monitoring future administrative performance and creating the ability to take meaningful comparison measures and assess progress.

The assessment process for Saskatchewan's 28th General Election examined the provincial election management body's administration of preparations for key electoral processes in the election and the administrative conduct of the election itself.

The content of this administrative review has been informed by direct observation of specific activities involved in implementing components of the electoral process combined with opinion research drawn from a cross-section of electoral stakeholders, including the voting and non-voting public, election workers and political party representatives.

SOURCES OF DATA FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW:

Field Observations including

- More than 1,200 individual acts of voting across 12 constituencies including length of time to cast a ballot and whether correct identification was presented;
- Procedures for opening of polls and preparing to serve voters on election day;
- The return of ballot boxes and other election materials after the end of voting; and
- The ballot proofing process.

Opinion Research including surveys inclusive of

- Voters and non-voters;
- Elections Saskatchewan's Field Leadership Team;
- Election workers including deputy returning officers and poll clerks; and
- Political party representatives including candidates and business managers.

Scope of Review

The type of assessment described in this volume has never been conducted before in Saskatchewan, and is still a relatively rare activity within Canada. The primary reason for this is that senior election administrators in the provincial, territorial and federal jurisdictions become so extremely busy with event management that they simply do not have time to undertake any type of formalized review of the processes they are administering during their preparation and delivery of an election.

For this very reason, Elections Saskatchewan obtained the assistance of persons from outside of their organization to undertake the administrative review activities that are reported in this document. However, the costs and logistics of this exercise needed to fit within a modest budget allocation for assessment activities, and this necessitated some conscious limitations to the scope and timing of selected review activities.

Activities placed within the scope of the review, which was planned prior to the originally scheduled November 2015 election date, focused on the most important general election activities that occurred within the period of March 1 to April 30, 2016. The assessment project was designed by the members of its Steering Committee⁴ during the 2014-15 fiscal year, and the details were adjusted in the summer of 2015 to accommodate the four-month election delay.

Included within the scope of this review are:

- The quality of voter registration and lists of voters used for administering the election;
- The recruitment and training of the election workforce across 61 constituencies;
- Arrangements for voting locations and returning offices in each constituency;
- Services for voters with disabilities;
- Services for First Nation voters;
- Ballot printing controls;
- Political party and candidate support;
- Provision of voting information to voters;
- Advance voting procedures;
- Election day voting procedures; and
- Ballot counting and reporting procedures.

During the review's design, other important administrative activities needed to be consciously excluded from the scope of assessment, primarily due to their associated timing or overall duration. These included electoral mapping; development of instruction materials used by election officials at all levels; procurement of goods and services associated with field delivery of the election; the final count and formal results reporting to the Legislative Assembly; and the audit review of candidate and political party election expenses.

⁴ The Steering Committee for the election assessment project was made up of three members, including Saskatchewan's Chief Electoral Officer, Dr. Michael Boda, and the project's design was further assisted by an electoral process expert. Further details about these individuals are provided in the 'Acknowledgements' section that appears at the end of this publication.

Methods of Assessment

The key to Elections Saskatchewan's planning for the 28th General Election was the concept of following a "path for renewal."

This idea, publicly introduced in the institution's 2012-2013 annual report, outlined a course of action by which Elections Saskatchewan would alter its management approach and evolve the institution's operations to be consistent with best practice in Canada and other leading democratic jurisdictions around the world.

The concept was further elaborated in Elections Saskatchewan's 2014-2016 strategic plan, which included a strategic objective to develop and implement a plan for:

*"...evaluative activities, surveys, and audits that must be conducted before, during, and after the election. These evaluations, surveys, and audits will be used to compile a quantitative and qualitative baseline of assessments regarding service levels, procedural compliance, voter participation, organizational performance, and stakeholder satisfaction."*⁵

The resulting implementation plan for meeting this objective was guided by social science research principles and combined the expertise of the academic community, senior election administrators and experienced statistical and program evaluation experts. The chosen approach was stratified, blending the application of professionally designed survey research, 'on the ground' observation by experienced electoral practitioners, interviews with key individuals, and facilitated discussions with stakeholder groups.

To capture on the ground, real-time data on the front-line administration of voting processes and procedures, Elections Saskatchewan engaged experienced electoral officials from election management bodies across the country to observe compliance at the polls. Twelve expert observers traveled throughout the province, each attending multiple polling locations in twelve different constituencies to watch and record what they saw and heard at the polls during the last day of advance voting (April 2) and on election day (April 4).

Observer assignments were devised with a view to ensuring an adequate number of polls being observed for both the poll opening and poll closing processes. The plan also ensured that each observer had an opportunity to view counting on election night at a polling location relatively close to the corresponding returning office for that specific constituency. In doing so, the observers were able to watch the count, as well as observe the return of supplies to the returning office and the results reporting activities conducted in that office.

To accurately capture perceptions of the administration of the election using a rigorous, quantifiable approach, the Social Sciences Research Laboratory (SSRL) of the University of Saskatchewan was engaged to survey four groups. These were:

- **Voters/Non-Voters** – Beginning immediately after election day, an anonymous sample of 1,205 voters and 1,200 non-voters were contacted by telephone and asked to comment on satisfaction with and perceptions of Elections Saskatchewan, the way the election was conducted and their level of knowledge of key aspects of the election process – including when, where and how to vote.
- **The Field Leadership Team (FLT)** – After the close of all election-related activities, an electronic link to an online survey was sent to the members of the Elections Saskatchewan Field Leadership Team: Returning Officers (ROs), Election Clerks (ECs), Supervisory Returning Officers (SROs), their Assistants (ASROs) and Deputies (DSROs) who were collectively responsible for administering the election in the field. The survey was completed by 17 SROs/ASRO/DSROs, 57 ROs and 49 ECs. Survey questions covered the entire term of their appointment with Elections Saskatchewan, starting from initial training to the closure of constituency returning offices.
- **Election Officials** – Following the election, the SSRL e-mailed a link to an online survey to 7,033 temporary election workers who had supplied an e-mail address. Of those, 4,818 completed the survey, a response rate of 68.4 percent. Election workers were asked to comment on the entire scope of their election work experience,

⁵ Elections Saskatchewan. A Strategic Plan for Saskatchewan's Election Management Body, 2014-16 (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, January 2014), p. 15.



including satisfaction with training and reference materials they received, their interactions with the voting public and candidate representatives, as well the extent to which they experienced problems, such as voter lineups while administering the vote.

- **Candidates and Business Managers** – The Chief Official Agents of each registered political party were asked to forward a link to an online survey to their candidates and business managers. The survey was completed by 19 candidates and 13 business managers.

To capture first-hand impressions from key actors throughout the election, Dr. Michael Atkinson from the University of Saskatchewan conducted interviews with the Chief Official Agents and other senior personnel of the province's registered political parties.

The results of these observations, surveys, interviews, and meetings are referenced throughout this report.

An Antiquated Approach to Delivering Elections

As the following chapters will show, the administration of Saskatchewan's 28th provincial general election was an administrative success from the viewpoint of the province's election stakeholders. There was very little negative public or media attention. The election results were widely accepted without controversy or dispute. While voter turnout remains a concern in Saskatchewan (only 56.8 percent of registered voters and 53.5 percent of the larger number of eligible voters participated), this is a broader issue that is separate, in many ways, from the administrative conduct of the electoral event.

Digging deeper into the administration of the election, however, reveals a somewhat more troubling story. By and large, Saskatchewan's 28th election was run much the same way as its very first, held more than a century ago. Election administration is possibly the only area of governance and public policy in the province that has been virtually untouched by the widespread adoption of computer and communications technology. Voters continue to be issued a paper ballot at their assigned voting location while workers strike voters names off a printed voters list using a ruler and pen. Voters can only go to their assigned polling station on election day, even if another would be far more convenient or not feature a voting lineup. At the end of election day, voting officials still must manually count every

ballot they were issued, record detailed voting results by hand, and then deliver them to their returning officer. Further examples could be given, but a central theme is apparent: Saskatchewan's model for providing voting services has become antiquated and needs to be updated to better serve the needs of all stakeholders in twenty-first century elections. During the assessment, it was widely agreed by observers and election workers that the current system of voting administration needs fundamental re-engineering.

The archaic model that currently defines the approach to voting services requires the assembly of a massive army of human resources in order to conduct a provincial election. On April 4, 2016, there were more than 12,600 workers on the Elections Saskatchewan payroll – most of whom only worked on election day at one of 2,945 polling stations located around the province. Nearly half of returning officers reported having difficulty in recruiting and hiring enough election workers to work the polls in their constituency.

“Election administration is possibly the only area of governance and public policy in the province that has been virtually untouched by the widespread adoption of computer and communications technology.”

It is not the purpose of this report to offer a comprehensive set of recommendations for legislative reform in Saskatchewan elections. Rather, its purpose is to examine the administrative implementation of Saskatchewan's 28th General Election and how that administration could be improved at future electoral events. Chapter Five contains a path forward for Elections Saskatchewan to respond to this administrative review but also delineates a clear line between issues which are administrative in nature and those which can only be addressed through changes to legislation.

The Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform, which will comprise Volume IV in *A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election*, is where the larger issues of electoral legislative change requirements are set to be reviewed. That volume will present a vision of the kinds of legal framework changes legislators must consider to modernize Saskatchewan's election rules for application in its second century.

Contents of this Report

This Administrative Review provides detailed data, information and analysis regarding Elections Saskatchewan's implementation of the province's 28th General Election.

The report flows chronologically in accordance with the legislated election calendar. **Chapter 3** focuses on the pre-writ period and the months leading up to the general election. Topics covered in this chapter include voter registration efforts, recruitment of election workers, and the securing of voting locations and office space throughout the province. This chapter also looks at the efforts made to remove administrative barriers to voting for First Nations voters and voters with disabilities.

Chapter 4 looks at the writ period, from the issuance of writs on Tuesday, March 8, 2016 to the return of the writs on Wednesday, April 27, 2016. Topics covered in detail include the procurement and printing of ballots, services offered to political parties and candidates, and information services offered to voters. Advance voting, election day voting and the counting and reporting of preliminary voting results are also included in this chapter.

Elections Saskatchewan's planned response to the various assessment findings are detailed in **Chapter 5**. This includes clarifying the distinction between what can be changed administratively and what must first be changed legislatively. A full listing of the commitments for improvements in election administration are found in this chapter as well.

Appendix A provides a detailed description of the various assessment methods undertaken during the 28th General Election that contributed to this report. Finally, a listing of the people and organizations that contributed to this report is found in the **Acknowledgements** section.

“It is not the purpose of this report to offer a comprehensive set of recommendations for legislative reform in Saskatchewan elections. Rather, its purpose is to examine the administrative implementation of Saskatchewan's 28th General Election and how that administration could be improved at future electoral events.”

Summary Statistics for Observer Program

Summary Statistics for Observation Program	Urban	Rural	Total	Provincial Total	% of Total
Electoral constituencies	6	6	12	61	20%
Advance polling location	9	11	20	173	12%
Election day polling locations	44	37	81	905	9%
Polling stations	163	92	255	2945	9%
Opening of polls	6	6	12	2945	0.4%
Returning offices – vote tabulation and supply return			10	61	16%



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Through the assessment process, many key findings about the province's electoral process were uncovered and are highlighted throughout the report. A summary of a number of these key findings is found below:

Voter Registration

- The voters list used in the April 2016 election was the best quality produced in the province for at least three decades with a 17.4 percent increase in registered voters from 2011.
- Printed voters list could be made more user-friendly for election workers through a number of small changes.

Election Workers

- Nearly half of all returning officers said it was difficult to find enough election workers.
- Efforts should be made to ensure the population of election workers better reflects the makeup of the province's adult population.
- Continuing to rely on more workers to ensure the efficiency and integrity of the electoral process is not sustainable.

Constituency Voting Locations and Office Space

- Finding suitable returning office space was a challenge in some constituencies.
- Collaboration with federal and municipal election management bodies may create efficiencies and offer better service to voters.

Voters with Disabilities

- Elections Saskatchewan's work had a positive effect on reducing barriers for voters with disabilities but more can be done in future events.

First Nations Voters

- There was a 166 percent increase in the number of polling stations on First Nations land from the 2011 and 2016 provincial general elections.
- Engaging with First Nations bands must remain a key priority for Elections Saskatchewan moving forward.

Ballots

- Changes in administrative procedures should result in increased efficiency in the proofing and printing of ballots.

Political Parties and Candidates

- Overly bureaucratic legislative requirements create unneeded burden for political parties and candidates.

Voter Information

- The Voter Information Card is the most important communication tool with voters and care should be taken to ensure the card is easy to follow and that all elements are clear.

Advance Voting

- The shift towards advance voting will likely continue in future elections.
- Legislative change is needed to create a more efficient advance voting process.

Election Day Voting

- The current system of serving voters is heavily bureaucratic and designed in an era that had very different expectations regarding efficiency and integrity.
- Observers widely agreed that the current voting services model is overdue for modernization.

Counting and Reporting Election Results

- The large increase in advance voting created ballot counting issues at the close of voting on election night with advance polls often being the very last polls to report results.
- Consistent procedures and approaches for counting ballots, reporting results and returning materials to the returning office could improve efficiency.

SUMMARY OF COMMITMENTS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

In response to this assessment, the Chief Electoral Officer has committed Elections Saskatchewan to making a number of administrative changes and improvements in advance of the next general election. Importantly, these administrative commitments should be considered separately from the recommended legislative changes that will be examined in detail in Volume IV of A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election – Chief Electoral Officer’s Recommendations for Legislative Reform.

For a complete list of administrative commitments and for more detail on the items shown below, see Chapter 5 – Responding to the Assessment.

Voter Registration

- Endeavour to obtain reliable external public-sector data sources to help maintain the register of voters.
- Regularly measure the quality of data in the register of voters.
- Review the needs of election officials to ensure the voters list lends itself to efficient use.

Election Workers

- Continue to enhance the Take Part program.
- Streamline training modules for election officials based on adult learning principles.
- Explore and test web-based e-learning methods.

Voters with Disabilities

- Continue engagement with disability community.
- Implement further practical measures to improve physical access to polling places including improved signage and chairs for use by voters with disabilities who are waiting.

First Nations Voters

- Continue engaging with First Nations band leaders, focusing on engagement of First Nations individuals as election workers.
- Address remaining administrative barriers to voting for First Nations people, including access to identification and timely delivery of voter identification cards.

Ballots

- Examine methods within legislation to regionalize printing of ballots.

Political Parties and Candidates

- Streamline administrative requirements related to candidate nominations.
- Ensure candidate business managers are well supported and have access to the information they need.

Voter Information

- Review the design of the Voter Information Card with field staff and voter focus groups to ensure clear messaging.

Advance Voting

- Explore range of options to provide adequate staff to cope with increased advance voting demands.
- Test methods to more efficiently count ballots in advance voting ballot boxes.

Election Day Voting

- Review current guidelines for placement of polling locations and maximum distance voters should need to travel to vote on election day.

Counting and Reporting Election Results

- Evaluate current vote counting methods to ensure advance poll results are released as early as possible on election night.
- Standardize methods of reporting results on election night from voting locations to returning offices.
- Develop a consistent, orderly approach for the return of election materials to the returning office on election night.





764,264

Registered voters in Saskatchewan

THE PRE-WRIT PERIOD

This chapter provides an assessment of how key electoral processes were administered in the lead up to the election, generally known as the pre-writ period. While it can be argued that preparations for the next election begin immediately after the previous one ends, the immediate weeks and months ahead of the date when election writs are issued sees a dramatic escalation of the activities and intensity of election preparations.

Voter Registration

Creating the register of voters

On May 14, 2014, the Legislative Assembly enacted legislation to establish a permanent register of voters which would commence once a final, province-wide enumeration of voters was concluded.

The enumeration was prescribed to be held in advance of the 28th General Election. The legislation called for the information register that was to be created to be the source of voters lists used in the general election that followed the enumeration, and that it be continuously maintained and capable of producing voters lists, as and when required, for use in subsequent elections, by-elections, referendums and plebiscites.

The permanent register replaced the previous provincial system of voter registration which involved a periodic door-to-door enumeration of citizens, usually just before or immediately after an election writ period began. This system had been in use since the province's creation in 1905, and involved an entirely new voters list being created for each election. Following every election, the voters list was destroyed – no efforts were made to maintain or reuse any of its contained information.

The legislative model for the Saskatchewan voter registry system requires that it be maintained via updates from public sector databases that the Chief Electoral Officer is legislatively enabled to obtain agreements to access. In addition, eligible citizens can register via electronic and

paper application forms made available between elections. Just prior to each scheduled electoral event, it is Elections Saskatchewan's intention to mount a province-wide registration drive supported by advertising, mail-outs, a 1-800 call centre and a web-based voter registration portal. This will provide newly eligible voters, registered voters who have moved and need to confirm or record their new address, and previously unregistered voters an efficient and convenient range of methods for being included in the provincial voter registry.

The transition to a registration methodology employing a permanent register of voters has been accompanied with a positive impact on registration levels. Indeed, the voters lists produced from the voter registry for the 2016 election showed a major improvement in the percentage of eligible voters registered compared to any provincial voters lists created over the past three decades. Properly maintained, the register promises to have profound benefits for the future maintenance and enhancement of the health of Saskatchewan's democracy and the efficient delivery of election services by the province's election management body.

Deriving voters lists from the register

The single largest difference between an enumeration methodology and the approach of using a continuous register to manage voter registrations is in the production of voters lists needed at each election. With an enumeration, usually performed just before an election is to be held, an invitation to register to vote is provided to the eligible residents at the doorstep of every household in every constituency, and a preliminary list is created for each polling sub-division of each constituency. Conducting a province-wide enumeration of voters is a massive and costly logistical exercise. However, with a continuously updated register, the preliminary list for each polling division is simply produced when the election is called. In fact, every voters list created is simply a "snapshot" of the electronic register's current content – each time a voters list is needed the data contained in the register at that moment is reflected on the lists that are derived from the information extract taken.

For both the enumeration method and the permanent register approach, a period of registration revision is included in the first couple of weeks of the election campaign, allowing unregistered voters to become

registered and permitting persons to update their registration details as necessary. Once this period has elapsed, voter registration is closed except for the possibility of registering at the time of voting. Ideally, as many voters as possible are properly registered at their current address when the preliminary list is created, and as few as possible are required to register during the revision period or at the time of voting. This is the case under both registration schemes.

The difference between the enumeration and register approaches differs fundamentally once the election concludes. With the enumeration method, registration remains closed and no voters lists are created until the next full enumeration of the voting population takes place, usually very close to the time of the next election. But with a permanent register, the registration process reopens the day after election polls close and additions and updates can continue. Voters who are registered remain so, and their registration information is maintained via confirmations and updates from various public-sector data sources, such as the provincial health insurance and drivers' licensing programs, and the federally maintained National Register of Electors.

It is often said that "a good voters list is the foundation of a good election." Voter registration is crucial for political participation in a democratic context as it provides the basis for identifying whether individuals qualify to vote. Voter registration also provides an ability for an election management body to provide a very useful service to voters – those who are registered are sent a voter information card (VIC) at each electoral event that advises them where and when they can vote.

17.4%

Percentage increase in eligible voters registered compared to the 2011 General Election

Moreover, a voters list serves to protect the integrity of the voting process by ensuring that only eligible voters are given access to the voting process. The list is used at the polls to screen prospective voters, ensuring that only those entitled to vote are given a ballot and that each person is only permitted to vote once. In all jurisdictions within Canada, no person may vote without first being registered as a voter, and being formally recorded as such.

The voters list is also a critical tool for political parties and candidates for the purposes of identifying and engaging with voters and soliciting their voting support. In addition, it assists election administrators in estimating the number of officials it will require at different polling locations, and determining where to deploy what numbers and kinds of election support workers such as registration officers. Statistics derived from voter registration are also used by election administrators in adjusting the boundaries of polling divisions in advance of general elections, necessary to even out the workloads that will be experienced at polling stations.

Quality of election voters list used for voting administration
Every election management body strives to have the best quality list it can for use in administering the vote. However, voter registration is voluntary in Saskatchewan, as it is in all other Canadian jurisdictions. This requires obtaining active registration consent from each person who wishes to have the option of voting made accessible to them.

The quality of a voters list is typically assessed by measuring its coverage, currency, and accuracy.

- **Coverage**, or completeness, refers to the percentage of voters who are registered compared to the number of eligible persons in the constituency or province;
- **Currency** is a measure of the relative decay of information from the time it is collected to the time it is needed. It refers to whether the list is up-to-date, i.e. whether an individual named at a specific address continues to reside at that location; and
- **Accuracy** refers to whether the information on the list is correct in terms of not containing spelling errors, data entry mistakes or other more serious inaccuracies, such as the inclusion of ineligible or duplicate voters. It is the percentage of correctly listed names and addresses compared to the total number of names on the list.

Given the importance of the voters list to the work that election officials undertake in the polling place, the quality of the list can also be assessed in accordance with the extent to which it assists election officials in processing voters.

Coverage

As noted in *Volume I, Statement of Votes*,⁶ the number of registered voters increased by nearly 160,000 since the 2011 election, while the estimated number of eligible voters increased by only 22,466. Coverage during the 28th General Election reached an historically high level of 94.1 percent of the province’s eligible voters. As can be seen in the table below, there has been a 17.4 percent increase in the registration coverage rate compared to the 2011 General Election, which underscores the benefits of introducing the permanent register methodology and the specific strategies Elections Saskatchewan chose to improve provincial voter registration levels.

Voters List Coverage

General Election	Eligible Voters	Registered Voters	Percentage
2011	789,758	605,615	76.7%
2016	812,224	764,264	94.1%
Change	+22,466	+158,649	+17.4%

Source: *A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election, Volume 1: Statement of Votes*

⁶ *A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election, Volume I, Statement of Votes*, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, January 2017), p.14.





Elections Saskatchewan's field leadership team training during the pre-writ period.

Currency

Where a voter's record is not up-to-date in a register of voters, that voter may be inconvenienced by having to re-register at their new address at the time of voting. For the 28th general election, 25,885 voters completed registration forms at the time of voting, which was 3.2 percent of the entire eligible voter population. Of that number, 12,514 were subsequently found to already have a record in the register of voters and their re-registration at a polling location simply reflected a change of address since they were enumerated.

The balance of the individuals who completed registration forms at the polls, a total of 13,371 citizens or 1.6 percent of eligible voters, were net new registrants who had not been registered as voters during the nine-month enumeration period or within the register revision period that ended 15 days after the election was called. Observers noted that some voters seemed to prefer a "one-stop-shop" process that included registration and voting at the same time.

If the rate of registration currency on election day is assumed to have been the same for non-voters (43.2 percent of registrants) as for participating voters, the revised voters list created for the 28th General Election had a currency measure of 97⁷ percent. This figure comfortably exceeds a generally accepted North American quality standard of 90 percent address currency for permanently maintained voter registry records.

Accuracy

In general terms, any data recorded with respect to a voter which can or does result in that voter not being able to exercise his or her franchise reflects on the accuracy of the voters list. In the months before the election writs were issued, Elections Saskatchewan focused closely on ensuring that each voter's registration details were accurate, including cross referencing with federal and provincial databases and, where necessary, individually contacting voters to confirm their details. There were no recorded instances of a voter being unable to vote because their registration details were inaccurate. However, it is apparent that the names of some recently deceased voters did appear on voters lists used in the election, as the processing time through external organizations requires several months before notice of death reports are received by Elections Saskatchewan.⁸

Ease of use

The quality of the voters list can also be considered from the perspective of the extent to which it facilitates the voting process. This includes the ease of registration at the time of voting and the ease of using the printed voters list during advance or election day voting administration by poll workers.

Surveys of polling officials involved in processing voters established that certain improvements could be made to the usability of voters' lists, especially those used in advance polls, by standardizing on alphabetical sorting,

⁷ The revised voters list used for voting administration contained 750,893 names. Of the 420,873 pre-registered voters who voted, 12,514 were not 'current' as they needed to have address updates applied — this fact was documented in the registration forms taken at the time of voting and processed immediately following the election. Assuming the same rate of address inaccuracy for non-voters, 2.97 percent of all registration records in the voter registry were out-of-date regarding voters' current addresses when the revised list for the election was produced. This provides a currency calculation of 97.03 percent. While that figure appears highly successful at face value, it does mean that 22,237 individuals were registered at a "wrong" address when voting became available during the general election. This lack of address currency resulted in more than 12 thousand participating voters being administratively inconvenienced by the requirement to re-register prior to voting. The importance of proactively managing voter registration currency in the maintenance of the ongoing voter registry is underlined by the analysis of how many registrations taken at the time of voting were for persons who were already registered.

⁸ For the 28th General Election, Elections Saskatchewan determined it would not complete a quantitative assessment of the accuracy of the voter register given the resources it would require. For this event, it instead relied on voters to report inaccuracies.

increasing font sizes and line-spacing, and automating the process of voter mark-off. Similar comments were made by electoral practitioners that observed advance and regular polling arrangements. As well, observers noted that the special registration form used at the time of voting could be re-designed to reduce confusion in the use of various checkboxes.

Findings

It is clear that in terms of the number of registered voters alone, the voters lists produced for the 28th General Election was the best quality produced for a provincial election in Saskatchewan in the last three decades.

An increase in voter registration of nearly 160,000 citizens over a single electoral cycle, with a coverage rate of 94 percent and a currency rate of 97 percent is a very significant set of achievements. While the benefits of having a permanent voter registry for efficient and effective electoral administration are not in question, the requirements of ongoing maintenance of registration records clearly brings new challenges, the most significant of which is the need for access to reliable and timely data on the address changes of the province's citizenry.

During the previous electoral cycle, the average rate of household moves within the province was estimated to be 7.7 percent per year.⁹ Without very effective address update mechanisms, the Saskatchewan voter registry will be unable to produce acceptable quality voters lists at the end of a standard four-year electoral cycle – as many as 31 percent (or more) of registrants could have changed their residential addresses between one general election and another. Meeting the challenge of keeping the registrations in the continuous voter registry current with regards to voters' addresses is clearly an area where Elections Saskatchewan will need to excel.

The extent to which voter registrations, taken at the time voting during the 28th general election, indicate that a proportion of registered voters' addresses were not up-to-date, despite a recent province-wide enumeration,

“...in terms of the number of registered voters alone, the voters lists produced for the 28th General Election was the best quality produced for a provincial election in Saskatchewan in the last three decades.”

reinforces the need for Elections Saskatchewan to work with other public authorities to ensure that data quality standards are maintained at a level commensurate with the importance that the voters list has in each election. As well, it points to a need for the province's election management body to have a highly effective voter registration update program in place in advance of every election to ensure voters who have recently moved are alerted to the need to check on their registration status and update their address if necessary. Regular measures of registration coverage and currency will need to be compared to the initial baselines established by this assessment, and such quality assessments should be undertaken at the constituency level if supporting demographic statistics make that possible.

It is incumbent on Elections Saskatchewan to make aspects of the printed voters list more user-friendly for election workers by increasing font sizes and line-spacing, as well as providing an alphabetic sort on the revised lists used for voting administration. There is also considerable potential for increased efficiencies through the introduction of electronic voters lists for use at polling places, which is rapidly becoming commonplace among election management bodies in other parliamentary democracies. If electronic voters lists can be used within current legislative guidelines, an examination should also be made to establish if electronic voter registration and updates could be implemented at polling locations.

⁹ Every five years Statistics Canada tracks interprovincial and intra-provincial mobility as part of the census. Moves over the course of one year and five years are measured. Unfortunately, the detailed results of the May 2016 census will not be released until late in 2017. However, for the period of May 2006 to May 2011 an average of 7.7 percent of the population of Saskatchewan moved every year. During that same period, nine urban constituencies had a mobility rate that exceeded 50 percent within those five years. (Source: Sask Trends Monitor, QED Information Systems Inc., March 5, 2017)



Election Workers

Recruitment and training

To administer voting services at the nearly three thousand polling stations across the province, Elections Saskatchewan needed to recruit 12,600 temporary workers.

This figure includes the field leadership team (FLT) comprising the mission-critical positions of 61 returning officers (ROs), 61 election clerks (ECs), and nine supervisory returning officers (SROs).

Returning officers, each assisted by an election clerk, were responsible for the mammoth task of recruiting an average of 168 election workers within each constituency. Election workers comprise poll officials such as deputy returning officers and poll clerks as well as support positions such as information officers, registration officers and others.

The SROs were each located within one of nine geographic regions within the province and assisted the returning officers and election clerks with executing their roles. Closer to the election, SROs were supplemented with the appointment of Assistant Supervisory Returning Officers (ASROs).

Recruitment of the field leadership team was, by and large, concluded in the fall of 2014 and was followed with a rising crescendo of instruction content delivered over multiple training conferences. Once the writs had been issued, returning officers proceeded with their formal recruitment and appointment of election workers. Recruiting so many thousands of workers for what is in most cases a single day's work is a large, complex and challenging exercise.

To provide as much assistance as possible to returning officers, Elections Saskatchewan head office introduced a province-wide "Take Part Program."

Take Part was an initiative designed to encourage citizens to become election workers with the option of contributing to the wider community by directing their election earnings towards nominated charities. By the time the election was called, 11,716 people had registered under the Take Part Program. Returning officers were provided with lists of those people, along with lists of local election workers who had worked in prior provincial, municipal and federal elections.



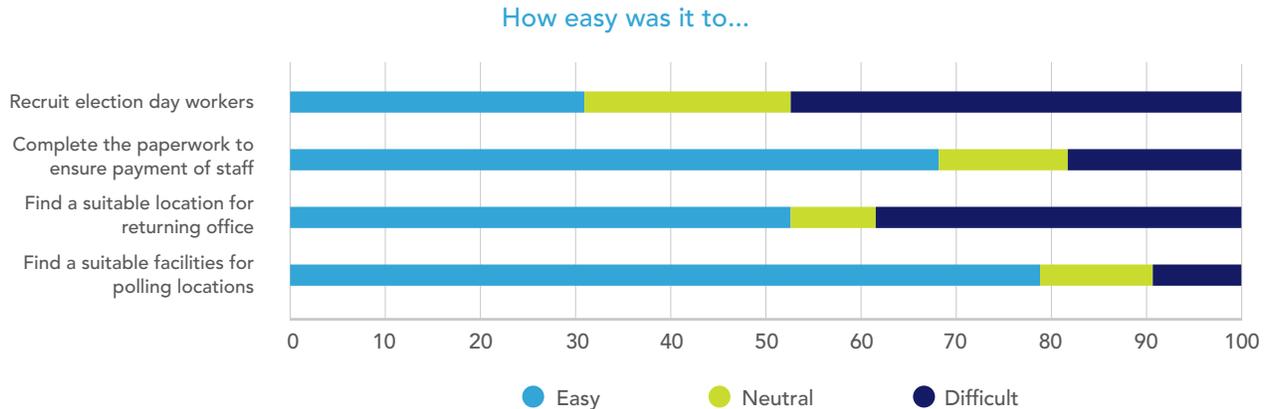
An example of the Take Part awareness material designed to encourage citizens to offer their time and work election day.

Despite this considerable level of centralized assistance being provided, many returning officers still found it necessary to rely heavily on their personal contacts to fill all the temporary election administrator positions required across their constituencies. This reality reflects the increasingly difficult task of recruiting sufficient skilled temporary workers to staff local polls at election time.

45%

Percentage of field leadership team members who reported difficulty recruiting election workers

Figure 1 – Field Leadership Evaluation on Difficulty of Assignments



Too often, returning officers were faced with the dilemma of finding additional election workers on the day of the election to replace those who did not show up as scheduled. As an example, an influenza outbreak at the time of the election contributed to more than 200 trained election workers dropping out in the city of Regina during the final 48 hours prior to election day.

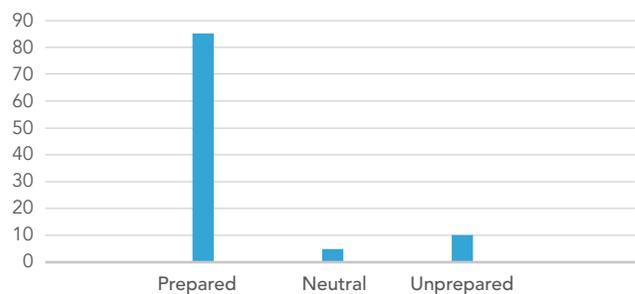
An extremely long working day, which required poll workers arrive before the start of voting at 9 a.m. and were required to remain at their assigned station, not only until voting closed at 8 p.m., but until all the ballots cast at their polling station had been counted and reported (and in many cases, also personally delivered back to the returning office), also contributed to the difficulties of recruiting election officials. Many qualified persons were unwilling to work such a long duration for a one-day job, and queried why two separate shifts could not be used instead.

The strict legal accountability that a polling station team has for every ballot they are issued, and for each ballot they in turn issue to voters, compared to the reality of being required to work a 12 to 13-hour day, without any breaks, at a fixed-rate minimal wage compensation level, illustrates the tension between the highly prescriptive requirements of *The Election Act, 1996* and everyday citizen expectations regarding what they believe to be the reasonable requirements of a temporary work position.

New training programs were developed for the field leadership team that focused on rapidly recruiting, hiring and training the many thousands of election workers needed for the election. In addition, the series of training conferences for the field leadership team were centered around Elections Saskatchewan's mandate (and core strategic value) for serving voters, political parties and candidates.¹⁰ The final training conference held in February 2016 included a review of the election and office materials that returning officers would use and the process they would follow to establish their respective temporary offices, hire office staff and open their office to the public immediately after they were issued the writ of election for their constituency.

Figure 2 – Election Worker Training

As a result of your training, how prepared were you to complete your work?



¹⁰ As listed in Chapter One, Elections Saskatchewan's values are: Independence, Impartiality, Professionalism, Accountability, Innovation and Service Orientation. These were published in *A Strategic Plan for Saskatchewan's Election Management Body 2014-2016* which can be found online at <http://www.elections.sk.ca/resource-centre/reports-publications/>.



Profile of the election workforce

Election workers are the key resource on the ground for the conduct of voting in an election. The field leadership team oversees the effective delivery of voting processes at in 61 constituencies across the province, while election officials provide the direct interface with voters at polling locations. An understanding of the makeup of this key resource is vital if Elections Saskatchewan is to continue to engage the most competent temporary workforce available and tailor its training programs to suit their background.

For nearly 80 percent of the field leadership team, the 28th general election was the first electoral event they had managed. More than 60 percent were 60 years or older, most were female (81 percent), and more than half (55 percent) were retired. Significantly, the field leadership team is well qualified, with more than 70 percent having completed some university level education and 93 percent having a college education or higher. Importantly, occupational backgrounds in business, finance, administration, education, government, religious service and management predominated, with more than 70 percent having worked in these occupations prior to the election.

Election officials displayed very similar demographic characteristics to the field leadership team. More than 60 percent of election workers who responded to the survey had never worked in an election before, nearly half (45 percent) were retired and the majority were female (76 percent). The average age of an election worker was 56 years. Election officials had similar employment backgrounds to the field leadership team.

Findings

The profile of Elections Saskatchewan’s temporary election workforce is typical of election workers, not only in Canada but across most mature western democracies.¹¹ Clearly, a challenge for the organization going forward is to build on the experience that many new election workers have acquired by encouraging their involvement in future elections. At the same time, it is important that Elections Saskatchewan encourage different subsets of the population to become involved in serving at election time so the population of election workers better reflects the makeup of the province’s adult population.

Figure 3 – Field Leadership Team Age Distribution

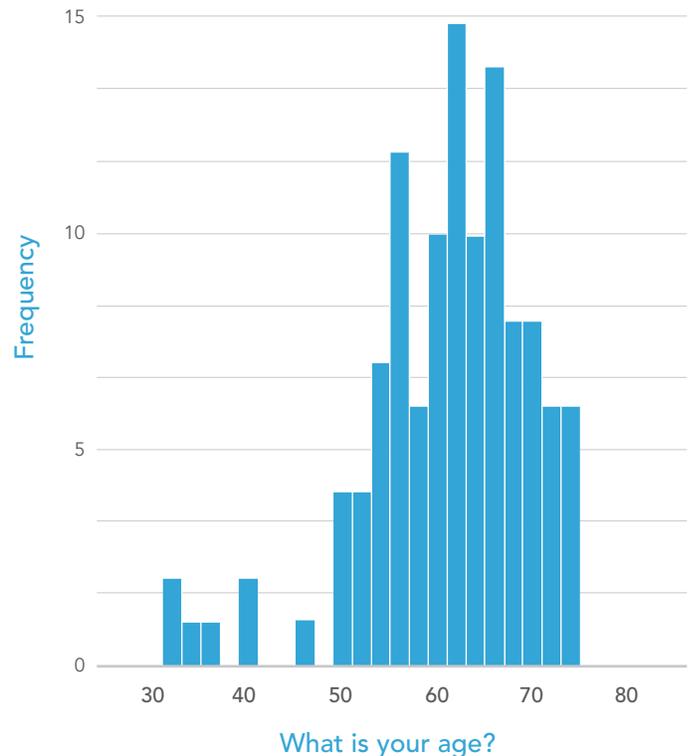
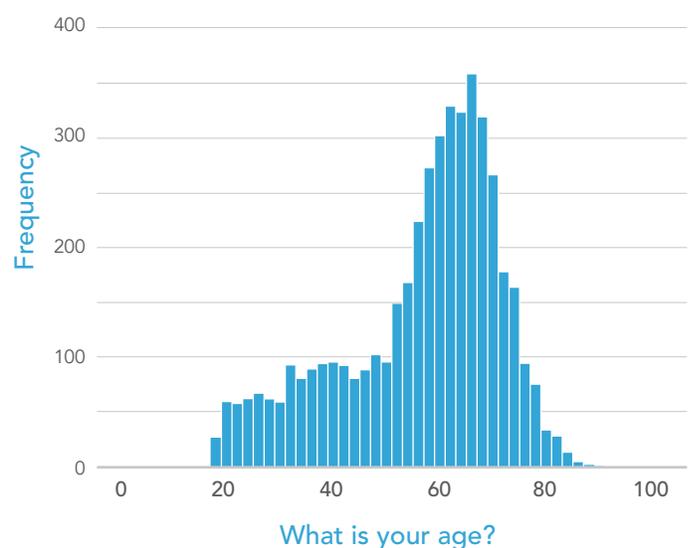


Figure 4 – Election Worker Age Distribution



¹¹ Electoral Regulation Research Network/Democratic Audit of Australia, Working Paper No.26; “Polling Officials: The Strength and Weakness of Democratic Systems”; Ed Killesteyn (Australian Electoral Commissioner 2009-2014); available online at http://law.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/1556001/WP_26_Killesteyn1.pdf

“...it is important that Elections Saskatchewan encourage different subsets of the population to become involved in serving at election time so the population of election workers better reflects the makeup of the province’s adult population.”

An understanding of the current and emerging demographics of the election workforce should be leveraged to enable the development of the most effective possible training programs, based on adult learning principles and tuned to the specific tasks that a person in each role is required to master. Experiential learning should be emphasized to the maximum extent practical – adult education studies indicate that temporary roles involving complex activities are most effectively taught with a “learn by doing” approach.

The scale of the recruitment and training task, involving more than 12,000 temporary workers, presents a significant and ongoing challenge for Elections Saskatchewan. Unless the current voting services model is fundamentally changed, this number of temporary employees will continue to grow for each election as the population of the province and the number of registered voters grows. This can only add to both the challenge of the recruitment task and the overall cost of conducting elections.

Elections Saskatchewan took several measures to help returning officers in their recruitment efforts, but assembling an adequately skilled election workforce remains an area of significant future risk. Continuing to rely on increased staffing as the primary approach to ensuring quality voting services is not sustainable. There is a pressing need to streamline and automate services at the polls, as well as to explore more efficient ways of allocating human resources used to administer voting.

Irrespective of the number of election workers that need to be employed, effective measures that assist returning officers with their recruitment task will need to be aggressively pursued by Elections Saskatchewan’s head office. The initial success of the Take Part Program suggests that it should be continued and expanded, including adopting suggestions made by the field leadership team to collect more detail on the skills and aptitudes of persons applying that will permit more informed screening earlier in the employment and role assignment process.

Training programs based on workbooks being reviewed in a classroom setting by the returning officer and election clerk has been the approach adopted by Elections Saskatchewan to date. In total, there are eight manuals¹² covering nearly 500 pages of densely detailed instructions that at least summary level training must be provided for. It is clear from the survey comments of the field leadership team that the volume of material to be digested by them as both the managers and the trainers, and by temporary election workers as their students, is a truly daunting challenge. Further efforts to streamline the training material, as well as making use of more contemporary teaching techniques based on electronic media for education, should be explored and tested and, if found to be effective, implemented for the next general election in Saskatchewan.

“Continuing to rely on increased staffing as the primary approach to ensuring quality voting services is not sustainable.”

¹² Training manuals are provided for: Returning Officers and Election Clerks (300 pages), Deputy Returning Officers, Poll Clerks, Registration Officers, and Information Officer at a Regular Poll (90 pages); Advance Poll Deputy Returning Officer and Poll Clerks (40 pages); Mobile Poll Team (30 pages), and HRT Poll Team (30 pages). In addition, a separate manual is provided regarding payroll procedures and another for the computer systems used in returning offices.



Constituency Voting Locations and Office Space

Securing accommodation for polling and administration

As part of each returning officer's pre-writ assignment, 1,700 polling locations and 55 separate constituency field office locations were identified and secured across the province. This selection process, which commenced in May 2015, was originally undertaken to be ready for the statutorily scheduled November 2015 election, which was subsequently delayed when the October 2015 federal election was called in early August. As necessary, the original locations were either confirmed or replaced with alternate locations in early 2016.

While the process of securing temporary returning offices and polling locations generally proceeds quite smoothly in urban areas, securing voting locations in rural areas with appropriate accessibility features is often more challenging. Ultimately there were five advance voting and 14 election day polling locations used that did not meet the desired standards for accessibility by voters with disabilities, as no other facilities that were both accessible and available could be found in those communities. This means that 98.9 percent of polling places met all desired accessibility criteria, which included level access. Elections Saskatchewan was proactive in communicating this information to the public, and a list was made available online providing details about voting locations that did not meet access standards, including the reasons those standards were not being met in each of those cases.

Figure 5 – Web Listing of Voting Locations Not Meeting Disabled Access Standards

Voting place accessibility standards

Accessibility

[Accessibility Implementation Plan for the 28th General Election](#)

[Accessibility tools](#)

Voting place accessibility standards

In our planning for the April 2016 general election, our Electoral Accessibility Initiative used an extensive checklist to determine accessibility for roughly 1,100 regular and advance voting places needed for the provincial election. Through the assessment process it was determined that some of these voting places did not meet all the mandatory criteria of our checklist.

The remedy for all of these locations was to provide an extra information officer on-site to provide assistance to voters.

[There are other ways to vote.](#)

[Polling Location Accessibility Check List](#)

[Returning Office Accessibility Check List](#)

Voting places not meeting mandatory criteria for the 2016 general election

Constituency	Location Name	Voting Place	Issue
Arm River	24/7 Travel Centre and Inn (Dafoe)	Election Day	No level access to building
Batoche	RM of Invergordon (Crystal Springs)	Election Day	Uneven pathway to building
Canora Pelly	Silver Thread Community Centre (Togo)	Election Day	No level access within the building
Carrot River Valley	St. Patricks Anglican Church Parish Hall (Hudson Bay)	Advance Voting	Exterior door is 30"
Cumberland	Pelican Narrows LGA Hall	Advance Voting and Election Day	Ramp does not meet existing standards
Kelvington Wadena	Yellow Quill First Nation	Election Day	Ramp does not meet existing standards

Source: <http://www.elections.sk.ca/accessibility/voting-places-deemed-inaccessible/>

Premises for returning offices were secured and leases were signed prior to issue of the writs. To secure suitable premises having full accessibility and other necessary logistical features, such as parking and security at a reasonable cost, it was necessary in several constituencies to locate returning offices either together or outside of the constituency being served. Twenty percent of returning offices were ultimately located outside their own constituencies. Despite the obvious desirability of having a field office located within its relevant constituency, Elections Saskatchewan found that co-located offices often brought advantages from the perspective of sharing tasks and covering off unexpected staff absences.

Findings

Elections Saskatchewan was diligent in trying to secure accessible voting locations across the entire province, but was unable to find suitable polling sites for just over one percent of the locations used. Efforts will need to continue to close this small remaining gap to meet the objective of having all polling locations, as well as all constituency returning offices, meet accessibility standards necessary to properly serve voters with disabilities.

The process of securing locations for returning offices and convenient polling locations to serve voters for advance and election day voting purposes seems to be working well overall, although many returning officers found it to be more difficult than they had expected, especially in regard to returning offices. As the graph on page 21 shows, 38.4 percent of field leadership team members reported it was difficult to find a returning office location. Just 9.6 percent said it was difficult to find polling locations.

98.9%

Percentage of polling places that met all accessibility criteria

Voting period observers noted that many voters tend to believe that they should be able to cast their ballot at the same location at every electoral event they attend, whether it is a local, provincial or a federal election. While differences in constituencies and polling division boundaries will not always make this possible, Elections Saskatchewan should continue to liaise with federal and local government election administrators to share information regarding the voting locations they have used in their most recent elections and details on the associated capacity, parking availability, accessibility features and rental arrangements. Returning officers should be encouraged to select those facilities which other jurisdictions also choose for voting purposes to standardize the locations for voting within communities to the maximum extent possible.

“...Elections Saskatchewan should continue to liaise with federal and local government election administrators to share information regarding the voting locations they have used in their most recent elections and details on the associated capacity, parking availability, accessibility features and rental arrangements.”





One of more than 1,700 polling locations around Saskatchewan.

Voters with Disabilities

Elections Saskatchewan's electoral accessibility

During and following the 2011 Provincial General Election, Elections Saskatchewan heard a number of complaints regarding the general accessibility of that event. These complaints focused on the physical accessibility of polling stations, a lack of sensitivity by election officials, and poor disability-related accommodations within the election processes. Further evidence that more work needed to be done in this area was provided by a 2012 research study that compared Canadian practices in reducing barriers to voting. Saskatchewan was found to be in a group of low-achieving jurisdictions offering a "modest selection of legislative initiatives and few if any administrative measures for electors with disabilities".¹³

In 2013, Elections Saskatchewan partnered with disability and seniors' organizations, the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), to establish an initiative that would lead to a comprehensive program of improvements in accommodation for voters with disabilities. That initiative sought to identify the specific needs of people with disabilities, as well as older people in the province, with the aim of creating a more "voter-centric" experience for

all citizens engaging in the electoral process. This included a thorough review of voting accessibility legislation, regulations and electoral practice. It also involved listening to and responding to the views of affected stakeholders. More than 200 disability and seniors' groups were invited by Elections Saskatchewan to participate in an extensive consultative process that combined focus groups, interviews and written submissions on specific topics, as well as soliciting general ideas for improvement.

In June 2015, Elections Saskatchewan published a CEO Assessment Series report titled *Toward Improved Accessibility for Saskatchewan Voters*. That document set out a range of administrative features Elections Saskatchewan would introduce to remove barriers faced by voters with disabilities.¹⁴

In the lead-up to the 28th General Election, several significant legislative amendments, arising from recommendations made by the Chief Electoral Officer,¹⁵ were also made to provide better accommodation and accessibility to the voting process for those with disabilities. This included access to homebound voting and the ability of any voter to vote at an advance poll without having to declare a reason for not being able to vote on election day.

"In June 2015, Elections Saskatchewan published a CEO Assessment Series report titled *Toward Improved Accessibility for Saskatchewan Voters...*[setting] out a range of administrative features Elections Saskatchewan would introduce to remove barriers faced by voters with disabilities."

¹³ Elections Canada. Electoral Participation of Electors with Disabilities: Canadian Practices in a Comparative Context, (Victoria: Professor Michael J. Prince, March 2012), p. 39.

¹⁴ The full report can be found online at <http://www.elections.sk.ca/resource-centre/ceo-assessment-series/>.

¹⁵ Elections Saskatchewan. Chief Electoral Officer's Assessment – Toward an Improved Legislative Framework for Elections in Saskatchewan, (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, December, 2013), pp. 9-15.

Homebound voting, introduced for the first time at the 28th General Election, allowed people who were unable to leave their home for reasons of illness, infirmity, or immobility to vote at their own home during the advance voting period. This service was also available to anyone who was caring for an individual that qualified for homebound voting. Some 574 voters utilized homebound voting services and had an election officer come to their residence to administer the process of taking their vote.

Building on these legislative changes, other practical administrative measures were implemented for the election to improve voting accessibility for the disabled. As discussed above, returning officers were required to assess polling locations per prescribed accessibility criteria. This included the availability of disabled parking spaces close to the building's point of entry, level access into the building, appropriate signage, and adequate lighting with the ability to install supplementary lighting in each area intended for voting booths. In addition, returning officers' selection of voting locations was based on the requirement to meet, to the maximum extent possible, the minimum width, clearance and threshold requirements for doors and passageways deemed necessary for wheelchair access. As well, sensitivity training was provided to all temporary election workers to inform them of the methods and approach they should use to provide respectful and appropriate service to voters with disabilities.

574

Voters used homebound voting services



An election worker assisting a voter back to their vehicle after casting their ballot.

Findings

Elections Saskatchewan's work in setting priorities and identifying improvement strategies did have a positive impact on reducing barriers to voting for persons with disabilities. Initiatives that were viewed favorably included an increase in inclusive and accessible voter education materials, availability of advance voting (particularly the ability to cast an advance vote without being required to provide any proof of disability), and informative voter information cards (VICs) being sent by mail.

Some respondents stated their appreciation of seeing a disability access icon on their VIC that notified them that their assigned polling place was accessible. The location of polling places at independent living centres and assisted living facilities were also seen as positive developments. Several observers commented that disabled voters described their voting experience as quick and easy, with minimal problems. Poll workers were consistently described by observers as being welcoming, friendly and helpful to voters with disabilities.

Another positive development was the inclusion of men and women with disabilities as poll officials and information officers. In situations where an accessible polling place could not be found or did not meet these requirements, additional staffing was provided to ensure that the necessary assistance, including curbside voting, was made available to those voters who required it.



Despite these improvements, there is still room for Elections Saskatchewan to intensify its engagement with provincial disability organizations and related stakeholders. Further enhancements can be made in relation to voter education, improved sensitivity training for poll workers as well as additional research on accessibility for indigenous voters with disabilities.

In addition, while in many cases polling places met the basic standards, some outstanding accessibility issues remained unresolved per the findings of election observers. For instance, there might have been a level access entrance to the polling place, but a voter might have had to negotiate several stairs to get from the parking lot to the building entrance if they arrived and found the only disabled parking space was already occupied. Additionally, from a service perspective, some information officers could have been more attentive to their voting location's entrance and should have checked regularly for voters experiencing accessibility challenges. Some locations did not have well-functioning doors which required a wheelchair user to obtain assistance from other voters to make an entrance. As well, some polling places had ramps, but observers noted that they were either too steep or narrow to meet the practical standards of accessibility. A supplementary light provided for the voting screens was a good idea, but observers found it was inconsistently used.

Other improvements to be considered in advance of the next election include better signage to direct voters to an accessible voting location entrance, the availability of chairs to accommodate voters who are unable to stand for long periods of time while waiting to vote, and ensuring all advance voting locations are fully accessible when any election day polling place in the constituency is not. Observers suggested that when a voting location that is not fully accessible must be used, an inexpensive short-wave radio doorbell could be installed in the parking lot to allow voters with disabilities the ability to indicate a need for curbside voting to the officials within the polling place.



The cover of a First Nations voting guide, also produced in Cree and Dené languages.

First Nations Voters

There are seventy-four First Nations within Saskatchewan, and 63 of these are affiliated with one of the nine Saskatchewan Tribal Councils. Out of the approximately 1.1 million people in Saskatchewan, the total First Nations population is 144,995.¹⁶

First Nations in Saskatchewan fall into five major linguistic groups: Cree, Dakota, Dene (Chipewyan), Nakota (Assiniboine) and Saulteaux. The 2011 national census revealed that Saskatchewan had the highest proportion of self-identified First Nations individuals of all Canadian provinces. At the time of that census, 53.2% of these individuals lived on reserve land.¹⁷

In response to a history of low provincial election engagement levels by First Nations citizens living on reserve land, the Chief Electoral Officer undertook several initiatives to reduce their administrative barriers to voting. A voting access improvement plan was developed based on direct engagement with the province's First Nations community. *A Voting Guide for First Nations of Saskatchewan Community Leaders* was subsequently published based on the specific agreements that had been reached.

¹⁶ This figure is as of February 28, 2014, as reported by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Available online at: <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/110010020593/1100100020597>

¹⁷ Statistics Canada Census and National Household Survey, 2011. Summary regarding Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples available online at: <http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/stats/pop/2011Aboriginal%20People.pdf>

The access improvement plan was based on collaboration, mutual respect, trust and development of relationships with key individuals, including First Nations Chiefs. Over a period of 12 months leading up to the election, 66 of the 74 bands represented across Saskatchewan engaged in implementing the plan.

Eighty head enumerators who lived on First Nation reserve land were designated to assist in the registration of eligible voters living in their communities. Their enumeration efforts resulted in the registration details of 39,800 First Nation voters living on reserves being submitted to Elections Saskatchewan and subsequently processed into the voter registry.

116%

Percentage of increase in polling locations on First Nations lands

In comparison with 2011, twice the number of bands were enumerated, and 78 percent more First Nations residents living on reserve land were registered as voters. For advance polling and election day, 164 polls were located on First Nations lands, a 116 percent increase from the 2011 general election.

Elections Saskatchewan also made efforts to reduce administrative barriers at the polls for First Nations voters lacking the types of identification documents usually produced to satisfy the legislated requirement for each voter to provide proof of their identity and address of residence prior to being issued a ballot. For example, the completion of an official Letter of Authorization forms was administered by Elections Saskatchewan in advance of the election, and the applicable collected forms were then provided back to election officers assigned to work at polling stations established to serve voters living on reserve land.

The Letter of Authorization is a regulated form of acceptable identification, signed by the Chief of each participating Band, which can be used to legally establish the identity of Band members and verify that they live on a reserve. While the signed letter could be used as one piece of identification for voting, a second acceptable identification document also needed to be provided by the voter.

Findings

The initiatives Elections Saskatchewan undertook to focus on reducing administrative barriers for eligible First Nations voters living on populated reserves, through enhanced voter registration activities and in efforts at establishing additional polling locations on reserve land, were well targeted to improve access to electoral participation.

The establishment of polling stations in community spaces on First Nations reserve land, many for the first time in any provincial election (164 polling stations in 2016 vs. 76 in 2011) was an important inclusion effort. It was also noted that having the polling locations on First Nations reserve lands was far more convenient for resident voters than situating polling places in nearby towns.

Nevertheless, a high priority for Elections Saskatchewan should be to continue outreach efforts that are based on a continued, deep and long-term engagement with band leaders, a focus on First Nation members' engagement in performing election worker roles at polling locations established within their communities, and a willingness to find ways to resolve remaining issues that continue to create barriers to voting participation. These include the challenges of improving the processes of providing reliable identification of First Nations voters, and ensuring all voters registered on reserves are delivered their voting information cards prior to the start of advance voting at each election, using methods other than the postal system where necessary.



**INSTRUCTIONS
TO VOTE**
Vote by marking a cross X
within the circle to the right
of the candidate's name of
your choice.

**INSTRUCTIONS
TO VOTE**
Vote by marking a cross X
within the circle to the right
of the candidate's name of
your choice.

1,134,000

Ballots printed and distributed for the
28th General Election

THE ELECTION PERIOD

This chapter provides an assessment of the administration of key electoral processes during the election writ period, including the printing of ballots, establishment of voting premises, and the conduct of advance voting and election day voting. The election writs were issued to returning officers on March 8 and returned to the Chief Electoral Officer on April 27, 2016.

Ballots

Ballot proofing and printing

A critical component of the preparation for each election is the process followed for having the official election ballots created, proofed, authorized and then securely printed and distributed. A ballot showing incorrect candidate details, or arriving late for the commencement of advance voting, poses significant risk to the overall integrity of an election.

Printing and distribution of ballot papers involves a series of interdependent actions. The process starts with the acceptance of candidate nominations by returning officers, which have a statutorily set date and time deadline.

For this election that deadline was 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 19. Following that, ballot proofs are created by each constituency's contracted printer based on details submitted by the candidate on their nomination forms. The returning officer approves these proofs and then submits them to Elections Saskatchewan's head office for secondary approval. A designated head office manager ensures a careful, detailed review of each ballot proof, and only once they are approved is the secure printing of the ballots for a constituency permitted to proceed. Ballot printing is carried out by printers throughout the province. The printer is selected by the returning officer¹⁸ as part of their pre-writ work assignment.

¹⁸ Section 35 of The Election Act, 1996 prescribes the duty of the Chief Electoral Officer to supply ballot paper, but suggests it is the responsibility of each returning officer to engage with a ballot printer.

For the 2016 general election, 1,134,000 ballot papers were printed and distributed. Consistent with the need for integrity in the ballot-proofing and printing process, a high degree of centralized management oversight was put in place. This involved setting out clear target dates and times for the receipt of ballot proofs from returning officers and subsequent approvals. The planned schedule allowed sufficient time for printing ahead of advance voting, but required returning officers to work closely with each of the 25 contracted printers to ensure they fully understood the ballot printing requirements and relevant time frames, and realize that there was a single point of approval at Elections Saskatchewan’s head office before printing of a constituency’s ballots could commence.

These ballot printing arrangements were, in some cases, further complicated by Saskatchewan’s geography. For example, in the Athabasca constituency, proofing and printing deadlines had to be brought forward to accommodate transport times to polling locations that could only be accessed by airplane.

Importantly, all ballots were printed correctly and in accordance with legislation. However, despite the considerable levels of centralized oversight, problems were still encountered that could easily have resulted in ballots being printed incorrectly or delivered too late for advance voting to commence on schedule. In a small number of constituencies, ballot proofs took far longer than reasonable to be approved for printing, with some requiring multiple proofs from the printer before being centrally approved as correct. Moreover, the exacting requirements of the legislation in terms of ballot paper design and

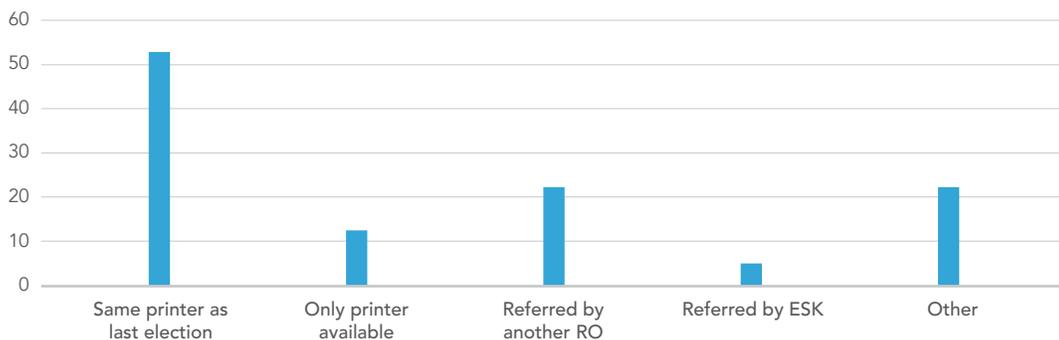
print dimensions were sometimes not appreciated by the smaller printing firms, and ensuring compliance required considerable effort on the part of head office staff. In another case, a change to the name of a political party, which had occurred after the writ was issued, was initially overlooked in the proofing of ballots in the field.

“The extent of consolidation of ballot paper printing and distribution undertaken to date has brought considerable efficiencies, but the problems encountered in the 2016 election point to the need for a centralization process to continue.”

Findings

The process of proofing and printing ballots is highly devolved, based on a long series of manual steps that must be completed in strict sequence and involving considerable numbers of personnel across 61 constituencies and within Elections Saskatchewan’s head office. The extent of consolidation of ballot paper printing and distribution undertaken to date has brought considerable efficiencies, but the problems encountered in the 2016 election point to the need for a centralization process to continue.

Figure 6 – Ballot Printer Selection by Returning Officers



This reflects, in large measure, the continuing and gradual decline of local printers with sufficient capacity and reliable governance arrangements to ensure consistent, province-wide compliance with the ballot design and printing requirements prescribed by *The Election Act, 1996*.

Further improvements to the integrity of the ballot printing and distribution process could be made if the following changes in administrative procedures were adopted ahead of the next election:

- Further centralization of ballot printing, perhaps with the province divided into geographic regions each served by a single printer that can meet the stringent requirements for timeliness, consistency and quality. Having fewer printers is likely to reduce the current risks associated with managing dozens of printing houses across the province, will help ensure compliance with printing requirements and can build selected printers' understanding of the importance of the ballot printing function in the electoral context;
- Combined with reducing the number of printers involved, interpreting more legal flexibility to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to select ballot printers that can meet the stringent technical and production speed requirements;
- Automatically populating ballot printing orders using information technology. Consolidating the number of printers can provide an opportunity to integrate Elections Saskatchewan data collection systems with the systems operated by contracted printers, permit automated population of candidate data and result in more timely changes of related nomination data as and when necessary; and
- Applying greater management controls over the various points of the ballot preparation process, including the ability to "lock down" candidate information, as well as requested party and candidate name changes during the nomination period, after this data is entered into the election management system.

Political Parties and Candidates

Candidate and political party satisfaction with electoral services

Elections Saskatchewan supplies candidates, their business managers and registered political parties with a wide range of support materials. These include:

- Manuals and guides that set out legislatively prescribed processes and requirements;
- Forms to be used in the nomination of candidates and for meeting various reporting obligations;
- Electronic and printed copies of preliminary and revised voters lists per constituency;
- Small and large-scale printed and electronic maps for each electoral constituency;
- Street indexes and community name guides per constituency;
- Following advance voting, ensured access to poll books for candidate representatives so they can determine who has already voted;
- On election day, ensured periodic access to copies of information sheets ("bingo sheets") that provide candidate representatives with indications of the voters list sequence number for each voter who has voted at a polling station throughout the day; and
- Other information and materials that facilitate effective engagement with voters and compliance with the requirements of *The Election Act, 1996*.

Close contacts with political parties and candidates are maintained during the election period through both Elections Saskatchewan head office and local returning offices.

At the close of nominations on March 19, 2016, a record number of 268 candidates had been nominated.¹⁹ Two hundred and sixty-three of these candidates represented one of the six registered political parties in the province, and five were independent candidates.

Candidates, business managers, and the chief official agents of the political parties were included in post-election evaluation surveys and interviews that formed the structure of the election assessment. Elections Saskatchewan sought to determine their level of satisfaction with the electoral services they had been provided and their perception of the administrative conduct of the provincial election management body and its staff during the election.

¹⁹ For more information, see <http://www.elections.sk.ca/media/news-releases/record-number-of-candidates-nominated/>. The previous high was 250 nominated candidates in the 1982 provincial general election.



Comments provided both through surveys and interviews indicate that Elections Saskatchewan was perceived to have performed well in the conduct of the election itself. Staff at both head office and in returning offices were well regarded. Where issues were raised about staff, these were generally ascribed to frustration with arcane rules that could be more easily adhered to by established parties mounting major electoral operations. Significantly, perceptions of both fairness and trust of Elections Saskatchewan were rated highly. Nevertheless, improvements in training, including client service training, were common suggestions.

Findings

The current legislation that pertains to the conduct of elections was described by many political party representatives and candidates as “bureaucratic.” Legal requirements regarding the residency of nominators and witnesses was one common area of complaint, closely followed by the requirement to have nomination papers notarized.

The software used to report election spending, provided by Elections Saskatchewan, lent some assistance in the post-election financial reporting process, but not to the point of making disclosure a straight-forward exercise. Most respondents believed that their interactions with Elections Saskatchewan could be greatly streamlined and made less onerous with updates to the province’s election legislation and the intelligent application of information technology. A reduction in the paper burden would, in their opinion, help remove some of the interpretation disputes and challenges they experienced.

There are many aspects of Saskatchewan’s current election legislation that are clearly in need of modernization. Substantial easing of the bureaucratic burden would be possible if several changes were made to legislation that are now commonplace in other jurisdictions. Apart from residency requirements and witnessing, these include the ability for political parties to submit “standing” nominations of endorsed candidates to the Chief Electoral Officer in advance of election writs being issued, use of electronic candidate nomination procedures, and the ability to pay nomination fees electronically.

“Substantial easing of the bureaucratic burden would be possible if several changes were made to legislation that are now commonplace in other jurisdictions.”

Voter Information

Outreach and advertising

Considerable efforts were made by Elections Saskatchewan to ensure that voters had information about “when, where and how to vote.”

Voter information services involved a strategic mix of paid electronic and print advertising, extensive use of “new media” channels involving social media and links to the Elections Saskatchewan website, a dedicated 1-800 public call center, and the mailout of voter information cards (VICs) to every household with registered voters.

Surveys of voters demonstrated that all information services provided by Elections Saskatchewan were well received. It is clear however, that the VIC is by far the most effective component within the communications array.

Voter Information Cards (VICs)

By the end of the revision period, a VIC had been issued to all 750,893 voters who were registered prior to the start of advance voting and whose names would appear on voters lists used at advance and election day polls.



VICs were initially sent out to 745,003 voters who were registered on the date election writs were issued. Supplementary VICs were printed and mailed during the first seven days of the election period, and subsequently e-mailed to those voters who registered or updating their registration within the remainder of the 15-day registration period that followed the election call. Those voters who registered late in this “revision” period needed to be e-mailed their VIC as there was no longer sufficient time to have it printed, mailed and delivered before advance voting began.

The voter information card confirms that the voter is on the voters list and tells the voter exactly where and when they are permitted to vote, either at any advance poll within their constituency or at a single assigned polling location on election day. Voters were encouraged by Elections Saskatchewan to bring their VIC along with them when they went to vote, as it greatly assists the administrative process leading to a voter being issued a ballot. The VIC is also an acceptable form of identification that may be used in combination with another piece of ID to prove name identity or address of residence.

More than 83 percent of voters surveyed reported that their VIC was a key source of information on voting in the provincial election. This was by far the highest medium relied upon, with television ads and word of mouth communication coming in next, with each having just over 37 percent of respondents saying they were used to get information on voting.

Findings

While it was regarded as the most successful component of the range of information services Elections Saskatchewan provided to voters, evaluation of the use of VICs in the

election period demonstrated that some voters had trouble distinguishing between the locations of advance and regular polling places. The VIC print layout needs to be redesigned in collaboration with experienced field staff and voter focus groups in advance of the next general election.

While the Elections Saskatchewan website was not as important as the VIC for voters, it was a preferred medium for political parties and candidates to obtain information about the election and their responsibilities. Candidates also rated highly their satisfaction with the services provided by returning officers. Interviews with chief official agents and senior political party representatives pointed to high satisfaction levels with support provided by personnel from Elections Saskatchewan’s head office, but pointed to some inconsistency in the quality of services provided by returning officers.

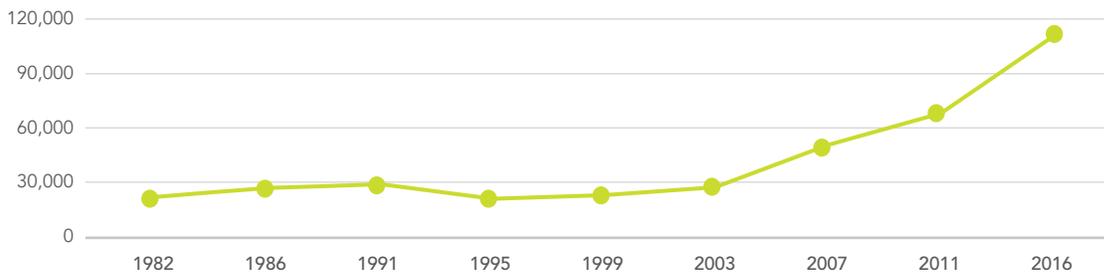
Advance Voting

The dramatic increase of advance voting participation

Advance voting began on Tuesday, March 29 and ran for five days ending on Saturday, April 2. There were 173 advance voting locations spread across the province’s 61 constituencies. From Tuesday through Friday advance polls were open from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. – on Saturday, April 2, advance voting was available from 12 noon to 7 p.m.

For the first time in Saskatchewan’s provincial election history, advance polls were open to any voter and not just those who had a legislatively-defined reason why they could not vote on election day. This change contributed to 110,716 ballots being cast at advance polls, a record number in the province’s election history, and a 66 percent increase over the 2011 General Election.²⁰

Figure 7: Advance Voting Turnout 1982 to 2016



²⁰ A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election, Volume I: Statement of Votes, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Saskatchewan, Regina, January 2017, p. 12.



Elections Saskatchewan undertook extensive planning of the staffing requirements at advance polling centres in anticipation of an increase in the number of advance voters. The media was also engaged to ensure voters were aware that advance voting was available over an extended period and longer hours to encourage a more even spread of voters attending polling places. In the 2015 Federal Election, a total of 16.7²¹ percent of Saskatchewan voters cast their ballots at advance polls. However, advance voting numbers in Saskatchewan's 2016 provincial election were much higher with 25.9 percent of ballots being cast at advance polls.

“Moving forward, Elections Saskatchewan will need to balance the need to alleviate lineups at the beginning of advance voting periods with the need to administer elections in a cost-effective manner.”

Lineups of waiting voters did develop on the first day of advance voting, requiring rapid deployment of supplementary teams of election officials that had been put in place as a precaution to deal with excessive wait times that might develop.

The post-election survey of advance poll workers found that 76 percent experienced lineups of waiting voters. The highest percentage of lineups were found on the first day of advance voting (87 percent of advance poll workers who reported lines) when the polls initially opened.

Seventy-one percent of respondents reported that they believed there were advance poll lineups because voters started lining up before the polls opened. Moving forward, Elections Saskatchewan will need to balance the need

to alleviate lineups at the beginning of advance voting periods with the need to administer elections in a cost-effective manner. Under current legislation, once an advance poll team is deployed, it must remain in place for the entire advance voting period, even if the team is no longer required to support efficient voting. This makes it impossible to briefly “scale up” advance poll teams to accommodate an initial rush of voters on the first day or in the first few hours of voting on each day – a more flexible staffing model for advance voting will require legislative change.

Elections Saskatchewan acknowledges that long wait times at advance polls were a source of complaint by many voters and recognizes that the administrative mechanisms for advance voting must be re-engineered to deal with the increased preference voters are showing for this voting option.

Findings

It is likely that advance voting will continue to rise in future elections. The experience of Saskatchewan is consistent with the trends in all other provinces and in Canada, and reflects the experience of many other western democracies. Voters appear to want to take advantage of the convenience of voting when it best suits their personal schedules. Indeed, even the 2016 Saskatchewan municipal elections saw a near 50 percent increase in advance voting from that of 2012.²² It is imperative that future election planning takes the likelihood of substantial further growth into account.

However, it is not just a matter of providing for more election workers at the time of advance voting. It is axiomatic that as advance voting numbers rise at faster rates, so too will the number of election day voters fall. Further, even though constituencies have roughly equivalent numbers of voters, advance voting patterns do not appear to follow the same proportionality. For example, in the constituencies of Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota and Saskatoon Willowgrove respectively, 3,231 and 3,274 persons voted during advance polls. This was more than double those who voted advance in the neighbouring constituencies of Saskatoon University, Saskatoon Riversdale and Saskatoon Centre.

²¹ Elections Canada, Forty-Second General Elections 2015, Official Voting Results, “Distribution of valid votes by voting method”, published online at www.elections.ca

²² *Advance poll turnout up from last municipal election: Elections Regina*, by Alexa Huffman, Global News, October 24, 2016. Found at <http://globalnews.ca/news/3023045/advance-poll-turnout-up-from-last-municipal-election-elections-regina/>.

A more flexible staffing model appears to be necessary, including the removal of the legislative restrictions on the way polling needs to be arranged and staffed within each constituency. Overly formal processes, such as requiring the Chief Electoral Officer to provide specific written approval to a returning officer before that returning officer can appoint additional poll clerks, only act to reduce the flexibility required in modern day electoral practice.²³

While it would require a modification to Saskatchewan’s electoral laws, observers suggested the hours of advance voting, for each of the five days it is provided, could usefully be changed to become the exact same hours as for voting on election day – 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. This is a standard approach that is used in numerous other provinces across Canada and the convention aligns with voters’ expectations that advance polling locations operate on the same hours as the regular polls. In addition, the extended hours over five days should help alleviate voter lineup problems experienced during advance voting.

Election Day Voting

Voter satisfaction with electoral services

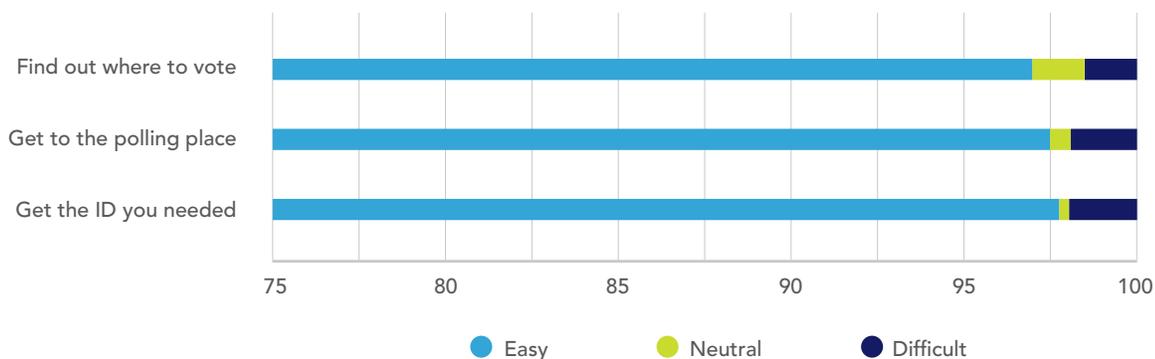
Just over 300,000 votes were cast between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. on April 4.



Inside one of 1,700 polling locations on election day.

Based on post-election surveys, voters were overwhelmingly positive about their election day voting experience. In general, the services provided by Elections Saskatchewan were well received and clearly understood. Voters found it easy to find out where to vote, to travel to their designated polling location and to navigate the process of voting, including the requirement to present their identity documents. Critical to these perceptions is the competence and helpfulness of temporary election officials stationed at voting locations who were rated highly by both voters and candidates.

Figure 8: Ease of Voting
Voters - How easy was it to...

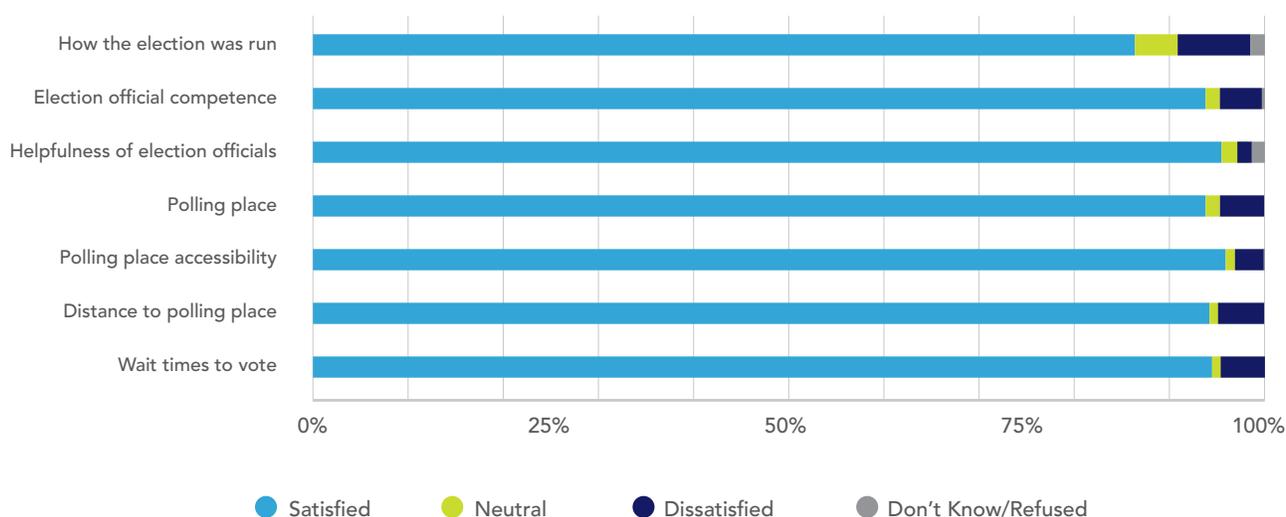


²³ Section 13(2) of *The Election Act, 1996* requires the Chief Electoral Officer to give prior written approval to a returning officer before the returning officer can appoint an additional poll clerk for a polling place.



Figure 9: Voter Satisfaction with Electoral Services

Voters - How satisfied were you with...



Wait times for voting, or for registration for those voters who needed to register on the day of voting, appear to have been acceptable, with measurements taken by observers varying between one minute and three minutes respectively.²⁴ The post-election survey of voters found that 94.5 percent of voters were satisfied with the amount of time required to vote.

Elections Saskatchewan received numerous complaints about the locations of polling places, specifically about the distance some voters needed to travel, or the amount of time that was required to get to their assigned polling location. There is no doubt that constituency and polling division boundary changes made prior to the election resulted in some voters being assigned to polling places that were different, and more distant, from those used in their local communities at previous elections.

A significant finding from the survey of non-voters is that the reasons eligible voters had for not voting seemed to have little, if anything, to do with Elections Saskatchewan's

administrative conduct of the election. Importantly, the survey results demonstrated that Elections Saskatchewan is well perceived by both voters and non-voters in terms of trust and fairness.

Factors affecting a person's willingness to vote that stood out included negative perceptions of candidates, a belief that the person's vote would not matter, and their level of interest in the election. Two questions asked of voters relating respectively to concern about the person's ballot not being counted or not having privacy when voting were strongly rejected as reasons for not voting, again providing confidence about Elections Saskatchewan and the administrative approach it used in conducting the election.

Procedures for processing voters

Since legislation was introduced prior to the 2011 election, all voters have been required to prove both their identity and the address where they live before they can be issued a ballot. Providing this proof of identity and address can be done in one of three ways:

²⁴ Extensive measurements were made by observers of the waiting times experienced by voters during both advance voting and on election day. The precise amount of time voters waited before being able to proceed to a polling booth to cast their vote was measured for nearly 300 voters at advance voting, and more than 1,200 voters on election day.

1. By providing a driver's license, or other government-issued identification document that bears a photo and indicates both the name and residential address of the voter;
2. By showing two pieces of identification, both of which must have the voter's name and one of which must show the voters address of residence; or
3. By having a person, who is a registered voter from the same constituency and has the required identity documentation, vouch for the identity and residential address of a voter who does not have identification documents.

Once verified as an eligible voter, the voter's name is manually recorded in the legislatively mandated poll book and physically crossed off the voters list with a ruler and pencil. The voter is then handed the relevant constituency ballot after the back of the ballot is initialed by the deputy returning officer. The poll book contains a manually created list of persons who attend at each polling opportunity and acts as the legal record of who have voted that is meant to assist in guarding against multiple voting and providing a paper audit trail if voting fraud is suspected. The poll clerk is required to enter the word "voted" in the poll book against each voter's manually entered name once their ballot has been deposited into the ballot box.

The poll book has also traditionally provided important information to candidate representatives, who are permitted to watch voting proceedings at each polling station and

record who has voted. Communicating this information to their candidate's campaign office permits efforts to encourage voting among their candidate's supporters to be well targeted. However, the presence of such "scrutineers" at polling stations has become less prevalent in recent decades, as political parties find it increasingly difficult to attract volunteers to undertake this type of work. The ability of candidates' representative "runners" to pick up information sheets prepared by election officials at each station regarding the voters list sequence numbers of registered voters who have voted in each past hour has become the preferred method of collecting information on which voters have, or have not, yet turned up to vote at their assigned polling station.

Observations of more than 1,200 instances of voting found that overall compliance with procedures for the management and handling of ballots and controls on the voting process was high. Some failings were identified, but none that materially affected the outcome of the election in any constituency.

Checking of voters' identification documents was done consistently and comprehensively across all officials and polling places observed. It was noted that VICs greatly assisted the efficient processing and identification of voters and significantly reduced the elapsed time required for ballots to be issued to voters who brought their VIC with them to poll. However, there was confusion on the part of some poll workers as to whether a VIC was an acceptable form of identity.

Figure 10: Voter/Non-Voter Perceptions Regarding Elections Saskatchewan

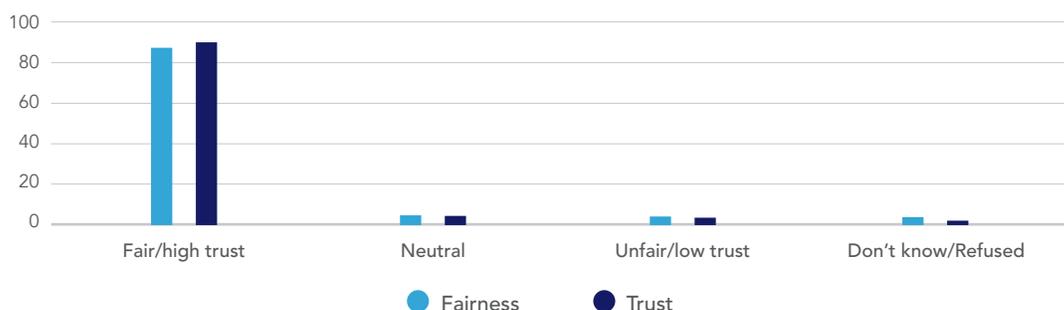
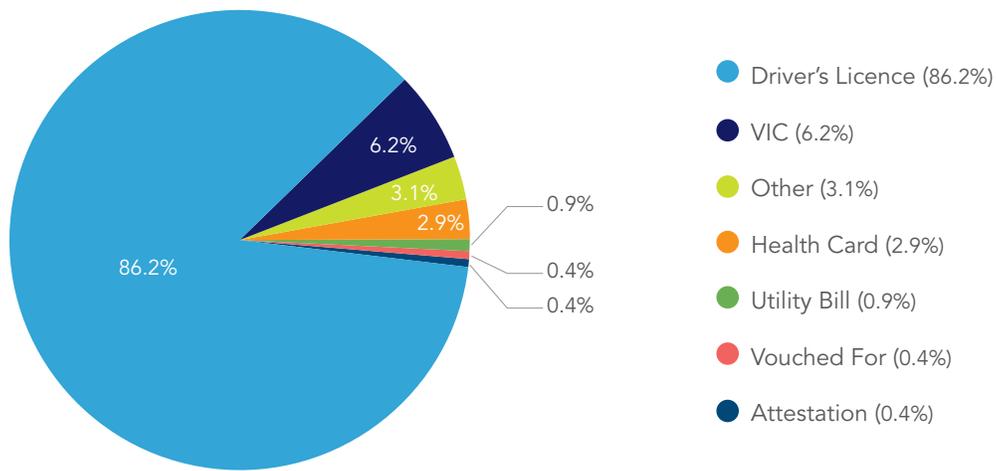


Figure 11: Types of Identification Used by Voters



Voter Identification Presented

Elections Saskatchewan collected administrative data on the types of identification presented at the polls using a *Report of Acceptable Pieces of Identification* form. Each deputy returning officer was requested to complete this form and check off the types of identification that voters presented throughout the day, but advised that this was not a legal requirement of the Act. After all election materials were processed, 71 percent of deputy returning officers had returned a completed form. The chart below presents summary data on ID used based on the forms returned to Elections Saskatchewan.

Eighty-six percent of voters presented a driver's license as identification proof for their name and address. This compares favorably to administrative data collected during Saskatchewan's 2011 general election, where it was reported that 82.5 percent of voters presented their driver's license before being issued a ballot.

About 13.6 percent of the voting population used the second option of showing two documents, both with their name and at least one with their address. Of these, just under 0.4 percent used some type of attestation form, such as a Letter or Authorization, as one of those documents. Less than 0.4 percent of voters used the third available option, which involved having another voter vouch for their identity and address.

The post-election survey of voters found that 92 percent of voters found it very easy to obtain the identification documents they required to vote. For some voters, however, the requirement to provide documents that show their current address of residence presents very real difficulties, as most identity documents (e.g. credit cards, health cards) only show a name and not an address. Homeless voters, students, First Nation voters living on reserve land and elderly people in institutionalized living arrangements are the most likely to face this challenge, which acts as a form of administrative disenfranchisement.

Findings

The point at which ballots are issued to voters invariably highlights a range of issues.

At this critical juncture, a series of functions, activities and outcomes from many other processes come together in a manner that can affect waiting times and the integrity of the voting process. What became clear to observers, and was commented on by political party representatives and candidates, is that the current process is heavily bureaucratic and was quite obviously designed in a previous era that had very different expectations regarding procedural efficiency balanced against voting system integrity.

A more detailed analysis of voter processing than is appropriate for this review would reveal considerable potential for improvements using technology. For example, an “electronic poll book” system might encompass rapid voter look-up functionality (via a bar-coded VIC), interactive instructions to the presiding election official on acceptable voter identification, instant mark-off when a registered voter has had their identity verified (unless they are shown to have already voted), provision of a paper ballot to the voter by the presiding election official, the voter then marking their ballot behind a privacy voting screen, insertion of that paper ballot into a scanning tabulator (on top of a secure ballot box), production of electronic updates on who has voted (“electronic bingo cards”) for electronic distribution to parties and candidates, and – at the end of the election day – an electronic printout and secure transmission of the voting results for the ballots submitted into each ballot box.

“...it was noted that the instructions in the poll officials’ manual seemed unnecessarily lengthy and legalistic and would benefit from being simplified and made more concise.”

Such functionality would benefit voters by shortening wait times and increasing convenience. Candidates and political parties would benefit from receiving up-to-date information on who has voted on each day of advance and regular voting. Finally, Elections Saskatchewan would benefit through improved processes, reductions in staffing requirements, simplified election worker roles, and minimized opportunities for fraud or compliance errors. The experience of other electoral management bodies, such as Elections Ontario and Elections New Brunswick, demonstrates that such an approach is entirely feasible. Equally, their experience provides an opportunity for Elections Saskatchewan to learn how to minimize the costs and risks of implementation.

Several voter processing requirements – such as writing the names of voters in the poll book, completing relevant forms about voters required to make declarations, striking-off the names of voters who had voted and initialing the backs of

ballots – were observed as not always being undertaken at the time the ballot was issued, but rather at later times when the number of waiting voters had subsided. Clearly, a desire to provide prompt voting services was seen by many temporary election officials as being more important than completing the onerous and redundant supporting paperwork required in the current voting model.

In the view of the poll observers, there was too much writing required in the poll workers’ administration of the voting process. Additionally, it was noted that the instructions in the poll officials’ manual seemed unnecessarily lengthy and legalistic and would benefit from being simplified and made more concise. It was widely agreed by observers that the voting model prescribed by *The Election Act, 1996* needs to be re-engineered and is overdue for a modernization update that will require extensive legislative amendments.

Based on the number of complaints raised by voters, it was also noted that Elections Saskatchewan should carefully review its polling location guidelines regarding the maximum distance voters should be expected to travel to vote in an election. Regardless of whether existing guidelines are deemed adequate, a systematic review of the travel distances that were required for voters to attend their assigned 2016 voting locations should be undertaken. Potentially this task can be automated with application of the geographic information system (GIS) technology that Elections Saskatchewan uses to develop its electoral maps.

Observers also noted that the response by voters to voting officials asking about their occupation was often tongue-in-cheek, such as “perfect husband,” “domestic engineer,” or “not tired-just retired” which were frequently accompanied with comments or questions about the value or purpose of recording voters’ occupation information. Observers from across Canada confirmed that the legislatively required collection of occupation information as part of voter registration or poll book recording is no longer a request made in any jurisdiction except Saskatchewan.

The independent assessment of poll worker performance in the field concluded that, overall, the election was administered in compliance with prescribed procedures. However, it was noted that the legal framework which election officers must operate within is very complex and cumbersome, and shows great opportunities for being modernized and streamlined.





An official seal is placed on all ballot boxes containing counted ballots.

Counting and Reporting Election Results

Preliminary count voting results

Election night, after voting closes, is always an intensely busy period in polling locations and at returning offices.

Against an understandable demand from a range of stakeholders for speedy voting results, hundreds of thousands of marked ballots must be accurately counted. These ballots are subject to scrutiny by candidate representatives, must be reconciled with ballots issued and unused, and must be counted in a fully transparent manner that demonstrates accuracy, precision and fully documented accountability.

The results from each polling station within a voting location are progressively communicated to the returning office for aggregation and public reporting as the preliminary voting results within each constituency. The actual paper ballot accounts and marked ballots must be properly sealed inside their corresponding ballot boxes and returned to the constituency returning office along with all other issued election materials.

At the returning office, the ballot boxes must be accounted for and placed into secure storage pending their final count verification. Inevitably, some details in this process can get overlooked by tired election officials who have already worked 12 or more hours without a break.

Importantly, observers who attended the ballot count in polling locations, and then witnessed follow-up activity at corresponding returning offices, verified that all critical procedures were being followed in the reconciliation of ballots and the secure transfer and storage of ballots in ballot boxes.

After voting closed across the province on April 4, 2016, all ballots cast on that day as well as at advance polls were counted – a total of 426,706 votes. Preliminary results were made available that evening via Elections Saskatchewan's website and were reported in detail by the news media as the results were compiled.

Final count voting results

Just under two weeks later, on Saturday, April 16, returning officers counted absentee votes that had been cast as mail-in ballots, as well as all the ballots for voters registered in their riding that had been collected by polling teams that administered voting in hospitals and remand centres around the province.

At the same time, staff in the returning offices reviewed the ballot paper accounts for the ballots that had been counted on election night. Tallies for each ballot box were reviewed to ensure the accuracy of the recorded count at each polling station and advance poll, and if any anomalies were found

(e.g. transposition errors) the corresponding ballot box was retrieved from secure storage and its contained ballots were recounted if necessary.

The final count addition of 7,538 votes cast in constituencies around the province did not modify the overall voting results that were reported on a preliminary basis on the night of April 4. In every case, the winning candidate on election night remained the winning candidate after the final count of all ballots was completed on April 16.

Findings

Overall, the counting and reporting of voting results was regarded as having been administered smoothly, accurately and successfully. However, four issues were noted by observers and political representatives.

The first was that the massive influx of advance voting meant that the ballot counting for these polls were the last, and largest, reported in many constituencies. Methods must be implemented that allow for advance polls to be counted more efficiently and for the reporting of their results to become more timely. Elections Saskatchewan did employ additional poll clerks to assist in ballot counting in locations that had extremely high advance voting turnout. The effectiveness of these additional poll clerks needs to be carefully evaluated in the context of the legislatively prescribed duties of the single deputy returning officer for each advance polling station.

The second issue was that poll supervisors (referred to as “supervisory deputy returning officers” in the Act) were not consistently effective in leading their polling station teams through an orderly process of reconciling ballots, controlling ballot boxes, and tabulating results on supplied forms. This is an area where more effective training and careful recruitment selection would be beneficial. It is recognized that the conduct of a thorough and accurate ballot count is a critical activity that is made more difficult by the fact that polling officials are tired, are wanting to leave as soon as possible, and can be short-tempered after dealing with the voting public for eleven hours without any permitted meal or refreshment breaks. Until the voting service model is changed, this reality must be managed with deliberate care and the careful recruitment and through training of appropriately skilled supervisory resources.

Third, the reporting of voting results from polling stations did not occur in a consistent manner from each voting location within or between constituencies. In some cases, the deputy returning officer called the returning office; in others, the central poll supervisor called in. Sometimes a poll supervisor would call in the result as each polling station reported; in other cases, they would wait until all polling stations had completed their final reconciliation. This led to speculation on the part of the waiting media about why results were “slow to come in” from some voting locations and constituencies while arriving in a steady stream in others.

Fourth, and last, observers noted that some returning officers had a very orderly process devised for the receipt of ballot boxes and election supplies coming in from voting locations while others, seemingly, had not fully thought through all the associated logistics. In some cases, every deputy returning officer was required to personally deliver their ballot box to the returning office; in others, the poll supervisors delivered all the boxes and supplies from the voting location they managed and had a vehicle appropriate for the purpose. This is an area where the head office of Elections Saskatchewan can prepare some standardized procedures to be followed based on the experience of returning officers who have developed and fine-tuned highly effective approaches to the election night collection of poll materials over several elections.

“Methods must be implemented that allow for advance polls to be counted more efficiently and for the reporting of their results to become more timely.”



2,405

Voters and non-voters provided survey feedback on their election experiences

RESPONDING TO THE ASSESSMENT

This chapter provides a path forward for Elections Saskatchewan based on the results of the administrative review that was undertaken and presented in this report. Specific efforts that will be implemented, wherever possible, in advance of the next general election are included.

Administrative vs. Legislative Response Requirements

Elections Saskatchewan is justifiably proud of the way in which it prepared for and delivered the province's 28th General Election. Overall, all aspects of the administrative process associated with the election were well-accepted by voters, candidates, political parties and political interest groups.

Media coverage on the election's delivery was critical only of the lineups on the first day of advance voting. After those lineups subsided in subsequent days, no further controversy about the administration of the election was reported on. Visiting observers found this to be a significant departure

from the sustained negative media coverage regarding election administration they had experienced in their jurisdictions during recent electoral events.

The overall success of this event, however, does not diminish the fact that there are lessons to be learned and areas for significant improvement. The 28th General Election confirmed that Saskatchewan citizens' voting habits are shifting in fundamental ways. Provincial voters expect service options that align with their lifestyles, personal and family situations, geographic settings, and health circumstances. Voters increasingly want to vote when and where it suits them, not just on election day at a single designated polling station.



Folding ballots in preparation for offering them to voters at the polling place.

Numerous suggestions were made, by those surveyed and interviewed as part of this review, about available ways to improve, modernize and streamline services for provincial voters. These included a complete rethink of the current polling division voting assignment model, enabling more flexibility for voters to vote where and when they want, and to allow voters to efficiently access and vote at advance polls. Many suggestions about simplifying the advance voting process were made, and some suggested moving the election day to a weekend, when more people would be available as election workers and most of the population would find it more convenient to vote.

No particular systemic issues related to registration or voting were identified during the election observations or by the assessments undertaken. On the other hand, feedback from voters, election workers and political participants overwhelmingly indicated a clear need to automate and modernize the electoral process so it responds and adapts to shifts in service demands and local conditions.

The results of this election's assessment, undertaken by personnel and organizations from outside of Elections Saskatchewan, is not meant to convey any message of failures on the part of Saskatchewan's election management body. Rather, it is to impart a general finding that the current voting model, which has been left untouched since the province's creation in 1905, has reached its "best-before" date and is now more than ready for significant

re-engineering and modernization. The current legal framework constrains the ability to recruit election workers; provides little flexibility to rapidly scale services to demand; and presents barriers to automation for even the most basic, repetitive and tedious tasks. This reality is not unique to Saskatchewan – most provinces and the federal jurisdiction are currently grappling with an urgent need to find a new voting model that is sustainable, efficient and appropriate for 21st century electoral democracy in Canada.

The results of this assessment also provided numerous details about how the administration of the next general election could be improved regardless of whether the core voting model is legislatively revised or not. In many ways, these are incremental changes and improvements that would be expected from any administrative review examining what worked well, what could be done better, and what is urgently in need of repair.

To the extent to which the changes recommended in this assessment can be made without any legislative change, Elections Saskatchewan is committed to making the improvements required. The actions that will be taken, provided the necessary resources are made available, are listed in summary on the pages that follow.

Elections Saskatchewan recognizes that service improvements can no longer depend, as they have in the past, on simply increasing the number of election workers at polling locations. As well, the provincial election management body recognizes that it will need to take greater advantage of available information and communication technology if it is to align modern electoral management with citizens' evolving service expectations. To move ahead with these changes, Elections Saskatchewan will require additional flexibility under *The Election Act, 1996*. In the coming weeks, the Chief Electoral Officer will submit a report to the Legislative Assembly recommending legislative amendments that will enable modernization while maintaining or enhancing the integrity of the electoral process.

These topics will be the subject of Volume IV of *A Report on the Twenty-Eighth General Election, The Chief Electoral Officer's Recommendations for Legislative Reform*.

Commitments for Improvement in Election Administration

In response to the results of the assessment made of the 28th Provincial General Election, the Chief Electoral Officer is committed to making administrative changes and improvements to their preparations for and delivery of the 29th General Election.

Specific administrative changes that will be prepared for full implementation at the 29th General Election are as follows:

Voter Registration

- Endeavor to obtain reliable external public sector data sources of citizen name and address records for maintaining the voter registry, and actively pursue methods of ensuring address updates for registered voters are processed in a regular and timely fashion.
- Design a highly efficient and effective voter registration update program to be implemented in advance of each general election, with the objective of minimizing the number of new registrations and address updates that need to be processed at the time of voting.
- Regularly measure the quality of the data contained in the register of voters using the most accurate demographic statistical information available for reference use.
- Review the specific needs for election poll officials in terms of providing advance and election day voters list sortation that lends itself to efficient voter processing, with all printed lists provided with font sizes and line spacing that makes them easily readable by poll officials of all ages.

Election Workers

- Encourage new members of the election workforce who assisted with the 28th general election to sign on to work at the 29th General Election.
- Continue, and enhance, the Take Part Program by collecting further relevant details regarding applicant's skills and aptitudes to allow more informed employment screening to be made earlier in the process.
- Encourage new and additional subsets of the citizen population to "take part" and complete an application that indicates their willingness to play a role in the administrative delivery of a provincial electoral event.
- Simplify and streamline the range of training modules developed for election officials (advance, regular, mobile and HRT- hospital/remand/temporarily displaced) and support workers based on adult learning principles.
- Explore and test the use of web-based e-training methods for temporary election workers, and implement their use if they are found to be an effective teaching solution.

Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities

- Intensify engagement with disability communities and stakeholders, especially with respect to voter education, improved sensitivity training for poll workers and research focused on accessibility issues faced by Indigenous voters with disabilities.
- Implement further practical measures for improving physical access to polling places by voters with disabilities, including better signage to direct voters to an accessible entrance and the provision of chairs for use by voters with disabilities who are waiting.
- Ensure all advance voting locations in a constituency are fully accessible for voters with disabilities if any election day polling place in that constituency does not meet accessibility standards.
- Explore the feasibility of installing a short-wave radio doorbell in the polling place parking lot of any voting locations that do not meet standard accessibility criteria (so officials inside can be alerted to the need to administer curbside voting).



First Nations

- Continue outreach plans based on a continuing, deep and long-term engagement with band leaders, focusing on engagement of First Nations' personnel as election workers, and addressing remaining barriers to election participation, such as access to identification documents for First Nations voters and timely delivery of voter information cards to all registered voters living in reserve communities.

Ballots

- Examine the opportunities within the current legislation to regionalize the printing of ballots using printers that can meet stringent requirements for timeliness, consistency and quality.
- Develop improved controls at various points in the ballot preparation process, placing stringent information access limits on party and candidate name changes at the close of the nomination period, using a centralized election management system.
- Explore methods available to apply integrated information technology for populating the content of ballot printing orders.

Political Parties and Candidates

- Examine the opportunities within current legislation to streamline administrative requirements related to completion of nomination papers by candidates, collection of witness signatures, notarization of completed nominations papers, and payment of nominee fees.
- Identify needs and improve efficiencies in supporting candidates' business managers, ensuring they have access to the specific and succinct information required to fulfill their legislated responsibilities.

Voter information

- Review the design of the voter information card (VIC) in collaboration with experienced field staff and voter focus groups to better distinguish the location of advance and regular polling places and the voting dates and times associated with each voting opportunity.

Advance Voting

- Examine workforce planning associated with the staffing of advance polls to better predict peak demands, especially on the first day of advance voting.
- Explore the range of available administrative flexibility for providing adequate staffing to cope with increased advance voting demands.
- Research and test most efficient methods available to accurately count the votes contained in advance voting ballot boxes to ensure election night voting results are not delayed.

Election Day Voting

- Review current guidelines for placement of polling locations and the maximum distance voters should be expected to travel to attend their assigned poll on election day.
- Use existing geographic information system (GIS) technology to review the travel times and distances voters required to reach their most convenient advance poll site and their assigned election day voting location in the 2016 General Election.
- As necessary, adjust the guidelines for returning officers to follow when assigning voting places for use in the 29th General Election.

Ballot Counting and Reporting

- Evaluate current advance poll ballot count staffing arrangements, and find effective methods to ensure the results of each advance poll are released as early as possible on election night.
- Explore methods of reliably recruiting skilled and experienced poll supervisors, and ensure they receive appropriate and adequate training to fulfill their leadership role in each polling location.
- Standardize the methods, processes and instructions regarding the telephone reporting of polling station results to the returning office on election night.
- Develop, test, document and implement a highly effective, standardized approach to the orderly return delivery of ballot boxes and polling materials that must be transported from voting locations to their corresponding constituency returning office on election night.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

Election Assessment Planning

Beginning in the Fall of 2014, the Chief Electoral Officer assigned a senior election administrator from an outside jurisdiction and a leading academic authority from within the province to join him in developing a project plan for the independent assessment of the administration of the 28th Provincial Election in Saskatchewan. In the spring of 2015, an expert in the detailed design of electoral process measurements was added to the team.

The team's selected assessment approach was based on applying social science research principles that would combine the expertise of the academic community, senior election administrators and experienced statistical and program evaluation experts. The resulting assessment project plan blended elements of 'peer assessment' with the more traditional 'survey research'.

Peer assessment, using experienced election administration practitioners, was used to capture raw, factual data via 'on the ground' observations of the voting process in various types of constituencies. Peer assessment was also the basis of collecting information via interviews with key political stakeholders, and undertaking facilitated discussions with various stakeholder groups.

The requirement for professionally designed survey research, primarily needed to accurately measure stakeholder perceptions of how the election was administered, was met by the University of Saskatchewan Social Science Research Laboratory (SSRL).

By the Fall of 2015, the integrated design of the election assessment project components was completed and individual and group assignments were made to prepare for implementation of the assessment plan in the spring of 2016.

Peer Assessment

Observations were conducted by experienced representatives from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) with respect to Elections Saskatchewan's initiatives to improve accessibility for First Nations voters. The IFES team visited nine polling stations (seven on First Nations reserves and two in urban constituencies with concentrations of First Nations voters) during voting and ballot counting hours, and observed tabulation at a constituency returning office. Interlocutors included First Nations polling officials, other Band members, Elections Saskatchewan administrators, and the Chief of the Lac La Ronge First Nation, the largest Band in the province.

IFES, together with the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, was also invited to examine Elections Saskatchewan's initiatives to improve accessibility for disabled voters at the election. These initiatives had been set out in Chief Electoral Officer's Assessment report titled *Toward Improved Accessibility for Saskatchewan Voters* and included homebound voting for persons with disabilities and their caregivers upon application to a returning officer; allowing an individual voter to act as a friend and assist up to two voters (previously limited to one) at a poll; permission to use sign language interpreters to translate any questions that deputy returning officers may put to a voter and any answers that the voter gives; removal of the requirement to give a reason for voting at an advance poll; and assistance in depositing a ballot into a ballot box.²⁵

In another significant initiative by Elections Saskatchewan, a group of 12 election experts from municipal, provincial, and federal Election Management Bodies (EMBs) were deployed to observe compliance with legislative and procedural requirements of the election, and two senior electoral administrators from Elections BC coordinated this data collection and information reporting exercise.

²⁵ All candidates were invited to complete a survey, with only 29 responding. While the results do not provide a basis for making broad conclusions about the attitudes of candidates, the responses do seem consistent with the results of the voters' survey. Elections Saskatchewan will explore a more productive engagement strategy with candidates in future survey designs.

The program focused on the collection of structured observations related to key controls over ballot handling procedures, voter accessibility, and wait times at a random sample of returning offices and polling locations located throughout urban and rural Saskatchewan. Observations of ballot proofing procedures were also observed at the head office of Elections Saskatchewan. The observers were deployed to constituencies to make observations on the last day of advance voting (April 2) and on election day (April 4). On April 6, the group reconvened in Regina to participate in a facilitated debriefing session.

These 12 independent electoral experts (observers), deployed to make observations at selected voting sites and to record those observations for later analysis, had their information collected in a computerized survey tool that provided summary reporting on the election observations taken. The observer plan resulted in over 1,200 observations of the provincial voting process being recorded.

To complement the focus on election integrity through the examination of compliance with legislated procedures, an assessment of the quality of the voters list, often described as the cornerstone of any election, was conducted by Ed Killesteyn, a member of the Election Assessment Steering Committee. The decision of the Legislative Assembly to legislate the implementation of a permanent voters list was the foundation of a significant project aimed at improving the voters list quality for the 28th General Election and for provincial elections going forward.

Immediately following the election, the most senior administrative representatives of the province's registered political parties were interviewed by Dr. Michael Atkinson, the former Executive Director of the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, who was also a member of the Election Assessment Steering Committee.²⁶ Matters discussed during these interviews included the party's perceptions of Elections Saskatchewan consistency, transparency and independence; the administrative conduct of the election and whether improvements or deteriorations from the 2011 election were apparent;

perceptions of the integrity of the election outcome; the quality of party communications with Elections Saskatchewan and its key officers during the election period; and any recommendations for procedural improvement or technological innovations that would enhance the administration of future elections from the perspective of voters, candidates or political parties.

Finally, a two-day conference of the field leadership team, comprising supervisory returning officers, returning officers and election clerks, together with key personnel from head office, was held to consider major lessons learned from the conduct of the election as well as identify priorities for action in the lead up to the next election. Representatives from the Election Assessment Steering Committee, election observers, IFES and the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy worked together in facilitating this conference.

Surveys of Key Stakeholders

The Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL), a component of the University of Saskatchewan, were contracted to undertake independent surveys of key stakeholders about their satisfaction with, and perception of, the delivery of election services by Elections Saskatchewan. SSRL is a leading provider of specialized research support guided by specialists with backgrounds and training in specific social science research methodologies.

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Election experts from municipal, provincial, and federal Election Management Bodies (EMBs) observed the election

²⁶ Interviews were conducted with two principals from the Green Party, the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party, and the Chief Official Agents from the Saskatchewan Liberals Association and the Saskatchewan Party.

Surveys were conducted with:

Voters and non-voters – a sample of 2,405 voters and non-voters (1,205 and 1,200 respectively) received a telephone call and were asked to voluntarily provide their experiences in matters such as their satisfaction with and perceptions of Elections Saskatchewan, its workers and electoral integrity; the manner in which and the place where they voted; their level of knowledge about key aspects of the election, including most importantly when, where and how to vote; voter identification processes; and waiting times.

Candidates and business managers – candidates and their business managers (each group being surveyed separately) who contested the election were asked by their Chief Official Agent to complete an online survey regarding matters such as their satisfaction with the way in which the election was administered - the services provided by Elections Saskatchewan, election workers and voting arrangements, including vote counting, tabulation and announcement; and the ease with which they were able to comply with nomination and other candidate obligations.²⁷

Returning Officers and Election Clerks – After the close of all election-related activities, an electronic link to an online survey was sent by SSRL to all members of the Elections Saskatchewan Field Leadership Team. These included Returning Officers (ROs), Election Clerks (ECs), Supervisory Returning Officers, Assistant Supervisory Returning Officers (ASROs) and Deputy Supervisory Returning Officers (DSROs) who administered the 28th Provincial General Election in the 61 constituencies around the province.

This survey was completed by 17 SROs/ASRO/DSROs, 57 ROs and 49 ECs. Survey questions covered the entire term of their appointment with Elections Saskatchewan, starting from initial training to the closure of constituency returning offices.

Election Workers – Whether they are support workers within returning offices hired for the entire election period, or those officials employed for the day of the election only, these workers are often described as the “foot soldiers” of an election. They provide an important source of evaluative data quite simply because they are directly responsible for implementation of procedures and provide a direct interface with voters and candidates or their representatives. These workers were surveyed on matters such as their satisfaction with the way the election was administered by Elections Saskatchewan, their experiences with recruitment, hiring and training, employment conditions, the electoral materials used to support for their work and their experiences with voters.

Following the election, the SSRL e-mailed a link to an online survey to the 7,033 election workers who had supplied an e-mail address. Of those, 4,818 completed the survey, a response rate of 68.4 percent.

²⁷ All candidates and business managers were invited to complete a survey, with only 29 responding. While the results do not provide a basis for making broad conclusions about the attitudes of candidates, the responses do seem consistent with the results of other surveys. Elections Saskatchewan will explore finding a more productive engagement strategy to use with candidates in future survey designs.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to the personnel who gathered and structured the information used in this report, the Chief Electoral Officer is extremely grateful for the willing participation of persons who participated and provided thoughtful responses in surveys, interviews and facilitated discussions undertaken as part of the election assessment process.

These include the thousands of randomly selected voters and non-voters, as well as election workers, political party representatives, candidates, business managers, and members of Elections Saskatchewan’s field leadership team. Together, they informed this first-ever assessment of the administration of a general election in the province of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Michael Atkinson, former Executive Director of the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, and Ed Killesteyn, former Electoral Commissioner of Australia, served on the project Steering Committee along with Dr. Michael Boda, Saskatchewan’s Chief Electoral Officer.

This committee guided the development, assessment design, and overall management of the election assessment project.

Electoral expertise used in the detailed design of assessment activities was also provided by Michael Stockfish, the former Chief Operating Officer for Elections Ontario.

On site supervision and facilitation of the field observation process was provided by Cassandra McClarnon, a Senior Electoral Operations Officer at Elections BC. Further planning assistance and post-event data compilation was provided by Jill Lawrance, Director, Corporate Planning and Event Leader at Elections BC.

Twelve expert personnel from election management bodies across Canada, listed alphabetically below, volunteered their time, energy and expertise in making field observations of voting and vote counting processes across the province.

Name	Title	Jurisdiction
Amber Ackerman	Election Coordinator	City of Regina
Christine Chiasson	Research Advisor	Elections Quebec
Chris Foley	Elections Systems and Policy Analyst	Elections Newfoundland and Labrador
Peter Gzowski	Assistant Chief Electoral Officer	Elections Nova Scotia
Erna Hall	Deputy City Clerk	City of Regina
Sylvie Matte	Coordinator - Provincial Polls	Elections Quebec
Francis Morin	Senior Project Officer	Elections Canada
Lyne Morin	Senior Director, Electoral Integrity Office	Elections Canada
Ryan Phillips	Business Analyst	Elections Alberta
Kevin Thomas	Manager, Compliance Enforcement	Elections Ontario
Stephanie Thorpe	Manager of Election Operations	Elections PEI
Ian Tuckey	Community Outreach Officer	Elections Alberta

Augusta Featherston, Chad Vickery and Erica Shein, all from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), observed voting on First Nation reserves and carefully evaluated the extent to which administrative barriers to voting access still exist for the eligible voters living in those communities.

Virginia Atkinson and Anais Keenon, both from IFES, worked closely with Jeremy Rayner of the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy (JSGS), in undertaking a structured evaluation of the extent to

which a wide range of voting service initiatives, aimed at improving accessibility to voting for the province’s disabled voters, had been effective.

Jessica McCutcheon led the survey research team at the Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL) at the University of Saskatchewan that conducted surveys with voters/non-voters, candidates, business managers, returning officers, election clerks and election workers. Overall coordination of the survey data collection efforts was provided by Jason Disano, the Director of the SSRL.



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