


Changes to Manitoba's *Elections Act*

Significant amendments to Manitoba's *Elections Act* were introduced through Bill 27, which received royal assent on November 10, 2017. The amendments reflect recommendations by Elections Manitoba and policy changes initiated by government. Of note, the legislation provides the framework for a permanent voters list to be known as the Manitoba Voter Register, sets the framework for modernization and improves other administrative processes to increase efficiency. In addition, the provincial government has introduced a new requirement to show identification to vote and a vouching process for voters who are on the voters list, but do not have identification.

The Manitoba Voter Register

This is the permanent voter register for Manitoba provincial elections. A few key points around this are:

- The final voter list from the 2016 general election will be the base for the new register. [s. 63.1(6)]
- Regular updates will be made to the register with data from other sources such as Elections Canada, Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI), Vital Statistics and Manitoba Health. [s. 63.2 and 63.3]
- Voters will be able to update their information, and can also opt out if they choose. [s. 63.5(1)]
- Voters who register once do not have to do so again.
- The register will include 16 and 17 year olds. [s.63.1(2) and (5)]
- The register largely replaces enumeration, although there will still be targeted registration before the writ in electoral divisions with high mobility populations, new growth and/or other change [s. 65]
- By February 15 of each year beginning in 2019, registered political parties will receive a voters list pulled from the register. [s.63.8(1)]

Calendar Changes

- The current 75-day election calendar changes to a 28-day election period. Within two days of the writ being issued, preliminary voters lists will be sent to each returning office, candidates and parties. [s. 75(1)]
- Within two days of the writ a Voter Information Card (VIC) will be sent to each voter providing information on where to vote, options for advance voting and ways to update their information as needed. [s. 76.1(1)]
- Advance voting will occur from Thursday to Thursday (day 12 to 5) allowing more time to efficiently process non-resident advance ballots. [s. 125(4) and (5)]



Administrative Changes

- Fixed date election days will be an in-service/professional development day at all public schools making it more convenient for voters and safer for students.
- On election day, the certificate envelopes (not the ballots) from non-resident advance voting can be opened at 6:00 pm to help speed up the count. [s. 134(3)]
- Advance voting locations will match the hours of operation of their location – for example, the hours of operation for a shopping mall. [s. 125(7)]
- Election day voting hours will revert back to 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. Manitoba previously had the longest election day in Canada with a 7:00 am start. [s. 110]
- Modifications and potential improvements to the voting process can occur with approval from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs. [s. 28]
- Voting area sizes will increase to 500 in urban areas from 350, and in rural areas to 350 from 250. This makes more efficient use of staff and reflects the increase in advance voting. [s. 64(3) and 64(4)]
- Impersonation of a candidate or candidate's representative and election officials is now an election offence. [s. 181(3), 182 (1.1)]
- Permanent residents and youth can now be election officials. [s. 41(1); 42(1); 43]

Identification

In addition, Bill 27 amends the *Elections Act* as follows:

- Voters will now be required to present identification to verify their identity and address before they vote. [s.2 (1)]
- On election day, voters who are on the voters list but do not have ID can be vouched for by another voter from the same electoral division. Manitoba has not had vouching since 1983. [115(2.1)]
- Vouching will not be available during advance voting. [125(2.1)]