



# **Report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs:**

**Modifications to the Voting Process  
for the Fort Whyte Byelection**

June 2022

**In October 2021 Elections Manitoba (EM) received approval from the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs to proceed with a modification to the voting process for any byelection held before April 1, 2022. The modification applied to the Fort Whyte byelection held from February 22 to March 22, 2022. It expanded the availability of vote by mail to all eligible voters as a support to public health measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## WHAT CHANGED

EM offered all eligible voters in the Fort Whyte electoral division the option to vote by mail in the byelection by adapting existing absentee voting procedures. Usually absentee voting by mail-in ballot is only available to electors who will be away during advance voting and on election day.

## REPORT SUMMARY

Of the 379 applications received for vote by mail, 360 or 95% were approved and 19 were declined. Reasons for declining an application were:

- Duplicate application
- Voter lived outside electoral division
- ID not provided with application
- Applications received after the deadline

Seven voters who did not receive their original ballot kit requested a new one and replacement ballots kits were issued. There was no attempt to submit multiple ballots by any of those who were re-issued a kit.

Of the 360 applications accepted, 18 ballots were not returned to Elections Manitoba, one was returned with a signature missing and 41 were received after the deadline of 8:00 pm on election night. Two ballots were received with the signature missing but EM staff were able to contact the voter, obtain the signature and count their ballot.

## VOTE BY MAIL PROCESSES

### I. Application Process

Voters could apply to vote by mail either in person, by mail or using the online voter registration service. Voters could apply before the writ was issued, but ballot kits were not issued until after the election was called.

The majority of applications, 89%, were received online through the Elections Manitoba voter registration portal. Online applicants were prompted to check whether they were registered and, if not, to complete their registration. Next, they were prompted to complete their vote by mail application.

The rest were submitted to the returning office or Elections Manitoba headquarters.

### II. Verification Process

EM verified all applications to ensure the applicant was an eligible voter living in the Fort Whyte electoral division and had appropriate ID. Online applicants received an email confirmation that included a tracking number allowing them to check the status of their application through EM's voter registration application.

### III. Voting Process

Once the writ was issued, EM sent vote by mail kits to eligible voters. The voter was struck off the list as soon as the kit was issued and would not be able to vote in person. The kit included the following items:

**A. Instruction sheet**

**B. Write-in Ballot**

**C. Secrecy envelope**

**D. Certificate envelope** – with personalized voter information and oath

**E. Postage paid return envelope**

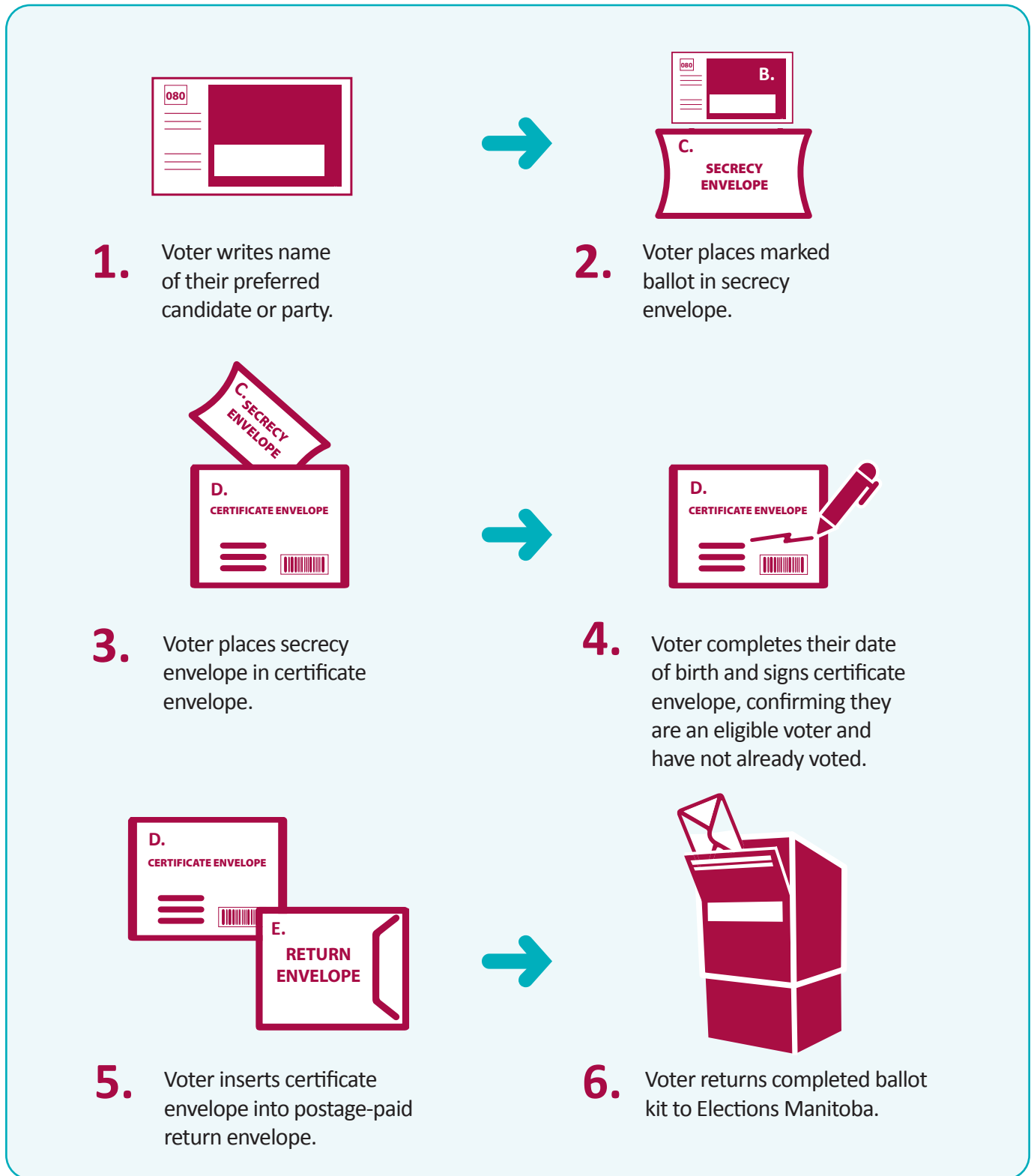
Voters marked their ballot, placed it in the secrecy envelope and then into the certificate envelope. The name, address and unique identification number of the voter was printed on the certificate envelope.

For the vote to be valid, the voter was required to complete their birth date and sign the certificate envelope. Voters could return the package by mail in the postage paid return envelope, or drop it off. The deadline to return the kit was 8:00 pm on election night.

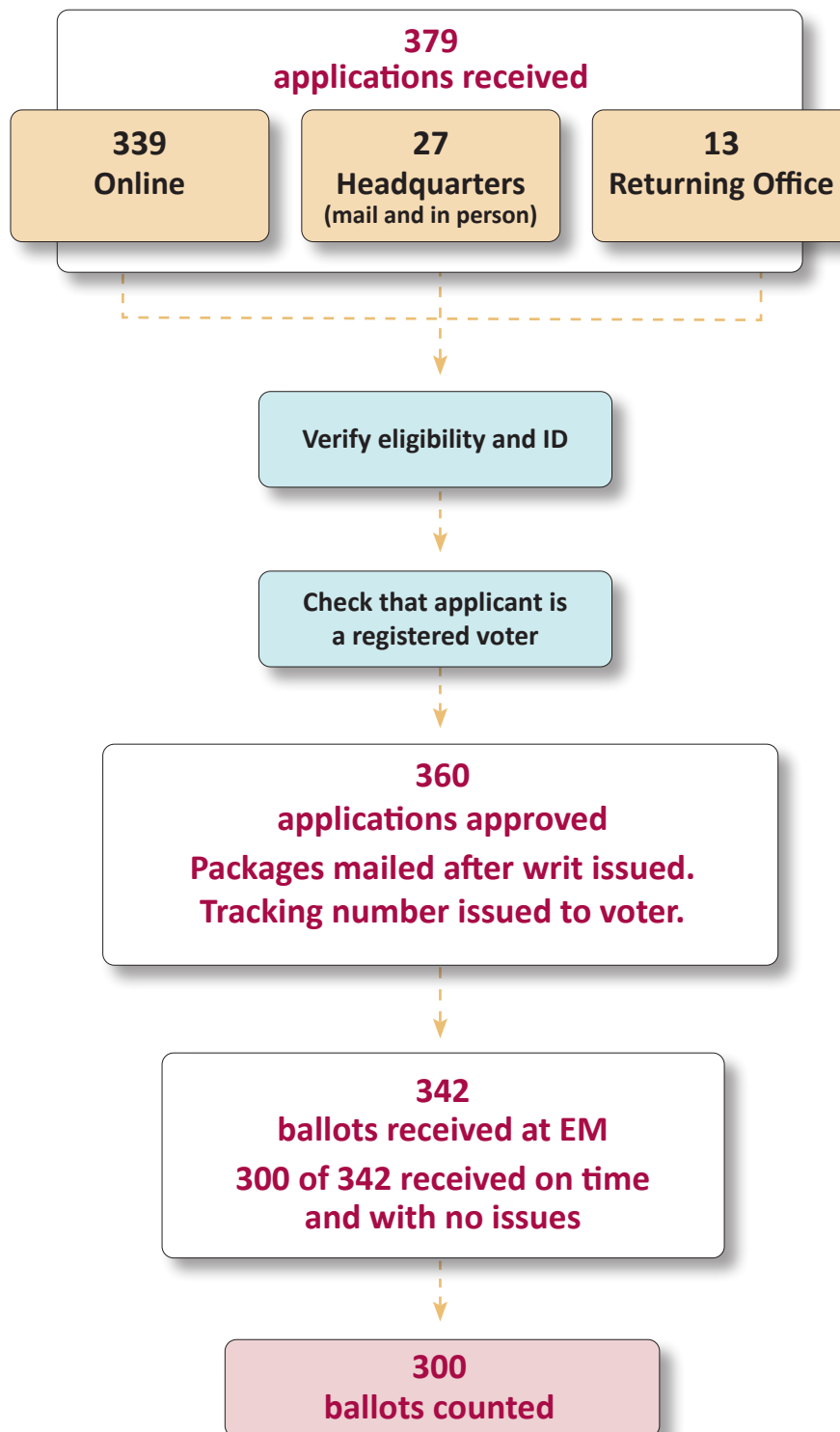
### IV. Receiving and Counting the Vote

Once a ballot was received, EM staff would update the voter's record in the registration application and place the certificate envelope in the ballot box. At 8:00 pm, the certificate envelopes were opened and the ballots were counted.

## FIGURE 1. VOTE BY MAIL PROCESS - VOTERS

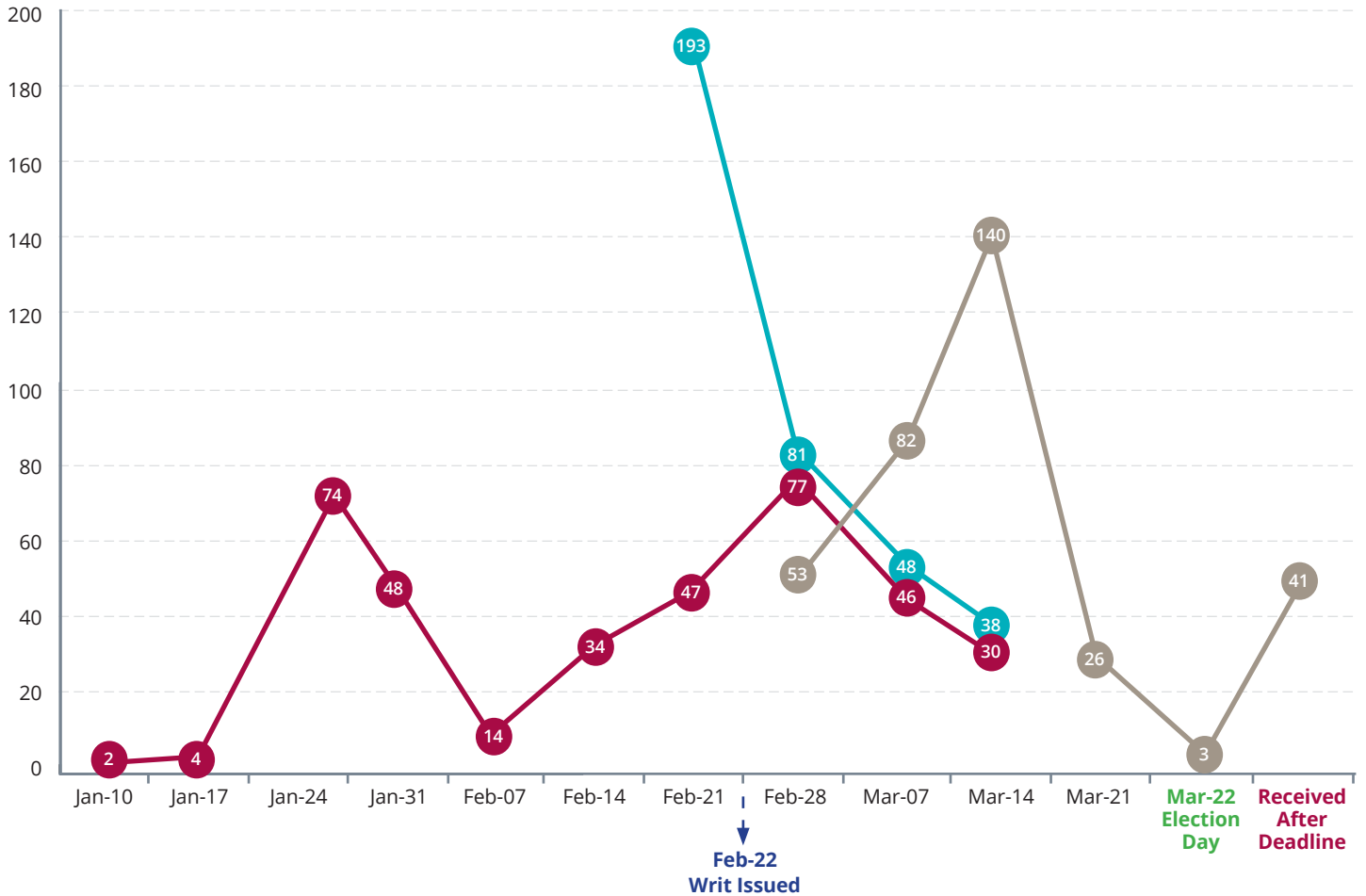


## FIGURE 2. VOTE BY MAIL PROCESS - ELECTIONS MANITOBA



## VOTE BY MAIL ACTIVITY

The following graph illustrates vote by mail activity, from the first applications received by Elections Manitoba to the last ballot kits returned.



**Totals:**

- 379** Applications received at Elections Manitoba
- 360** Kits mailed from Elections Manitoba
- 342** Kits returned to Elections Manitoba

## INFORMING VOTERS

EM took several steps to ensure voters were aware of the option to vote by mail:

Nov. 17, 2021 – Postcards were mailed to all homes in Fort Whyte encouraging them to register and informing them that vote by mail was available

**Are you registered to vote in the Fort Whyte byelection?**

Visit [electionsmb.ca](https://electionsmb.ca) to:

- Check.
- Register.
- Update.

If you're registered – great! You're ready to vote.

If you're not registered, it's easy to do! You just need your driver's license or two other pieces of ID.

If your address has changed, you can update it with ID.

All eligible voters can apply to vote by mail in the byelection. To find out about other voting options or for more information, visit [electionsmb.ca](https://electionsmb.ca) or contact Elections Manitoba.

**Questions:**  
Phone: 204.815.2996 • Toll-free: 1.866.339.4870  
[electionsmb.ca](mailto:electionsmb.ca)

**Elections Manitoba**

Jan. 29, 2022 – Print ad in the Winnipeg Free Press

Jan. 27 – Feb. 5, Mar. 14–22, 2022. Facebook ad

**Elections X Manitoba**

### FORT WHYTE VOTERS: VOTE BY MAIL OR IN PERSON

A byelection will be held in the Fort Whyte electoral division no later than March 2022. Voters may choose how to cast their ballot.

Voting by mail is being offered to all Fort Whyte voters due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To apply, visit [electionmb.ca](https://electionmb.ca) and follow these two easy steps:

1. Check if you're registered to vote and that your information is correct. If not, follow the instructions to register or update.
2. Once your voter information is up to date, you'll be prompted to complete the vote-by-mail application.

You'll need to upload ID: Either government-issued photo ID, like a driver's license, or two other pieces of ID.

**For more information:**  
204-815-2996 • Toll-free: 1-866-339-4870  
[mvr@elections.mb.ca](mailto:mvr@elections.mb.ca)

**electionsmb.ca**

**Elections Manitoba - MB**  
Sponsored - Paid for by Elections Manitoba

Did you know that all eligible voters can vote by mail in the upcoming Fort Whyte byelection? It's easy!

First, check at [www.electionsmb.ca](https://www.electionsmb.ca) to see if your voter information is up to date, or to register. Then while you're there, apply for a mail-in ballot. Once you get your vote by mail package, follow the instructions on how to securely cast your ballot and then send it back!

... See more

**Élection partielle de Fort Whyte Byelection**

**Vote by Mail**  
**Votez par la poste**

**Elections X Manitoba** [electionsmb.ca](https://electionsmb.ca)

**VOTE BY MAIL**  
All eligible voters who live in the Fort Whyte elect.

[Learn more](#)

Also: organic (unpaid) posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram from Jan. to Mar.

## MEETING OBJECTIVES

The modifications were well received by voters and EM staff. The objectives as set out in s. 28.1(2) of *The Elections Act* were achieved:

1. Improve the voting process for voters: By providing an alternative to in-person voting, individuals concerned about exposure to the COVID-19 virus were able to apply and vote at home.
2. Achieve administrative efficiencies: By accepting applications through the online registration portal, EM was able to verify the voter's eligibility and ID, issue the ballot kit, strike off the voter and print a label for the certificate envelope, all supported by technology. The use of technology also allowed for tracking of the ballot's progress, including when it was returned to EM.
3. Maintain the integrity of the voting process: Several measures were in place to ensure the integrity of the vote:
  - a. Barcodes on the certificate envelope linking the ballot to a voter
  - b. Voters required to sign the certificate envelope and fill in their birthdate, which affirmed their eligibility to vote
  - c. Eligibility and ID of all voters verified by EM staff
  - d. Secrecy envelope preserved secrecy of the vote
  - e. The process follows EM's established secure absentee voting process
  - f. Once a vote by mail application was approved, the voter could not vote in-person, as they were struck off the list immediately

## OBSERVATIONS

EM's vote by mail process went very smoothly. The system securely and effectively managed requests, verified voters, and tracked ballots issued and returned. Voters encountered few difficulties in submitting their application; the online application portal was easy to use for most voters. The proportion of declined applications was very low, with 95% of those received by Elections Manitoba approved. Only seven voters asked to have their ballot re-issued and none attempted to submit multiple ballots. The most common reason for a ballot not being counted was that it was returned to Elections Manitoba after the deadline.

## CONCLUSION

Vote by mail was a practical option for administering the vote to individuals who were unable or unwilling to visit a polling place due to the pandemic. The vote by mail module of EM's voter registration application allowed for efficient and accurate tracking, and the volume of requests was manageable. Absentee voting in previous elections and byelections is less than 1% of all votes cast. This byelection showed that EM can easily scale up to 10% and potentially more, if required.

The authorization provided by the standing committee to expand the use of vote by mail was given on a temporary basis in recognition of the public health situation. This report updates the committee on the vote by mail modification and is provided as information.