

# Lesson 5: Manitoba Provincial Elections



## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What qualities or skills should an elected representative have?
- 2 How are candidates elected in provincial elections?
- 3 How can I evaluate the candidates?

## OVERVIEW

During provincial elections, we elect members to the Legislative Assembly to make decisions on our behalf.

In this lesson, students review the role of elected representatives and discuss the qualities they want to see in their Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). After learning about how MLAs are elected, students develop questions they want to ask the candidates or to guide their research into the candidates. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates, and/or which characteristics are most important.

## LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- describe the ideal qualities and skills of elected representatives;
- explain the rules of our electoral system and how candidates are elected;
- identify our electoral division;
- formulate questions we want to ask or learn about the candidates; and,
- analyze the characteristics of the candidates and/or how they will respond to our concerns.

## Tips for Teachers

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- To avoid any bias or partisanship, ensure that all registered candidates are invited to respond to questions, visit the school or take part in any meetings.
- If you plan to hold a candidates' debate, please be sure to follow any procedures your school division has in place and refer to Handout 5.2 for guidelines.

## Supplies/Needs

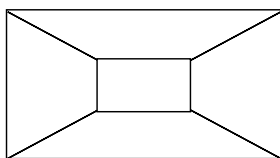
- "CIVIX Explains: Elected Representatives" video
- Internet access
- Slide Deck 5
- Digital access to or copies of Activity 5.1
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found on the project website

## Starter

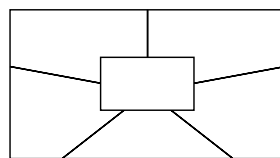
1. Watch the "CIVIX Explains: Elected Representatives" video and review the role of elected representatives. Explain to students that citizens elect politicians to make decisions on their behalf and be a voice for them in the legislature.
2. Through a 'Placemat' activity, have students answer the question: What qualities or skills should an elected representative have?

This cooperative learning strategy allows students to think about, record and share their ideas in groups and then reach a consensus.

- a) You can provide each group with one large sheet of paper divided into sections (one for each student and a centre block for the final group list). Alternatively, the activity could also be conducted through sticky note brainstorm discussion.



Four person group



Five person group

- b) Ask students to respond to the question within their allotted space. Provide time for each student to share their recorded responses with the rest of their group without discussion or debate from the other students.

- c) Next, have each group decide, collectively, on the five most important qualities and record them in the centre of the placemat — it is essential that all group members agree on the top five items.
- d) Review each group's top five as a class.

## Activities

1. Review the provincial election process using Slide Deck 5.
  - The province is divided into 57 geographic areas called electoral divisions. Each electoral division has its own election race, where interested individuals compete for the job of Member of the Legislative Assembly. These individuals are called candidates.
  - Many candidates belong to a political party.
  - Voters can only choose one candidate on the ballot.
  - The candidate with the most votes in each electoral division wins.
2. Using Slide Deck 5, compare the size and shape of electoral divisions in the province. Discuss what the differences might reflect (e.g., population, geographic features).
3. Demonstrate to students how they can find out which electoral division they live in by visiting the Elections Manitoba website ([electionsmanitoba.ca](http://electionsmanitoba.ca)). Go to the 'Voter Information' page (under 'Voters') to access additional information.

### TEACHER NOTE

The school's electoral division may be different from where some students call home. Please contact CIVIX if you would like your school to receive Student Vote ballots for multiple electoral divisions, to accommodate students who would like to vote for their local candidates.

4. Afterwards, review the map of your school's electoral division found on the 'Maps' section of the Elections Manitoba website (under 'Resources'). Point out the location of your school within the electoral division. Through a class discussion, answer the following questions:
  - What are the boundaries of the school's electoral division?
  - What communities or neighbourhoods are included in the electoral division?
  - What major landmarks are included in the school's electoral division?
  - What makes the electoral division unique?
  - Do you think people living in other electoral divisions have similar concerns to the ones you have in your electoral division? Why or why not?

Afterwards, provide time for students to respond to the first two questions on Activity 5.1.

- On the blackboard, interactive whiteboard or on chart paper, list the candidates running for election and their party, if applicable. Demonstrate to students where they can find this information by visiting the Elections Manitoba website. Give students a few minutes to add the names of the candidates and their parties to the worksheet (Activity 5.1).

#### TEACHER NOTE

Consider creating a display wall for candidates where information can be added over the course of the election period (pictures, announcements, articles).

- Divide students into groups and have them brainstorm possible questions to ask the candidates. Refer back to the *Starter* activity to foster ideas. Guiding questions for students:
  - Consider that you are hiring one of these candidates for a job. What do you want to know about them?
  - What information will help you evaluate the candidates?
  - Which issues do you want to see addressed in the community?

Have students individually write down their top three questions as suggested in the Teacher Note under Activity 5.1.

- As a class, narrow down the questions and pose them to candidates through email, in-person or by conducting a phone or virtual interview. You can also consider inviting candidates to visit your class/school or organizing a candidates' debate (Handout 5.2).

Alternatively, you can use a candidate's website or news reports to find the answers or analyze how the candidate may respond to the questions. You can assign each group a candidate and have them share their research and responses with the rest of the class. These responses could be added to the display wall as suggested in the *Teacher Note* under Step 5.

- Review the responses and/or group research and encourage students to share their thoughts about the candidates.

## Consolidation

Have a brief closing discussion about the candidates running for election, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

- What are the three most important qualities or skills when evaluating the candidates? Explain your answer.
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate?

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

An **electoral system** (or voting system) is the way in which we elect our representatives. An electoral system includes set rules for how voter preferences are recorded and the method for determining which candidates win. There are many different voting systems used around the world.

Manitoba uses a system called **Single-Member Plurality** or **First Past the Post (FPTP)**. The province is divided into smaller geographic areas called electoral divisions. Each division is represented by one Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Under First Past the Post, voters choose a single candidate on the ballot and the candidate with the most votes wins. The successful candidate does not need more than 50 per cent of the vote; they only require one more vote than any of the other candidates. This is called a **plurality** of votes.

The number of electoral divisions changes over time. Manitoba currently has 57 electoral divisions.

The size of electoral divisions is determined by factors such as population size, geographic features and social considerations, such as culture and language. The most important factor is making sure that the number of people represented is as equal as possible, so that every vote counts the same. Geographic

representation is also a very important factor that needs to be balanced.

Urban electoral divisions are often geographically smaller due to dense populations, while rural electoral divisions are often geographically larger with less dense populations.

Manitoba established **fixed-date** elections beginning in 2011. As a result, general elections will take place on the first Tuesday in October, every four years.

Regardless of fixed-date election legislation, a provincial election can be held at any time if the government loses the confidence of the legislature or if the lieutenant governor were to dissolve the legislature on the advice of the premier.

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

LESSON SECTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
<b>Starter</b>	Are students thinking critically about the qualities and skills needed for community leadership?
<b>Activities</b>	<p>Can students understand the provincial election process?</p> <p>Are students analyzing their electoral division and drawing conclusions about what makes it unique?</p> <p>Are students posing good questions to evaluate the candidates?</p>
<b>Consolidation</b>	Can students analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates? Can they make connections to the skills/qualities they want to see in their Member of the Legislative Assembly?

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

<b>Individual Education Plans</b>	<p><b>Modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Starter</i> – Make a list on the board of personality traits, qualifications and skills, so that students can choose the ones important to them.</li> <li>• Group students so they are comfortable sharing their ideas.</li> </ul> <p><b>Enrichment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group stronger students together so that they can challenge each other.</li> <li>• Have a mock debate where students take on the roles of the official election candidates and use research to form their responses.</li> </ul>
<b>Language Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide vocabulary for qualities an elected representative might possess (e.g., passionate, hard-working, honest, reliable, team player, approachable, good listener, well-spoken, committed to the community).</li> </ul>
<b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss specific questions marginalized groups may have for the candidates.</li> <li>• Discuss specific challenges your community is facing.</li> <li>• Analyze the diversity of the candidates running in your electoral division and discuss the need for diversity in politics.</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility &amp; Accommodations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.</li> <li>• Coordinate virtual Q&amp;A sessions with the candidates in place of in-person meetings.</li> </ul>