

Lesson 7: The Voting Process



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Is voting in elections important?
- 2 Why do we vote by secret ballot?
- 3 How do I vote in provincial elections?

OVERVIEW

The right to vote comes with the responsibility to vote in an informed and purposeful manner.

In this lesson, students analyze different reasons for voting in elections. Students review essential information about voter eligibility and where, when and how to vote in provincial elections. Afterwards, they practice voting and counting ballots through a mock vote. To consolidate their knowledge, students create a poster or pamphlet detailing how to vote or to encourage their family and friends to vote in the upcoming election.

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- analyze reasons for voting in elections and understand why people have different viewpoints;
- describe where, when and how to vote in provincial elections;
- mark a ballot correctly; and,
- use words and images effectively to convey our thoughts about voting and knowledge about the voting process.

Tips for Teachers

- Please use or adapt the activities in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- Show students a Student Vote ballot for your electoral division so they know what to expect on Student Vote Day. Please refer to your ballot package.
- Be sensitive to issues at home that may challenge perspectives around voting and democratic participation, such as religion or traditions.
- Recognize and acknowledge barriers that inhibit individuals or groups from voting (e.g., negative history, socio-economic class, language, newcomers).

Supplies/Needs

- “Why Voting Matters” video
- Index cards for students
- Internet access
- Slide Deck 7
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found on the project website

Starter

Save the Last Word

1. Distribute one index card or piece of paper to each student. Introduce the activity by posing the following question: Does voting matter?
2. Watch the “Why Voting Matters” video and ask students to select one quote or reason for voting that stood out to them. They should write down the quote or reason on the index card. You may want to play the video twice in order to support this selection.
3. Ask students to explain why they chose the reason they did from the video by writing an explanation on the back of the card (e.g., what it meant to them, reminded them of, how it connects to prior learning).

4. Use the 'Save the Last Word' discussion protocol to discuss their choices.
 - a) Divide students into groups of three. Assign one student the role of timekeeper.
 - b) Invite one student to share their selection with the rest of their group (1-2min).
 - c) Afterwards, have the other two students respond to the first speaker (1-2 minutes each), building on what has been said (e.g. areas of agreement, differences, related insights). No interjections are allowed during this process.
 - d) The first student is then given the “last word” and is able to respond to the others. Consider providing prompts (“I like what ___ had to say about...”, “I hadn’t considered ___ that way before.”)
 - e) The activity repeats until each student has had the chance to go first.

Activities

1. Using Slide Deck 7, discover some of the key aspects of voting in provincial elections.
 - Why do we vote by secret ballot?
 - Who is able to vote in provincial elections?
 - Who organizes provincial elections in Manitoba?
 - What are different ways a person can cast their ballot?
 - How do I mark my ballot?
 - Who is the trusted source for provincial election information? Where should I go if I have questions?
2. Show students a sample ballot and how to mark it correctly. Students can use a checkmark, X, or any other mark as long as it clearly indicates their choice. Remind students that they can only vote for one option, otherwise it will not count.
3. Having the right to vote doesn't always mean that a person will show up to cast a ballot. Explain the term 'voter turnout' and review the turnout numbers over the last 50 years (Slide Deck 7). Use these guiding questions for a class discussion.
 - What insights can you gather from the data?
 - Are voter turnout numbers higher or lower than you expected? What voter turnout would you like to see?
 - What are some barriers to voting?
 - Will you vote in elections when you turn 18 years old?

Consolidation

Have students demonstrate their knowledge by creating a poster or pamphlet about how to vote or to encourage people to vote in the upcoming provincial election. It could be designed for a parent, guardian, or an adult they know. This could also be done in a digital poster format, or as a video.

Ideas for possible content:

- List the qualifications to vote in provincial elections;
- Describe different ways you can cast your ballot (when/how);
- List the steps to cast your ballot;
- Make a pitch with reasons for voting.

Co-create criteria with your class. Sample criteria for a poster/pamphlet is below.

- The tagline and/or graphics are used to capture interest.
- Headings are meaningful and appropriate
- Information is helpful or accurate (e.g., date, eligibility requirements)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Elections Manitoba is a non-partisan agency of the Legislative Assembly with a mandate to conduct free and fair elections for Manitobans, to facilitate compliance with electoral laws, and to advance public awareness of and confidence in the electoral process.

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.

You are eligible to vote in a Manitoba provincial election if:

- You are a Canadian citizen;
- You are 18 years of age on or before election day;
- You have lived in Manitoba for at least 6 months immediately before election day.

Everyone must show ID to vote. Voters who are on the voters list but don't have the required ID may have someone vouch for them. Regarding ID, you have two options:

1. Show one piece of government-issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license, Enhanced Manitoba identification card, passport, treaty card).
2. Show two documents that include your name (e.g., Manitoba Health card, Social Insurance card, utility bill, credit card).

If you are voting on election day and your name is not on the voters list, you will also need to sign an oath confirming that you are eligible to vote and that you have not already voted. If none of your ID includes your address, you will be asked to sign a voter registration form.

Voters can vote at any **polling place** in their electoral division on election day. Once there, voters will cast their ballot on a first come, first served basis.

Voters may choose to vote in one of several ways:

1. **On Election Day:** You can vote on election day between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.
2. **In Advance:** Advance voting is held for eight days, beginning the Saturday 10 days before election day and continuing until the following Saturday.
3. **Absentee Voting:** Eligible voters who expect to be away during advance voting and on election day can apply to vote by absentee ballot.
4. **At Home:** If you are unable to go in person to a voting place due to a disability, you and/or your caregiver can apply to vote in your home by contacting your returning officer.

Voting in elections is done by **secret ballot**. This ensures the privacy of each voter's choice. No one except the voter knows the choice that was made.

A **ballot** lists the names of the candidates running in your electoral division and their political party affiliation, where applicable. There is a space beside each candidate's name on the ballot to mark your preference. As long as you clearly mark the ballot for one candidate, your ballot is valid. This includes a checkmark, X, shading in or another marking.

The voting process at a voting place works as follows:

1. Once you confirm your eligibility, an election official will provide you with a ballot that has the deputy returning officers' initials on the back.
2. Go behind a voting screen to mark your ballot. Choose only one candidate on the ballot.
3. Hand your folded ballot back to the election official to check for the initials.
4. Place your folded ballot in the ballot box.

A **rejected ballot** is a ballot that cannot be counted due to a deliberate or accidental unrecognizable choice. This can include marking the ballot for more than one candidate (even if different symbols are used), ranking the candidates, leaving the ballot blank or identifying who the voter is.

A voter can choose to **decline** their ballot if they do not want to vote for any of the candidates, but still want their vote to be counted. The elector writes the word "declined" on the front of their ballot (the side with the candidates' names), refolds the ballot and returns it to the election official. The election official checks that it is an official ballot (without unfolding the ballot) and it is placed in the ballot box.

A **spoiled ballot** is a ballot that has been kept separate and never placed in the ballot box because it was mistakenly marked or torn during the voting process. The election official writes the word "spoiled" on the ballot and places it in the spoiled ballots envelope.

When preparing to vote, you can consider reasons to support a candidate for MLA, a political party or leader, a specific policy idea and/or an entire party platform. Voting requires that you do your research and devote the necessary time. You will know you are ready to vote when you feel confident in your ability to make a choice.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

LESSON SECTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
Starter	<p>Can students identify a reason for voting that is meaningful to them and explain their choice?</p> <p>Are students actively listening?</p> <p>Can students analyze different reasons for voting?</p>
Activities	<p>Are students able to understand the reason for voting in private?</p> <p>Can students explain who is qualified to vote?</p> <p>Can students define voter turnout and identify reasons why some citizens may not exercise their right to vote?</p>
Consolidation	<p>Can students communicate an accurate and informative voting pitch to family members or adults they know that demonstrates their knowledge?</p>

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., secret ballot, Where to Vote card, voting station, election day, advance voting, accepted, rejected and declined ballots). • Share the “Why Voting Matters” video before class discussions and activities. • Ensure that subtitles are on during videos. <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities — Have students conduct research into the roles of different election officials (see <i>Election Manual</i>) or design a plan for organizing Student Vote Day at your school.
Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., secret ballot, Where to Vote card, voting station, election day, advance voting, accepted, rejected and declined ballots). • Share the “Why Voting Matters” video before class discussions and activities. • Ensure that subtitles are on during videos.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind students that new immigrants, adults who have difficulty reading, language learners, persons who are homeless, newly arrived refugees, and other specific groups may face challenges understanding or accessing the voting process. • Keep the focus on ideas to increase access and the benefits our society gets from hearing different voices, not only on the disadvantages these groups face.
Accessibility & Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.