

# Lesson 5: Manitoba Provincial Elections



## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How are candidates elected to the Legislative Assembly?
- 2 Who are the local candidates running for election?
- 3 Which party or candidate will best address my priorities and concerns?

## OVERVIEW

Provincial elections present a chance for citizens to discuss political issues affecting them and their communities, and debate the future direction of the province. As a voter, you need to evaluate the promises and proposals critically, and find out which party or candidate aligns with your political views and priorities.

In this lesson, students become familiar with provincial elections in Manitoba and the steps to become an informed voter. After learning about the election process, students work in groups to research the candidates and parties running in their electoral division. In the *Consolidation* activity, students analyze their thinking about the parties, leaders and candidates.

## LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- describe the provincial election process;
- explain how to find out their electoral division and which candidates are running for election;
- collaborate with their peers to learn about the candidates and parties running in the election;
- compare and contrast how different political parties or candidates will respond to the same political issue; and,
- evaluate the parties and candidates and determine who they support, and why.

## Readiness

A few days before the lesson, ask students to survey family members about which issues are important to them now and over the next five years.

This information could be collected informally through discussion or through an online survey.

## Starter

Using a 'Rank-Order' discussion protocol, ask students to reflect on the most important issues for this election.

- a) Provide students with the list of policy issues (Activity 5.1) and ask them to select the five most important issues and rank them in order of most to least important. Ask students to write down some notes to explain their reasoning.
- b) Divide students into pairs or small groups and ask them to compare rankings. Students should explain their choices to each other even if they are in agreement, since it's possible that they ranked items similarly for different reasons.
- c) Reflect on the activity as a whole group and try to come to a consensus on the top 3-5 election issues. Guiding questions:
  - Were there major points of consensus or disagreement?
  - Were there cases where you had common priorities but different reasons for choosing them?
  - Did seeing someone else's ranking and/or hearing their reasons make you see or understand one or more of the items differently?
  - How would your parents or caregivers rank these issues? What about your grandparents or elders?

## Activities

1. Ask students to fill out the 'before' column in the Anticipation Guide (Activity 5.2).
2. Review the provincial election process using Slide Deck 5.

Key questions:

- What are elections? When do provincial elections take place?
- What is an electoral system? Which system do we use in Manitoba?
- How do campaigns work? What is a platform?

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 the 'Voters' tab) and enter your school's address.

3. Afterwards, review the map of your school's electoral division found on the results page of the query. Reference the street boundaries and point out the location of your school within the electoral division.

### 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 divisions, to accommodate students who would like to vote for their local candidates.

4. Next, review the list of candidates running in your school's electoral division ([electionsmanitoba.ca](http://electionsmanitoba.ca)). The final list of candidates should be posted after the close of nominations.
5. Organize students into groups and assign each group a candidate/political party, or allow them to choose one based on their preference. The goal is to ensure that a group covers each candidate/party running in your electoral division, including independent candidates.

Using online sources ask each group to research their assigned party/candidate and create a presentation and product in a selected format (e.g., slide deck, video, bulletin board, pamphlet).

Co-create a checklist for the research.

Guiding questions:

- Who is the local candidate? What skills and qualifications do they have?
- Does the candidate belong to a political party? What does the party stand for?
- Who is the leader of the party? What skills and qualifications do they have?
- What are the party's main priorities or promises? Who are the main beneficiaries?
- How will the party address the top issues identified in the *Starter* activity?

Suggested sources:

- Candidate/party websites
- Candidate/party social media channels (Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook or TikTok)
- Candidate/party campaign literature

6. Have each group present their political party/candidate to the rest of the class, or share their presentations/products through a digital gallery. Students can take notes on each presentation using Graphic Organizer 5.3. Provide as many copies as necessary.

The presentations could also be shared with classes in the school to help prepare other student voters for Student Vote Day.

### ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

This activity can also be completed individually or in pairs, where students collect information about all the candidates/parties running in the election using the same suggested resources. Students can use Graphic Organizer 5.3 to help them organize their findings or encourage them to use a digital format that incorporates images and social media posts.

## Consolidation

1. Ask students to fill out the 'after' column in the Anticipation Guide (Activity 5.2).
2. Ask students to fill out the Campaign Reflection (Activity 5.4) and a closing discussion about the political parties and local candidates.
  - Which party or candidate's priorities or positions align most closely with your own?
  - Which party or leader do you think is best suited to lead the province, and why?
  - Which candidate do you think will make the best MLA and why?
  - What else do you want to know before making your voting decision?

#### TEACHER NOTE

- Some students may jump at the chance to share their opinions and even try to persuade others to adopt their choices. Others may opt for silence and prefer to keep their politics private.
- Reinforce the choice for privacy and the importance of being respectful towards others with different points of view.

## Assessment

Using Graphic Organizer 5.5, ask students to select one issue that matters most to them and research each party's promises or proposals on the selected issue. Do the proposals have long-term benefit or are they short-term solutions? Which party's plan do you most agree with and why?

## Extended Learning

Organize an in-person or virtual candidates' forum (refer to Handout 5.6 for tips for organizing candidate debates). Alternatively, you could ask each candidate to submit a video to the class about their reasons for running and/or their priorities for the community. Another option is to collect a few questions from the class, pose them to all the candidates through email and request written responses.

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

<b>Language Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide key terms in advance (e.g., election process, electoral system, electoral division, candidate, political party, platform).</li> <li>• Use an application or word cloud generator to simplify political party messages (e.g., <a href="http://www.wordclouds.com">www.wordclouds.com</a>, <a href="http://monkeylearn.com">monkeylearn.com</a>).</li> </ul>
<b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss issues or 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>Accommodations &amp; Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, consider using Google Docs or Jamboard for collaborative activities.</li> <li>• Have students create digital presentations of their candidate/party research rather than physical formats.</li> </ul>

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

An **electoral 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 electoral 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 (MLA).

In FPTP, 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 other candidate. 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. 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.

Under our parliamentary system, the party that elects the greatest number of representatives to the Legislative Assembly usually forms government and their leader becomes the **premier**.

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.

During an election campaign, an organized course of action is taken by a political party and its candidates to share its vision and platform with voters.

A **political platform** is a series of declared proposals and policies on jurisdictional issues concerning government and the public. Candidates and parties use a communications strategy to share their party platforms through announcements, advertising and events to gain support from constituents.