

# Lesson 8: The Voting Process



## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 **Is voting in elections important?**
- 2 **How do I vote in provincial elections?**
- 3 **What are some barriers to voting and how are they relevant to me?**

## 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 people vote in provincial elections. Afterwards, students learn about voter turnout and barriers to electoral participation, and reflect on whether any barriers may be relevant to them in the future. Next, students discuss actions to reduce or eliminate barriers through a collaborative brainstorming session. In the *Consolidation* activity, students create a social media style video about whether they believe citizens should vote or whether they plan to vote in the future.

## LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- evaluate reasons for voting in elections;
- explain key information related to voting in provincial elections;
- analyze barriers to voting in elections;
- work collaboratively with their peers to discuss actions to reduce barriers to voting; and,
- articulate reasons for voting in a persuasive manner.

## Starter

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 and reasoning with the rest of their group (1-2 min).
  - 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 and last.

## Activities

1. Explain to students that voting in provincial elections is done by secret ballot (Slide Deck 8). Voters mark their ballot behind a privacy screen and fold their ballot to conceal their choice. Using a 'Think Pair Share' discussion protocol, have students reflect on one or more of the following questions:
  - Why is voting in secrecy important?
  - What could happen if elections were held publicly?
  - Why is it important to ensure a fair and impartial election process?

2. Using Slide Deck 8 to review key aspects of the voting process in provincial elections in Manitoba.

Guiding questions:

- Who is qualified to vote in provincial elections?
  - What is the voters list?
  - What are different ways that voters 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?
3. Explain the term 'voter turnout' (Slide Deck 8) and various statistics from provincial elections in Manitoba.

Review:

- Voter turnout is the percentage of eligible electors or registered voters that cast ballots in an election.
  - Having the right to vote doesn't always mean that a person will show up at the polls to cast a ballot.
4. Provide copies of Activity 8.1 and give students a few minutes to complete it. Ask students to answer each question as honestly as they can.

### TEACHER NOTE

Encourage students to take the survey home and have a discussion with their parents or caregivers.

5. Review some key research findings about voting and barriers to voting using Slide Deck 8. There are many different barriers to voting, including motivational barriers and access barriers.
  - Motivational barriers include low levels of political knowledge and interest in politics, lack of perceived importance, cynicism and lower sense of civic duty.
  - Access barriers include not knowing when and where to vote, lack of personal identification, challenges getting to the polling station, and language and literacy skills.
6. Independently or with a partner, have students reflect on how many zeros they recorded on the voting survey (Activity 8.1) and which barriers could affect their decision or ability to vote in the future.

7. Using a 'Carousel' brainstorming strategy, have students generate a list of actions that could be taken to reduce or eliminate barriers to voting.

a) Create 5 stations with chart paper. Write one of the following on each piece of chart paper.

- Low levels of knowledge about government and politics
- Cynicism towards government and politicians
- Lack of interest in politics
- Low confidence about understanding politics and how to vote
- Belief that voting is a choice, not a duty

b) Divide students into five groups. Give each group a distinct coloured marker to code their responses and assign each group to a different station.

d) Let students know they will be rotating through the stations, writing down suggestions for each barrier. Encourage them to read through the responses that have come before theirs before adding their own suggestions.

e) Rotate groups through the stations. Give students 2-3 minutes at each station. Continue until each group has visited every station.

f) Reconvene as a group to debrief on the activity. Review the responses on each chart paper. Pull out similarities and differences to promote further reflection.

## Consolidation

Create a social media style video highlighting three main points as a response to one of the following questions. Consider using visual graphics and a tag line.

- Should eligible citizens vote in elections?
- Does voting matter?
- Do you plan to vote in the future? Why?

## ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

<b>Language Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., election day, advance voting, vote by mail, ballot, accepted ballot, rejected ballot, declined ballot, spoiled ballot, voters list).</li> </ul>
<b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 election system.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Accommodations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.</li> </ul>

## 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.