



SASKATCHEWAN

OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

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ACTING CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER RECOMMENDS MODERNIZING *THE ELECTION ACT, 1996*

The need for modernizing *The Election Act, 1996* is the message that Acting Chief Electoral Officer, David Wilkie had for the Legislative Assembly in the **Report of the Chief Electoral Officer - Recommendations for Changes to *The Election Act, 1996* – Twenty-Sixth Provincial General Election, November 7, 2007**, tabled today in the Legislature.

Wilkie said: "The world is always changing; election legislation needs to keep up with other changes in society." "Election legislation" says Wilkie "should take into account the aging population, the faster pace of life and the higher expectations of the public." The report makes 110 recommendations including those in several key areas arising from an extensive debriefing process in 2008 with many stakeholders, including Returning Officers, registered political parties and voters with disabilities. The recommendations for change include:

Service to Voters and Future Voters:

- making polling places, including advance polling places, accessible for all voters;
- having transfer certificates for voters to vote at alternate polling places for specified reasons;
- allowing the voter to put the ballot in the ballot box himself or herself, if he/she should so wish;
- having central advance polling places in shopping malls and airports to make voting easier for the busy person;
- allowing an eligible voter attending university or college to vote at a poll in his/her university or college, and to be counted in the constituency in which he/she lives while in school or in which he/she lived prior to attending school;
- extending the use of a "friend" to assist any voter who has a disability, not only the current restriction to blind voters;
- formally extending the use of mobile polls to small personal care homes and also to senior citizen apartment blocks;
- adding a "homebound voting" provision for voters with a disability, who are unable to get to a regular or advance poll, to be served by the Returning Officer in person, instead of the current vote by mail absentee voting system;
- allowing the use of pilot projects at a By-Election to test out new ways of voting, such as for voters with disabilities; and
- allowing school teachers to bring students to polling places for educational purposes, as long as prior arrangements are made with the Returning Officer.

Further Movement Towards a Permanent Register of Electors:

- having a final full enumeration in September 2011 and dropping the collection of occupation on the List of Electors;
- starting in 2012, having the Register of Electors updated via agreements with various government ministries and agencies to provide basic name, address, gender and birthdate information to the Chief Electoral Officer when someone moves;
- having targeted revision take place at each subsequent election in areas of high mobility such as personal care facilities, personal care homes and university residences; and
- strengthening restrictions on the use of the List of Electors for electoral purposes only, with specific increased penalties for violations.

Changes in Residency Requirements:

- having the six month residency requirement become effective on the date of the election, instead of the day before the election is called; and
- having no loss of residency for Members of the Canadian Forces, and their spouse and dependents after the current five year maximum.

Candidates/Election Finances/Returning Officers:

- returning nomination deposits to candidates who return candidate financial returns on time to the Chief Electoral Officer;
- increasing compliance measures, such as administrative fines, for not getting the required candidate and political party election returns in on time and for other election finances infractions of The Act; and
- putting in place election leave of absence provisions for a person wishing to be a Returning Officer or a candidate.

A detailed copy of the report can be downloaded from the Elections Saskatchewan website at www.elections.sk.ca (for paper copies contact Elections Saskatchewan at 787-4000, 1-877-958-8683 or 1702 Park Street, Regina.) The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly responsible for the administration and financial conduct of provincial electoral events.

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