



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Legislative Affairs

Chairperson
Mr. Tyler Blashko
Constituency of Lagimodière



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
ROBBINS, Colleen	Spruce Woods	PC
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Thursday, December 11, 2025

TIME – 1 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park)

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

Hon. Min. Wiebe

*Messrs. Balcaen, Blashko, MLA Compton,
Mrs. Cook, Mr. Oxenham*

APPEARING:

*Tracy Nysten, Acting Chief Electoral Officer,
Elections Manitoba*

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year
ending December 31, 2024*

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Clerk Assistant (Ms. Katerina Tefft): Good afternoon. Will the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): I nominate—I'd be saying, MLA Blashko, okay? I nominate MLA Blashko.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Blashko has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Blashko, will you please take the Chair.

The Chairperson: Our next item of business is the election of a vice-president.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Compton: I nominate Mr. Oxenham.

The Chairperson: Mr. Oxenham has been nominated.

Are there any—or, sorry—hearing—are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Oxenham—Mr. Oxenham is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2024.

Before we begin, I would like to remind everyone that questions and comments must be put through the Chair using third person as opposed to directly to members and representatives.

Are there any suggestions from the committee as to how long we should sit this afternoon?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): 'Til 3:30.

The Chairperson: It has been suggested that we sit 'til 3:30.

Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Does the honourable minister wish to make an opening statement? And would he please introduce the officials in attendance.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'd just make a brief opening statement.

It's such a privilege to once again appear before the committee and to talk about the important work that's being done by Elections Manitoba and to support the committee's work in reviewing its operations.

Elections Manitoba, as we know, plays a vital role in safeguarding the democratic process here in our province. And its mandate is clear: to ensure that elections are conducted fairly, they're conducted impartially and with the highest standards of integrity.

The work is fundamental in maintaining the public's trust in our institutions and to upholding the rights of Manitobans to participate fully in our democracy.

I want to acknowledge the professionalism and the dedication of our outgoing Chief Electoral Officer, as well as our Acting Chief Electoral Officer, as well as the many staff and folks over at Elections Manitoba. Their commitment to transparency, accessibility and continuous improvement really does ensure that our electoral system remains strong and responsive to the needs of voters.

Today's discussion provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the progress made, to consider the challenges ahead and to reaffirm our shared responsibility in protecting the integrity of our elections, whether it's in modernizing processes or strengthening outreach to under-represented communities or ensuring compliance with legislation.

Elections Manitoba continues to adapt and evolve in important ways in service of Manitobans.

I look forward to the dialogue that will follow and to hearing the perspectives of all the committee members.

Together, I think we can ensure that Elections Manitoba remains a model for independence and excellence, that it—that our democratic traditions are strong and continue to thrive.

Thank you, honourable Chair.

The Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister.

Does the critic for the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Balcaen: I do.

The Chairperson: Mr. Balcaen.

Mr. Balcaen: I'd, first of all, just like to welcome Elections Manitoba here today, and their Acting Chief Electoral Officer. So thank you for the opportunity to have this discussion today. We appreciate the work that you do for our democracy and in getting us all ready for elections and ensuring that elections are carried out in a fair and impartial manner throughout the province and maintaining the trust of the public.

And after reading the report, it appears you're responding to a lot of the concerns and suggestions made by the public and MLAs, as well as the candidates, as—and also the previous committee hearings. So I thank you for that. We look forward to hearing more updates today about elections Manitobans—Elections Manitoba's modernization efforts and how they're working to improve the efficiency of our elections.

And, hopefully, we can have a non-partisan discussion about how we can make elections a little less stressful on the voters, on candidates and their campaign teams, as well as, you know, the people that are hired within Elections Manitoba to do this work.

So we encourage the participation in our democracy and attract and engage our citizens to take part in elections and in the political process. And I know

this is an integral part of that, making sure that we're all on board with that.

So without any further ado, I look forward to asking many questions today and engaging in a discussion here with the officials.

Thank you for being here, and we look forward to the committee today.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does the representative from Elections Manitoba wish to make an opening statement?

Ms. Tracy Nylen (Acting Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Manitoba): Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Chairperson and members of the committee, for the opportunity to discuss Elections Manitoba's annual report for the year ending December 21, 2024. With me today are Jeanne Zwiep, director of election operations, and Mike Ambrose, director of communications and public information.

Today, I will give you a brief overview of the annual report which also covers campaign finance reporting for the 43rd general election and the conduct of the Tuxedo by-election. The annual report also contains a report on the modifications to the voting process. In addition, I will also speak about activities carried out by Elections Manitoba in 2025.

The deadline for parties and candidates to file election financial statements for the 43rd general election was February 5, 2024; 201 candidates were required to file a financial statement.

Of those, 101 were received by the filing deadline, six were assessed late filing fees, two statements had not been received by the end of 2024, and one still remains outstanding; 161 candidates and four registered parties were eligible to receive reimbursement for election expenses. The total amount of reimbursements was \$1.38 million.

Third-party election communication filings are also included in the report; this summary shows the contributions and election communication expenses for the 14 registered third parties.

The Tuxedo by-election was held on June 18, 2024. Voter turnout was 45.3 per cent, and NDP candidate Carla Compton was declared elected. Detailed results and maps were published in the statement of votes for the by-election and are available on our website. There were no modifications to the voting process used in this by-election.

The Tuxedo by-election gave us a chance to refine our processes and apply lessons learned from the last general election. In delivering this by-election, we made some changes to our training program for our Elections staff. We also refined the results reporting process to more quickly and efficiently deliver election night results.

The annual report includes a report on the modification of the voting process used in the Transcona by-election, which was held on March 18, 2025. The modification was approved by this committee on December 2, 2024, and made two changes to voting. It extended voting at the returning office by adding two additional days of advance voting, plus election day voting, and also allowed voters to cast a ballot at the returning office in the province on election day. This modification was also used in the Spruce Woods by-election, held on August 26, 2025.

* (13:10)

As the by-elections were held in just one electoral division at a time, only the first change, the extended voting days, was used. As outlined in the report, this modification did meet the objectives for implementing modifications as set out in The Elections Act. This modification has now—excuse me—been added to the legislation with the passing of bill 30, The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act.

Honourable Chair, 2024 puts us in a point in the election cycle where we shift from review and analysis of the previous election to planning for the next. We added an additional step to our evaluation and review process in 2024 by engaging with an independent partner to conduct a thorough organizational review.

We reviewed our organization structure, our current skills, our future skill requirements and identified gaps and developed a plan for bridging those gaps. Specifically, through the course of this review, we have identified the need to diversify our skill set by adding a number of new positions to our permanent staff to more efficiently deliver increasingly complex electoral events. This proposal has been sent to the legislative affairs management committee for review.

Honourable Chair, 2024 also saw the development of a new strategic plan for Elections Manitoba, which includes setting the strategic priorities that will allow us to carry out our mandate of delivering free, fair and accessible elections. These priorities are to uphold integrity and public confidence, strengthen

organizational effectiveness, enhance service and ongoing engagement, as well as enable inclusivity and accessibility. These priorities are the basis for our project planning and implementation for the election cycle.

Each year significant work goes into maintaining and improving the Manitoba Voter Register. We receive voter information updates from data partners, run a campaign to encourage voters to register or update their information and work with municipalities to gather addressing information. These activities contribute to improving the accuracy and currency of the register.

In 2025, we held 25 registration and engagement events in 18 electoral divisions, including Keewatinook and Swan River. These initiatives resulted in over 5,000 new addresses added to our address database in northern and First Nation communities. This is one step in our efforts to address low registration numbers in these communities. We use the register to produce voters lists for local governments and school divisions. We also work with local governments to provide guidance and voting supplies on request.

Another annual priority for Elections Manitoba is our in-class education program, Your Power to Choose. This program helps teach the value of participation and engagement through in-class, facilitator-led workshops. In 2024, 76 workshops were delivered in 37 schools across 24 different electoral divisions.

Our focus in 2025 is putting our strategic priorities into practice through the delivery of key projects. Some of these projects include major upgrades to our internal technology, including our election management system, which is used for result reporting and other key activities; a revamp of training plus improvements to our returning officer and field support strategies; also redevelopment of our website. Alongside these projects we continue election and by-election readiness preparation. Work has begun and continues on activities like recruitment, mapping, voter registration and procurement.

Implementing legislation is a key activity at our office. Bill 30 makes a few key changes to legislation, which provides important protections to Manitoba voters, political participants and election officials. In our 2023 annual report, we made recommendations to strengthen the legislation by placing stronger restrictions on false statements and misrepresentation.

The deliberate spread of false information is a threat to democracy, eroding trust in elections and

interfering with citizens' ability to understand and participate in the electoral process. Rapidly advancing AI technologies makes generating and spreading this kind of disinformation easier than ever.

Elections Manitoba works to position ourselves as a trusted source of election information. Some ways we do this is through ensuring accurate and timely information on our website, engaging in robust election advertising campaigns, being in the community and meeting with voters face to face and working with registered parties and campaigns. By strengthening the protections against false information and impersonation, this amended amendment also protects the election integrity and underscores our shared commitment to democracy.

In closing, Elections Manitoba remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering free, fair and accessible elections for all Manitobans. The work we have outlined today, guided by our strategic priorities and supported by our detailed project planning, ensures that we are prepared to meet the challenges of an evolving electoral landscape.

I want to thank this committee and the Legislative Assembly for your continued support and collaboration. Together, we share a commitment to the ideals of democracy and to the—ensuring that every eligible Manitoba can exercise the right to vote. Your partnership is essential to maintaining a strong, transparent and inclusive electoral process.

I look forward to discussing the contents of the report and answering any questions the committee may have.

The Chairperson: Thank you for that opening statement.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Balcaen: So—and thank you for the opening statement. It gives us a lot of background in areas that we can discuss here.

So the Chief Electoral Officer has resigned and moved on to a new position in British Columbia, and while we're—sorry, while Elections Manitoba is in the process of implementing these new strategies that have come forward, as well as the elections modernization, and at the same time looking for a new CEO, how will Elections Manitoba maintain its momentum going forward in implementing all of these changes to ensure election readiness is not disrupted as you onboard a new electoral officer, not knowing when the next election could be called?

The Chairperson: Before we go on to the answer, I'll just remind all members to put questions through the Chair.

Ms. Nysten: You know, we have a small department at Elections Manitoba, but together in our leadership team, we developed our strategic plan together. We went through our organizational review together and it developed our project plans.

And, you know, with the absence of a CEO, we still have our milestones to meet, our project plans to ensure. So at that—at this time with the leadership transition, all hands are on deck to ensure that all necessary modernization, all our processes in the procurement, all our things to be election-ready is done.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you for that.

So the Chief Electoral Officer's message in the report mentions that they conducted a full review of the organization and operations in 2024. I'm wondering, honourable Chair, if we could be informed in more detail about some of the ways that Elections Manitoba are bolstering organizational effectiveness and modernizing elections.

The Chairperson: Could you repeat the question?

And I'll just let Ms. Nysten know, like, when—you can take a moment and when you're ready. Just give me the sign.

Mr. Balcaen: Sure. The Chief Electoral Officer's message within the annual report mentions that they can—or that they conducted a full review of the organization and operations in 2024.

So I'm wondering if we could be informed in more detail about some of the ways that Elections Manitoba is bolstering organizational effectiveness and modernization of elections.

Ms. Nysten: So a couple of our strategic priorities that we had was strengthening organization 'effectiveness'—'ineffectiveness' when we did this. We want to support internal capacity by building personal development and training plans for employees and field staff on an onboarding program.

We also want to deliver internal communication that is successful—accessible and clear by defining consistent channels, and define ongoing training and robust onboarding programs.

So this—we want to continue with institutional knowledge, you know, prepare—everything is developing so fast—the complexity of the office with the

modernization. So having that over lapse and the gaps filled are very important for that position.

* (13:20)

So we—through that organization review, we did find that we had some gaps. Some of the bigger ones were for voter registration and community outreach. We were wanting more on, you know, developing relationships with community partners. We also found that the modernization—there's some complex technology, so we wanted another network to ensure that our infrastructure is safeguarded, secure. We're going through the proper channels of firewall, ensuring that all voters' information is—remain safe and protected and we want to uphold the confidence of the public to know that all our information is safeguarded with proper security measures in place.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes. So just to kind of continue along that. We heard some information regarding personnel development and onboarding priorities and making sure that Elections Manitoba maintains institutional knowledge and—which are all great goals to have.

My question would be that we're now two years past the mandate for this government. We've heard the Premier (Mr. Kinew) make some indications that he was ready to call a snap election because of some issues that he felt the opposition were causing him to have one of his bills passed.

So if there was an election called, say, tomorrow and the writ was dropped and government decided to do this or they had a non-confidence, or something happened there, is Elections Manitoba ready for that, staffing-wise? We saw in the past election staffing was a major issue and had grave concerns about that, making sure that there was election readiness.

So if we were to have an election called today, tomorrow, would we be ready for that?

Ms. Nylen: Elections Manitoba's mandate is that we should be always election-ready. However, there's two different phases that we have: we have election-ready—or, like, to get prepared for a fixed-date election and also a contingency plan for maybe another election. So we have two paths that would follow.

In that way, we're starting a recruitment, onboarding for the returning officers and then assistant returning officers. If an election is called tomorrow, everything, of course, is going to be—have to go a lot faster. We'd have to be more strategic, obviously, on staffing. This may be, you know, hiring more contract

workers, maybe use services outside, like other subject matter experts in certain areas that we might need help to assume.

But again, we have to be election-ready, so it would be a little rocky at first. But as long as—you know, we would have to secure returning offices, secure our polling places; the procurement would have to be complete, imaging all our laptops, ensuring our VCMs are tested and configured. But again, we would be able to conduct an election.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you for that answer.

Just shifting gears a little bit, in the recent—the most recent by-election in Spruce Woods, Elections Manitoba had advance polls opened most days in Brandon and in Glenboro. But many, many, many of the other rural communities only had one day of advance polling. And so we're talking kind of the split—this is one of those unique ridings—which there's a few—that have urban and rural constituents based on that.

So it seemed to create an imbalance in voter accessibility, where voters in an urban area had access daily to advance polls, whereas the general populace in the rural areas outside of Glenboro had to either drive an hour, an hour and a half, depending what it is, to have that same accessibility. And I know that's one of the areas that Elections Manitoba, honourable Chair, is looking at, is one of their strategic plans, is making sure that it's accessible for all Manitobans.

So can Elections Manitoba correct this in the future so that the next elections will ensure that all communities have the same level of access to advance polls, and voters can vote in their home communities and not have to travel long distances to do this?

Ms. Nylen: Yes, for the Spruce Woods by-election, we did have nine advance voting locations; three were open for multiple days. The LEO—the returning office was open for 10 days, Glenboro memorial centre for eight days, and Souris-Glenwood Memorial Complex for two days. We did have six locations that were open for one day, as stated.

And in our legislation, it states that all vote—there has to be—for a registered voter, the minimum—or the maximum that they have to travel is 30 kilometres to vote. So we do fall within that legislation and we comply with that; however, we'd have to take back to see how—what the—and also about how many people potentially would vote. And we'd have to take that into consideration as there's budget to think about in that way. But we can take that back.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes, I thank you for that and the other area for consideration too. And, you know, this was a—this was an election that happened—a by-election, not a fixed-date election. The fact of the timing, we have to, I think, look at those considerations as well, not just the demographics, not just rural versus urban, but the fact that, when we're hosting an election in the fall in a rural community that is farm-based, many, many people are out making their occupation, their living, out in the fields and aren't as accessible to that 30-minute drive or that 30 kilometres and making sure that they're ready.

So is there lessons learned from this one that we can take back or tell our voters that, you know, in future elections, these considerations will be looked at?

Ms. Nysten: In the 43rd general election we did have over 300 advance voting locations, and that was—some were multiple days and some were just one day only. I think we are continuing to ensure that we stay at that amount and, you know, potentially grow a little bit bigger.

Again, that's something to consider: looking at the accessibility and the convenience for voters in the future.

Mr. Balcaen: I thank you for taking that consideration and something to look into.

Honourable Chair, I'd just like to turn over some of the questions for the next couple of minutes to my colleague, the MLA for Roblin.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): In your opening statement you noted that you've been conducting voter registration initiatives, and you mentioned 18 constituencies where you had done that. So I—it's a two part question.

How do you determine where you're going to do voter registration initiatives, and what do those initiatives entail? Through the Chair.

The Chairperson: Of course.

Ms. Nysten: So there's many ways that we do outreach programs or outreach events. This one that we specifically were referring to in the notes, in 2025, was just an outreach in engagement. So we put it out to any of our continue—like, returning officers and assistant returning officers that were, you know, were willing and able to do this. They found somewhere that they could rent for cheap, and it was just something that we gave them—the idea. And so they reached out. They

decided where to go this time and that's just how these events started this time.

* (13:30)

We do do online outreach programs a lot. We try and do a lot of different things. It's not necessarily where; it's where the returning office that is willing to participate in the outreach program is—where those were set up. We will continue to go rural. We want to go northern tours; we want to reach out to everyone to ensure the same.

So next year, in 2026, with democracy month, we will continue to do these outreach events and hopefully we'll do some more electoral divisions at that time and continue to do so throughout the year.

Mrs. Cook: Do you feel that you have enough—does Elections Manitoba feel that they have enough access to—ways to update the voters list through municipalities, through the federal census; or do you feel that possibly there needs to be an enumeration process undertaken in Manitoba? Because I think it's been quite a long time since Manitoba has done that. I just wonder if we are aware of who we're missing.

The Chairperson: And, of course, that question was through the Chair.

Ms. Nysten: We have a few data partners. We have the National Register of Electors that we have access to. We also have MPI, Vital Statistics, and Shared Health—no—Manitoba Health. So we do get a lot of information through them so that those agreements—you know, we have access to targeted registration, so it's similar to enumeration. So in a fixed-dated election, we would look at potentially doing a targeted registration outside the election period. What we would do there is look at any vacancies, any new builds—maybe transient areas—and tackle that way.

Right now, our voters list, I believe, is about 96 per cent accurate and complete, so we continue to try and, again, find more addresses and more eligible voters and update as much as we can.

Mrs. Cook: Shifting gears a little bit, in the last general election there were some challenges in staffing and training for elections workers and, in particular, some difficulties with the new electronic ballot system and the counting machines. So I wonder what steps Elections Manitoba has taken since then and what they'll be doing in the lead-up to the next general election to ensure that there is enough staff at all polling stations that are fully trained and capable of operating the voting machines and managing all

the different methods of voting that we've now established in the name of making voting more accessible—but it also makes it more complex.

Ms. Nysten: Yes. Staffing is a concern and it's an ongoing concern, I think, everywhere.

We're going to try—we do—initially we have to get the returning officers and assistant returning officers hired, recruited and trained; once we do that, to reach out to the other 6,000 election officials that we require on election day—or about 5,500 for election day. We are updating our training manuals right now. We are looking into other ways of—you know, we'll do an in-person training; that will be about three hours for all voting officials that work with VCMs.

We're also looking into doing more of a learning management system, online training that they can keep going back to, reviewing and taking the course over and over again to see how to use the VCMs. Or, you know, if it's the electronic strike-off, if it's the result reporting into the counting, whatever that looks like. As well as—we do consistent webinars people can jump on. We can talk specifically about any training issues, any training spots that need a bit more attention. So we'll continue to do so. So hopefully, you know, with all that, that will be enough.

We also offer others to come back to the returning office before election day or at advance voting to use the vote-counting machine or test a vote-counting machine, to play with it, to look—to see what to do and get familiar with those—with the hardware.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that. I imagine, particularly in a year where we could potentially be having a federal election, possibly a provincial election and certainly a municipal election, I don't know, but I would assume that Elections Manitoba ends up drawing on many of the same staff that work in elections at other levels, so there may be a number of people who are feeling pretty tapped out.

Oh, what was I going to ask you? Yes, if someone is voting in the advanced polls at a voting station that is not in their constituency and they can't make an electronic ballot available for that constituency—and this is based on a couple of anecdotes that I heard during the last general election—the person is provided with a paper ballot with the names written on it.

So what is the process for ensuring that that paper ballot is placed in the proper ballot box and counted for the proper constituency? I just wondered if you could expand on that process—if Elections Manitoba could expand on that process—and how they ensure

that every ballot is counted in the right constituency and not misplaced or put into the wrong ballot box.

Ms. Nysten: Can you just repeat that first part of the question regarding to the—*[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Mrs. Cook.

Mrs. Cook: So if you're advance voting in a constituency that's not your own, and there isn't an electronic ballot available for that constituency and a voter is given a paper ballot, what is Elections Manitoba's process for ensuring that that ballot is counted in the proper constituency?

I heard from a couple of voters in the previous election who had voted in advance polls outside of the constituency—were given a paper, written-in ballot and it didn't go through an electronic counting machine or anything like that; it just got put in a box and they were somewhat concerned that their ballot didn't get counted or wasn't counted correctly.

Ms. Nysten: So someone—if someone is voting in advance outside of their electoral division, they would get a write-in ballot. That write-in ballot would be counted manually and it would be placed in another box and it would be reported for the ED. On the 605, which is the statement of vote, it would be counted as an out-of-ED voting.

Our job at Elections Manitoba is to ensure we know how many people voted outside of the electoral division and how many ballots have been counted in that electoral that they voted.

Mrs. Cook: Apologies if this is noted in the report, but do you have stats on how many people voted outside of their constituency in advance polls?

Ms. Nysten: And this was for the 43rd?

An Honourable Member: Yes, right.

Ms. Nysten: We can get back to the exact numbers at a later date, but we can forward them.

Mr. Balcaen: So in a question prior, my colleague asked about adding more days to voting and making easier to vote and stuff.

* (13:40)

During your—during the answer, honourable Chair, there was some information: there was approximately five to six thousand individuals that are needed to run the election; there's 57 different divisions; that—there's work being done on electronic—or, sorry, on e-training and on different areas, working towards policies on that, working towards training programs, trying them out to make sure that they work.

So I go back to my question that I had near the beginning—is if an election was held tomorrow, or called tomorrow, would we really have the ability in Manitoba to be ready to have it fully staffed and have the robust system that we expect in Manitoba? And again, adding, if I can, honourable Chair, the fact that, you know, we are going to have—we know that we're going to have an affix—a fixed election for municipal elections; and we could see a federal election at any time, same as a provincial election.

Ms. Nysten: Again, our Elections Manitoba mandate is that we have to be election-ready. This will be probably very difficult with—I mean, people—there could be fatigue—voter fatigue as well.

But again, what we'll look at is we will share resources with federal or municipal to ensure that we get people on vote-counting machines and the modernization. It is actually probably easier to run an election with those, even though they're more complex; but it is more simplified and it will be easier to do.

So, in turn, yes. If an election will be called tomorrow, we will be able to—maybe the returning office won't be picked right yet, the telecommunications, ensuring Internet connectively—all that. But we will have a couple—a few days to get that up and running, and then we'll be running as—and getting all the information out as required.

Mr. Balcaen: Well, that's a great segue, and I thank you for that.

Honourable Chair, I'd like to ask you a little bit more on the election readiness and technology and those areas that we're moving towards here in Manitoba.

So during the last election, the last general election, there was a severe thunderstorm that shut down power at many voting stations. And I'm wondering if we can have it explained how we could be better prepared for these sort of situations and ensuring that voting continues and ballots are properly accounted for even if the electronic voting machines can't be used due to a power outage.

And then I'll save my next question for the follow-up. It will be about firewalls and making sure that we're prepared there.

So if we could look at, you know, election readiness with the voting machines if we have a power outage, if we have something that we don't always prepare for. But we have to be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.

Ms. Nysten: So all vote counting—or all voting places or polling places will not all have electronic voting. There will be some still manually in areas, I believe. So if there was a power outage again, or if something of that sort, every polling place will have an auxiliary box.

So this will still allow all voters to vote and be accessible. The convenience will still be there. They'll be still putting it—and then we'll put in the auxiliary box. Then once up and going again, if the VCM is there, we can then feed those ballots into the VCM for counting.

We hope that doesn't happen again, but there is—we have contingencies in place for voters, if they are there, to still be able to vote in times of technology failing.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes, there's always issues with new technology and failures that we see. And again, in our last election, we did see that.

So you mentioned—through you, honourable Chair, it was mentioned during the last answer that not all areas will have access to electronic voting machines. So I'm wondering if we could be notified of which areas wouldn't have that, and how this meets the accessibility and, you know, modernization strategy of Elections Manitoba.

Ms. Nysten: So when we are doing our planning, we look at how many voters that potentially will be voting in that polling place. If there's approximately about 500 or so, a vote-counting machine will be placed there. If there's potentially—if it's a building with only 100 registered voters, that could just be a manual station, so just the ballot box. And it would just be that way.

So it's depending on the volume of voters in the polling place area that we look at, that we—and so I don't have the exact numbers that it would be for the 44th GE at this time, so. But it's not—it's about 20 or 30 only; it's not a big number of—we have 600-plus voting—vote-count machines out there in the province of Manitoba on election day.

Mr. Balcaen: So going back to the power outages, because that was a major issue in 2023—or a power surge or anything that impacts a voting machine. What procedures are now going to be in place to ensure that ballots have been counted correctly and that the digital count is not incorrect and that we match the two up as far as who has voted and what the digital count may show based on a power outage or a power surge?

Ms. Nysten: Back in 2023, we are confident in the numbers of—or with the count for manual versus the vote-counting machine count. We have processes in place to ensure that all manual counts and vote—and the electronic counts will balance and reconcile. There's no concerns.

We keep bringing this through on the three by-elections that we've had and to continue to keep our processes stronger, and we'll keep looking into that. But we're confident in our manual process as well as counting process as well as the electronic counting process.

The Chairperson: MLA Compton?

MLA Compton: Thank you, honourable—oh.

The Chairperson: Mr. Balcaen?

Mr. Balcaen: Just continuing on that. With the electronic balloting technology and machines, it seems that we'll still have a combination of manual counting as well as the electronic machines. Moving forward, I'm wondering if Elections Manitoba is planning on having 100 per cent electronic voting to make it standardized across the province, no matter where you live, no matter how many people are expected to come out to these elections to allow for as close to real-time data as possible.

So with that, is there a need for purchasing more of these—this equipment or this technology, and is there funding available or is there a need for funding for that?

* (13:50)

Ms. Nysten: Our evaluation report at the end said 90 per cent of the places did have electronic voting. Right now, we're in the process of seeing if we could add any additional voting-counting machines to some of the other areas to increase that number, and hopefully we will get to 100 per cent at some point.

Mr. Balcaen: So just to follow up, is—you're hoping—sorry, Elections Manitoba, honourable Chair, is hoping to get to 100 per cent sometime in the future.

I'm just wondering: Is there a financial burden that is not being met to get to this, or what is the stumbling block to not be 100 per cent if we were 90 per cent prior and just need to add 10 per cent?

Ms. Nysten: I just wanted to clarify, I said 90 per cent of the places; it's 90 per cent of the voters were able to vote electronically and 10 per cent was manual, so just wanted to clarify that.

You know, this is something, again, we can take back for consideration, the counting machines. And there's not—it's not the budget that we were looking at. I think it was more the accessibility and just—so we can take that back.

Mr. Balcaen: A follow-up from several questions ago talked about the youth vote initiative, and that there was 24 constituencies that that happened in.

I'm just wondering if the other 33 will be brought on board in this election—in the next election, or do they alternate between constituencies? Is the goal to have, you know, 100 per cent of the 57 constituencies on board for that?

Ms. Nysten: The Your Power to Choose workshops that we do, we reach out to the schools and—through newsletters, through social media. We have a online registration that they can apply online if they would like to—for one of our facilitators to come and do a education workshop there.

In—coming closer to an election, we would—do ramp up. We do send out more social media ads and we would do more newsletters to engage with teachers and students to actively participate.

We're hoping to maybe think of a—maybe a northern tour, get a facilitator to go travel to 'sclose'—some other schools to see how that looks, too, in this current year coming up.

Mr. Balcaen: So my follow-up was partially answered in that. So in the northern communities or in some isolated communities, there's not always that great connectivity. We've seen this across the province where there's not always availability for Internet or e-learning and stuff. So the hiring of somebody or a team to go to the North or to these communities would be a great—I think, a great initiative. I would encourage that to continue.

My other part that I had to ask on this or wondered about is: a great number of students transitioned during COVID, especially, to home-schooling and to the online learning and stuff. Does Elections Manitoba reach out to a home-schooling group, or is there a way to verify if it's equally accessible to people that choose to do home-schooling and have this education as compared to in the classroom of a traditional school?

Ms. Nysten: At this time, I know we do not reach out to the home school, but this is something to look into and definitely engage with and move forward with that. *[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Mr. Balcaen.

Mr. Balcaen: Sorry—yes, thank you, honourable Chair. I'm going to turn this over to my partner after this question, but we've not done a full enumeration in many, many years to update the voter list, and I know we've heard of different tactics that we can use. You know, we've been relying on other ways to update the list.

Can Elections Manitoba tell us a bit about the methods that they're using? There's been a few mentioned, but would it be something that Elections Manitoba is looking at, to do a full enumeration of the province?

We know that the province has grown. We know that there is a number of people that have become new Canadians or people that are not eligible to vote that are living in different residences, and that's something that we could ensure is as up to date as possible going into the elections that will help all parties that are looking to do their pre-election door knocking and engagement with the community.

Ms. Nylen: So we have talked about targeted registration. We talk about also—so that could happen outside the election period. We would go door to door at that time, more so for vacancies, newer builds, transient areas. We also do online outreach programs, get—and do some drives. We put the registration drive for—in the Hydro bill too, and say are you on the voters list, so we do this stuff.

Some of the concerns that we face—or maybe potentially some of the staff—are safety concerns of going door to door. Maybe some people might not want to open the doors anymore to strangers and—you know, so we are seeing a little bit more of that. However, if a full enumeration is in legislation, we should do—we would conduct that at the time. But I think we are trying to target the areas that we seem to have little pockets in in the voters list and will continue to keep doing our best to get it current and complete as we can.

Mr. Balcaen: Sorry. Just one more follow-up before my colleague asks a couple of questions, is that—great point is that dynamics have certainly changed over the years. You look back 30 years ago where people felt safe in answering their doors and people attending there. People had generally—100 per cent of people had home phones and ability to do surveys that way.

Now we've changed to cellular technology. Some people may have cellphones from outside of the district from anywhere in Canada, the US, Mexico—wherever their phone plans have brought if they've

come here. So I could see that being very difficult. More of an anecdotal remark.

But my question is, for voter outreach. How does Elections Manitoba deal with people that are unhoused or people that have changed residences? I'm mainly looking at the homeless population or people that don't have a permanent residence but are still Canadian citizens, live in Manitoba. They may move from one electoral division to another, transient that way. How do we determine where a person actually resides, where their vote lies if they want to engage in that?

And I bring this forward because I dealt with many homeless people in my previous career and I know that there is some programs in Brandon—and I'm sure it happens in other jurisdictions as well—where unhomed people are educated on upcoming elections but they may face these barriers. So I'm wondering how Elections Manitoba can reach out to that population and ensure that they have equal accessibility as well.

Ms. Nylen: So Elections Manitoba, we work with shelters and service providers for voting and any information. If someone does not have a fixed address, they can use the address where they receive the service, so there's lots of ID options that can use, including a letter from that service provider or that shelter, to allow them to vote.

* (14:00)

Mrs. Cook: I just want to ask a couple of questions about third-party election expenses. So I see the detailed breakdown in the report, and it's hundreds of thousands of dollars contributed by third parties, and for both just contributions but also election communications.

I guess my first question is how—does Elections Manitoba rely on third parties to proactively disclose and file these returns, or does Elections Manitoba have a role in identifying what they consider to be third-party elections communications and reaching out to those organizations and notifying them that they need to file? That's probably enough for my first question.

Floor Comment: So a third party is a person or a group other than a political party—

The Chairperson: Apologies. I wasn't on mic when I acknowledged you.

Ms. Nylen.

Ms. Nysten: Okay, so a third party is a person or group other than a political party, a candidate or a constituency association that promotes or opposes a party or a candidate during an election. This legislation that was—it came just in 2013 into this, but the legislation was written in, I believe, early 2000s.

So what, I guess, our Elections Manitoba role is that we ensure that we have everything that we can on our website to identify any third parties or if anything—has questions. But what—we can't police everything, so if an inquiry comes in or a complaint of some sort come in, we do follow up with potentially a third party. There is a bit of an option that they have to spend \$2,500 before they have to register with Elections Manitoba. So—and that's within that 90-day pre-election period.

So, you know, a lot of people could be potentially just to—doing posters or brochures, and that might not hit that \$2,500 threshold to register with us. A lot of the times, any inquiries or complaints that come, we do follow up, but other than that, we don't know who the potential third parties are, so we don't know how to reach out to them prior to—like, candidates and political parties—we can reach out and ensure that all the proper information is given to those campaigns at that time, so.

Mrs. Cook: Does Elections Manitoba feel that there may be a gap there, that there is—you know, Elections Manitoba has a big job, and I don't know if it is the job of Elections Manitoba to police third-party involvement in elections or if there is the need for another body or organization to take over that role or if there is a need for a process by which, you know, individuals or parties or candidates can request this be investigated.

They think there's a organization organizing against them and advertising to that effect or otherwise, what—it's not clear what recourse they have. So I'm wondering if it's Elections Manitoba's opinion that, you know, we—there's a gap here that needs to be addressed.

Ms. Nysten: And any third-party potential complaint would be referred to the commissioner. The commissioner, then, would—could have—do more of an investigation to see if—to maybe fill that gap.

Mrs. Cook: Okay, that clarifies something for me.

What about third parties that, like—there's not a lot of non-monetary contributions noted here, but we know that third parties send, for example, volunteers and door knockers, to certain campaigns. Is that

considered an in-kind donation? Should that be reported somewhere? Like, what is—what are the rules on that?

Ms. Nysten: The legislation for third parties is not as detailed as any of the political—other political participants; there's no contribution rules for third parties on—and no contribution limits. As—so it's hard to differentiate for that. So I believe the ones that have filed gave the information that they were required to do with the non-monetary contributions.

The things that they have to report on are specific to the election communication expenses and not necessarily other things that—other expenses that happened for that third party to—in that case. But—oh. One other thing to note is third-party returns are not audited, so we're taking in the information that they provide that way.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that. I think there's some gaps that need to be addressed in terms of third-party involvement in elections. Like, one of the things that makes our system in Canada, I think, so superior to, for example, the American system is that contributions by unions and corporations have been disallowed in Manitoba for a very long time.

But there are ways that some organizations get around that, and I think Manitobans deserve to have a clear picture of who's involved in elections and who's influencing the outcome. But that sounds like something for legislators to deal with, not Elections Manitoba, so I guess that's not a question that you can answer.

I do have other questions. When it comes to nominating candidates, I did find, personally—and I know probably others found that the—you know, when an election gets called over a long weekend, for example, that deadline kicks in to get your nomination papers in.

How much time does Elections Manitoba need to get all the candidate names, certify their nomination papers and get their name on a ballot? Like, I'm just wondering if there's any opportunity to lengthen that nomination period for candidates, or how that date is determined.

Ms. Nysten: So for a fixed-date election, the nomination period, I believe, is only for about four—

The Chairperson: Ms. Nysten.

Ms. Nysten: So for a fixed-date election, there is seven days of nomination period. For an other fixed-date election, there is 15 days for the nomination period.

So for the fixed-date election, I believe the nomination was shorter because of—we know that a fixed-date election is coming.

So with the nomination process, candidates have to file their financial—or, their nomination papers with the returning officer. The returning officer is the one that's going through, ensuring that the nomination papers are complete: all the candidate information, the declaration that is required as well as the 50 signatures needed.

Once that information is confirmed and the returning officer is approving that, it does then come to Elections Manitoba for another quick review and approval for that candidate to become official. When—however, whenever it comes in from the returning office, Elections Manitoba stays and completes all nomination process—or, nomination candidates that day.

So I'm not sure. So we get them done the day that we receive them at Elections Manitoba to approve and get on—them on—official on the website.

The next question was for the ballot—for the names on the ballot. So nominations close at 1 o'clock on a Monday. At that time, we're already proofing our ballots to ensure all the candidates from each electoral division are on there. We then send it to the printers and get ballot proofs. And so that process is pretty smooth.

However, it's then the VCMs and doing the ballot testing with the vote-counting machines and configuring and ensuring that all candidates, all voting 'placens' and—voting areas and polling places can—are configured in each voting—vote-counting machine.

* (14:10)

Mr. Balcaen: So going on some of the election timelines for fixed elections or for elections that are called early for whatever reason, the writ period is currently quite short in Manitoba, which makes—I would imagine makes things somewhat difficult not only for Elections Manitoba but for the parties and certainly for the candidates.

The federal writ period is 36 days, so my question is, should the Province consider matching that as a minimum writ period to ensure candidates—and, more so, Elections Manitoba—have sufficient time for all the paperwork involved in any of the election process?

Ms. Nysten: I believe the election period is from 28 to 34 days and—plus election day, so the election period

could be as long as 28—or 34 days plus election day, what is in our legislation right now.

Mr. Balcaen: Through the Chair, is that enough time? Is—does that allow enough time for Elections Manitoba to be fully prepared, I guess, in your opinion?

The Chairperson: In my opinion, as the Chair.

Ms. Nysten: Again, our mandate is to be election-ready and with whatever time frame and time period we have. So we would always want more time, but that's just what it is in legislation so we'll stick with that, so.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you very much, honourable Chair, and I'm glad we got an answer from Elections Manitoba rather than through the Chair on that question.

Just moving forward on some of the processes again that we've talked about, bill 30 recently passed the Legislature and made a number of changes to the indexing of donation limits and setting the donation—sorry—setting the donation limits as well as the indexing of auditing fees and increasing the amount Elections Manitoba will compensate candidates for those audit fees.

Just wondering if the Chief Electoral Officer, acting, can outline what those limits are now and how indexation will be done going forward for these limits.

Ms. Nysten: So in regard to the contributions, I believe it went down to \$5,000 for an annual contribution in aggregate of any political participant that they contribute to, and indexation is no longer in place, so it's just a flat \$5,000 annually going forward. And then the audit—so that's the contribution side, and was it—can I get clarification on the auditor fees? Was that the other piece?

Mr. Balcaen: Yes, just the indexing to auditing fees as well.

Ms. Nysten: So originally it was \$1,500 for a candidate campaign plus PST, and now, I believe—or it's gone up to \$2,500 as of January 1. Next January, 2027, we will be doing an index—or inflation and you'll be using January 2026 as a base amount and whatever that amount increases from January 2027 from January 2026, and that will increase.

I'm not sure and I can confirm that it might be after the next general election or if it starts indexing after it comes into play in January 1.

Mr. Balcaen: Well, thank you very much for that information.

Moving back to technology being used, what precautions does Elections Manitoba use to ensure that the data and information that the agency has kept is secure and protected from any hacking and that Manitobans' information is kept safe? We've seen a number of cases over the years and it's only increased with cyberattacks and with sophistication of hackers and people that are doing this for nefarious reasons.

So just wondering what sort of precautions Elections Manitoba has in place to ensure that Manitobans' personal information is being protected as best as possible.

Ms. Nysten: We—at Elections Manitoba we have several layers of defence to prevent any data loss. We have firewalls, secure VPN tunnels or encryption of our data. We use strong passwords, penetration testing and vulnerability assessments prior to any general election.

We consult with the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. All staff working with the voters list have to do a security check. We do periodic phishing email testing and periodic updates to our staff to maintain awareness. Those are some of the techniques that we use for securing voters lists and voter information—sorry.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you. I guess, on this: has Elections Manitoba had any concerns about hacking that has happened or have there been any events that have, I guess, caused a learning opportunity for Elections Manitoba, as far as, you know, any of the cyberevents or -attacks that could happen?

Ms. Nysten: There may always face some ongoing and regular cybersecurity threats. We maintain a robust digital security around other networks. Other management bodies across jurisdictions in Canada do too. We work together, come up with plans, you know, keep each other informed and share any of the—their processes that could help us in Manitoba as well.

Mr. Balcaen: I have one more question, then my colleague will—addition to asking a few. Elections in Manitoba are traditionally on Tuesdays. And in recent years—so in all of our recent years, sorry—but the federal government, federal jurisdictions have election days on the weekend. And in BC, some other jurisdictions have elections on other days of the week.

So I'm wondering, is there an ideal day that would be easier for Elections Manitoba to hold a full-scale election day? And I'm wondering, perhaps, if it was a, like a Thursday, so that there was three full business days during the week to help with the charge-up to

E-day or would a weekend make it easier for volunteers, who often have other careers or other jobs. I'm just wondering what would make it easiest for Elections Manitoba and for the voters to get out and vote.

Ms. Nysten: In the legislation, it states that election day is on a Tuesday so we never did more further investigation on what day would work better than that.

We do, however, have the opportunity on a fixed date that the schools are closed and we can have the opportunity to use 16- and 17-year-olds to work on election day. So that helps with potential, you know, staffing issues. But again, that's not something that we looked into because the election day says it's on a Tuesday.

* (14:20)

Mr. Balcaen: So as a follow-up through you, honourable Chair, I'm just wondering if what I'm hearing is that there could be an opportunity, if perhaps a study was done or a determination was made by Elections Manitoba, then it would fall in the hands of legislators to make that legislative change.

Would there be an opportunity to look at what would be best for Elections Manitoba, and, if so, you know, we could make that change, so is that something Elections Manitoba would be willing to look into to see if we can help, both for staffing, for sites to have this, as well as for voter turnout?

Ms. Nysten: If that was something that was asked we would do our research and to see if there's—if we came up with something, but.

Mrs. Cook: I just wanted to ask a couple of questions about the changes to voting that were sort of piloted during the Transcona by-election and again in Spruce Woods and the extension of advanced voting days.

When you look on page 39 at the votes cast at the returning office, based on my layperson opinion it looks like it actually may have helped increase voter turnout with 106 votes cast on day one of the extended advance that under previous rules that day of advance voting wouldn't have taken place.

But I'm just wondering if you can reflect on how this process worked, what Elections Manitoba learned and what lessons you'll take from this into a general election, whether you felt that these were positive changes overall, if you felt they had an impact on voter turnout, just your general impressions of these changes in particular.

The Chairperson: Again, a lot of questions directed through the Chair, but I will pass it off to Ms. Nylen.

Ms. Nylen: So a couple things to consider is the voting opportunities for voters, just giving additional days that may work better for the voters, more convenient, more accessible.

Also, you have to take into consideration the space that we need at maybe the returning office now to have the space required for voters to come in and cast their vote secretly and securely as well. So.

Mrs. Cook: Okay. Have a couple of other questions, but they're sort of random one-off questions.

Does Elections Manitoba encounter any difficulties with the City of Winnipeg, in particular, in getting occupancy permits for returning offices? And I ask this question because I know that campaign offices often have a heck of a time getting occupancy permits in time.

I'm wondering—I don't actually know—maybe Elections Manitoba is exempt from getting those occupancy permits—I don't—I just wondered if you have any—if you can comment on that at all, if that's also an issue for Elections Manitoba.

Ms. Nylen: I can comment on that in previous elections those permits weren't as required as much, and, you know, you definitely saw it more in 2023 that these—like the office occupancy permits were required. We do have a way to get them and I don't think there was an issue otherwise. But no, we're not exempt from having those. So.

Mrs. Cook: My other random one-off question: During the last federal election I understand that Elections Canada stopped providing printed poll maps to candidates.

I am hoping Elections Manitoba isn't planning to follow suit, so I guess I'm just asking, will Elections Manitoba continue to provide printed poll maps to candidates?

I think Elections Canada made a mistake, and, you know, some of us ran for parties that can probably figure out how to get those poll maps printed; not every candidate can do that.

Ms. Nylen: Yes, Elections Manitoba will continue to provide maps.

Mrs. Cook: I lost my spot; give me one second.

Oh, yes. This is an important question. What additional resources has Elections Manitoba identified

that they need to safeguard smooth and secure delivery of election results?

Ms. Nylen: I don't know necessarily if it's resources; it's more training, more process development. We've continued to keep—increase our, you know, standardizing our processes, enhancing them and getting them better.

As resources, any extra help on security and safety measures for securing the voters list is always helpful. However, we can be strategic in ways of not necessarily using staffing; we could use vendors to help us in those situations during election day, so.

But we continuously want to safeguard the election night results, the voters list and we continue to do so, and tighten up our processes and guidelines on a daily basis.

Mrs. Cook: I guess my follow-up question, then, is: Does Elections Manitoba feel it currently has the resources it needs to accomplish that, or will the organization be making an ask of government for additional funds to make sure that the organization can continue to do its core job?

Ms. Nylen: We have put a request for additional FTEs to the LAMC committee, and it's on—in review. However, if those did not go through, we have statutory funding. We can still get casual resources if required or—and contract workers if necessary.

Mr. Balcaen: Just on the staffing questions that my colleague had asked here, how much time would a candidate—sorry, not a candidate, a person working at or for Elections Manitoba at one of the stations—need for training? How much time do they require and what is the process, if you could walk us through that?

I've seen some recent advertisement by Elections Manitoba for co-ordinator positions, stuff—what is the process that candidates need to go—sorry, not candidates—employees need to go, whether they're permanent or temporary, and particularly the temporary employees that are going to be working at polling stations? How much time do they need? What is the commitment for the training prior to having this?

And I guess the second part of that is, what is the return rate if Elections Manitoba has that, honourable Chair, of the number of people that return as employees, election after election? Does that help—I guess my question is—would that help streamline the training for others?

Ms. Nysten: We have different tiers of staffing that we require. We have our 22 permanent staff; we also—our headquarters staff grows to about 80 during an election. We're starting to gear up, hiring more casual staff right now in headquarters.

Our recruitment campaign goes out in January for returning officers and assistant returning officers. Our stats right now, I believe, are around 64 per cent are returning, so that's really good for that and with retention.

Through that, the training process, we do more of a rigorous and complex training for returning officers because they're the ones, then, that are training. So it's like train the trainers, so they're training their staff that—at their returning office.

* (14:30)

So ROs, AROs probably get about seven to eight days of in-person training. We also do, like, online training, webinars, and we'll get them up to speed.

With the staff that just work—about 100 staff that just work election day, we give them about three hours of training—in-person training, the chance to come back and, you know, do hands-on learning at later dates, as well as we have LMS training; they—it's about an hour—online training that will show some more of that information and any webinars if needed. So that's kind of the—

The Chairperson: Mr. Balcaen.

Mr. Balcaen: So I thank you for that. It seems like there's some pretty intensive training for people that come on, and then they get that training and then they may not have to use it again for several years, so they'll need a refresher.

You mentioned about having—you mentioned earlier in one of your answers—sorry—honourable Chair, it was mentioned earlier in one of the answers provided that sometimes it's difficult to deliver these training opportunities in northern areas as well as remote areas.

Does Elections Manitoba have sufficient staff now on board, or will they bring them forward, to do these seven or eight days of training that's required in all of these different jurisdictions, and I think, particularly the northern region and remote areas of Manitoba?

Ms. Nysten: So we have two different training for the ROs and AROs. Initially, we have a centralized training, so all returning officers and assistant

returning officers come to Winnipeg and we do a centralized training for about three to four days. Then the remainder are regional training. So we then get returning officers—or areas that are similar, so the northern areas, we—the training would happen for the northern teams.

So we would do regionalized urban, more—like, eastern rural, western rural, to be—and so then that training is more specific to those areas and, you know, address the needs of whatever may be the requirement we're training for at that time.

Mr. Balcaen: Moving back to a technology sort of question—I started down this path a little bit in some of my first questions—is that the connectivity in certain areas of Manitoba is very difficult. I even find sometimes travelling on Trans-Canada or No. 16, there's areas where I lose contact in cellular or not having that provider as far as Internet.

What can Elections Manitoba do to ensure that all of these stations—polling stations and areas have that connectivity? Is there third-party providers that Manitoba elections—or, sorry—Elections Manitoba contract with to have that data available or that Internet availability at these sites? Is there different equipment that's brought in for that short term?

Ms. Nysten: So one of the things that we do for both returning officers—or offices—and polling places is that we test each site prior to ensure connectivity requirements can be met. That could be, you know, if one of the vendors or service providers is already in that polling place, we'll go with that one. If there is required something else, then we could meet the needs how—whatever is most convenient and can get in at that time.

We have used Starlink. We've—we could—we'll use any kind of connectivity that's needed. We have, I believe—I'm just trying—like the cellular modems that, you know, can reach farther, we can do that. But if we can't meet those requirements, again, you know, the ballots would be then done manually.

And it does say that the service will be reliable to approximately 95 per cent of the voters at 77 per cent of the voting locations. That was what our stats were in 43rd general election, so.

Mr. Balcaen: Just—I wanted to say thank you for the candid answers today.

I, myself, don't have any further questions. I don't know if my colleague does.

So at this time, I thank you very much.

Honourable Chair, I know we agreed to 3:30, but I'm wondering if there is leave to end the committee at this point.

The Chairperson: I believe we can get to that point.

Seeing no further questions, I will now put the question on the report.

Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2024—pass.

The hour being 2:35, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

The Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 2:35 p.m.

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