

Position Description

Returning Officer

December 2013

ElectionsManitoba



Elections Manitoba is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly responsible for securing the democratic rights of Manitobans through the conduct of free and fair elections, promoting democratic participation. All members of the office must provide professional and non-partisan public service, independent from government and free from political influence, in order to enhance public confidence in, and awareness of, the electoral process.

OVERVIEW

For each provincial electoral division, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) appoints a Returning Officer (RO) to conduct provincial elections and by-elections and to ensure that provisions of *The Elections Act* and other relevant statutes are observed. The CEO also appoints an Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) to assist the RO.

RO's and ARO's are responsible to the CEO. As public officials, they are appointed based on being the individuals most qualified and suitable for the position and on their ability to deliver the requirements of the position for the electoral division they are appointed to serve.

The RO and ARO positions are not civil service positions. The RO and ARO are employed on the basis of an employment contract and compensated on the basis of the Election Fees, Expenses and Rentals Regulation (Tariff of Fees).

REPORTS TO	Chief Electoral Officer through Elections Manitoba
REPRESENTS	Chief Electoral Officer

JOB PURPOSE

- Manage provincial electoral events (including general elections, by-elections, and referendums) in the designated electoral division.
- As a highly visible elections official, conduct free and fair elections within the designated electoral division (ED).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In accordance with Section 33 of *The Elections Act*, the following persons may not be appointed and may not act as an election official or enumerator:

- a member of the Assembly or the Executive Council;
- a member of the House of Commons or the Senate of Canada;
- a judge of any court or a justice of the peace;
- a candidate;
- a person who has been convicted of an offence under this Act;
- a person who, within five years before the proposed appointment,
 - was convicted of an indictable offence, or
 - served any part of a term of imprisonment for an indictable offence.

Section 36(1) of *The Elections Act* provides that the returning officer must be an eligible voter of the electoral division

***The Elections Act*, Section 38 stipulates that once appointed the returning officer has a duty to be impartial and must not:**

- Be a member or employee of a registered political party, a political party or constituency association, or hold a position with or contribute to any of them;
- Be an employee of a candidate or a person seeking to be a candidate, or hold a position with or contribute to either of them; or
- Engage in partisan political activities of any other kind.

JOB OVERVIEW

As a representative of Elections Manitoba, an election official must be available to participate in a variety of activities including election preparation tasks. As the manager of the election in his or her ED, the RO must plan, organize, implement and monitor all activities. The legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines that govern the election process dictate the variety of accountabilities that must be followed with little or no room for deviation.

To succeed, the RO must:

- Remain completely non-partisan during their term of appointment;
- Plan, manage and allocate resources effectively;
- Follow legislation, policies and procedures and instructions, strictly, with regard to both duties and time constraints;
- Know the ED well and be prepared to travel within it;
- Be able to work in a high volume, high pressure, time sensitive environment;
- Be able to work long hours for the duration of the 75 day election calendar;
- Be able to make important decisions based on local circumstances and conditions and resolve many problems that can arise over the course of the election;
- Be able to take both written and verbal direction;
- Hire and train hundreds of election officials;
- Exercise tact and common sense when dealing with complaints;
- Communicate effectively with staff, voters, Elections Manitoba staff and election participants (candidates, agents etc.);
- Possess good computer and office automation skills;
- Report information to Elections Manitoba on a timely basis – daily during the election period; and
- Act with initiative when required to do so.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

The duties of the RO are varied and require the use of a wide range of modern management techniques: material, human and financial resources management, public relations, project/event management and office automation, to name a few. The RO must be competent in these areas and very efficient in order to complete all tasks within a very short time frame.

1. Acquiring and maintaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to effectively perform their duties by:

- Acquiring and maintaining geographic and demographic knowledge of his or her assigned electoral division;
- Attending training courses provided by Elections Manitoba, and;
- Becoming knowledgeable of relevant legislation, regulations, manuals, policies, and procedures.
- Developing, completing and returning election preparation tasks.

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2. Overseeing building the voters list in the ED by:

- Managing and monitoring the enumeration and revision process;
- Recruiting enumerators/revising agents;
- Training enumeration personnel in the processes and procedures of enumeration;
- Motivating enumeration personnel during the enumeration phase;
- Providing information to stakeholders on methods and opportunities to get on the voters list; and
- Enumerating shelters and special voting areas within the ED.

3. Administering events within the ED according to strict timelines by:

- Assisting with the division of the ED into voting areas;
- Selecting and renting voting places;
- Opening and closing the returning office;
- Printing the voters list;
- Managing the nomination of candidates in compliance with statutory requirements;
- Printing and distributing ballots;
- Ensuring all legislated voting opportunities are provided;
- Overseeing the voting process in the ED at all voting opportunities;
- Reporting an initial compilation of votes cast;
- Carrying out the final verification of votes and certifying the results;
- Returning of the writ;
- Packing and return of all election materials; and
- Attending a judicial recount following an election or referendum, if necessary.

4. Managing the financial, administrative and human resources required for the administrative conduct of an election by:

- Locating and renting office space, furniture and equipment for the returning office;
- Recruiting, selecting, assigning, orienting and training election and returning office staff;
- Opening and staffing the office;
- Managing the day to day office operations;
- Managing the distribution of supplies within the ED so that all necessary supplies for the conduct of the vote are delivered to election officials in sufficient time for their use;
- Recruiting, selecting and appointing sufficient election officials (approximately 200 people);
- Training election officials in the conduct of their duties;
- Managing the performance of office staff and election officials;
- Authorizing payments to election officials, office staff and vendors;
- Closing the returning office and returning all supplies to Elections MB headquarters, and;
- Maintaining effective financial control.

5. Communicating information to the public, candidates, political parties, and Elections Manitoba by:

- Answering questions and providing information;
- Completing, printing, and distributing certain public notices required by legislation or the CEO;
- Being available at all times during the event to provide information and assistance to stakeholders;
- Reporting to Elections Manitoba headquarters as required by the CEO, and;
- Responding to questions from Elections Manitoba headquarters.

6. Carrying out related administrative duties in accordance with general or specific instructions issued by the CEO or his/her representatives.

7. Being an effective and non-partisan representative of Elections Manitoba.

8. Contributing to the improvement of the event process by:

- Participating in post-event reviews

QUALIFICATIONS

EDUCATION AND CAREER BACKGROUND

- Completion of Grade 12 or equivalent is required. Some University or College experience preferred.
- Education alone is not the main criteria for this role. Successful candidates will demonstrate an appropriate combination of the listed skills, work experience, intuitive ability, and education.

KNOWLEDGE

- Excellent knowledge of the ED including an understanding of the demographics and geography
- Knowledge of the English language; proficiency in other languages is an asset

SKILLS

Leadership - ability to demonstrate discretion, tact, neutrality, and accountability to the organization, as well as to represent Elections Manitoba in a professional manner

Planning and event/project management – strong planning and event/project management skills, and the ability to manage the human, financial, and material resources available to achieve the expected results at each stage of event proceedings

Human resource management - skills and knowledge to build a staffing plan and effectively hire, orient, train, compensate, and manage a team of staff. ROs must be able to demonstrate values-based practices in managing workplace relationships; maintain a workplace environment conducive to the health and safety of others; ensure a discrimination-free work environment; ensure equitable workload distribution; support staff in meeting performance expectations; take action to resolve conflicts, and understand and apply pertinent legislation and protocols that affect the management of human resources

Organizational skills – skill in handling and organizing large volumes of data, ability to organize systems to track and manage data/records, ability to complete many different, sometimes unexpected tasks concurrently while still keep to a schedule and to think strategically and prioritize tasks.

Financial management - basic financial management skills and the ability to use spreadsheet applications to monitor the electoral division petty cash, leases, office payroll and accounts.

Technical proficiency - skill in computers and computer software to use equipment, systems, and software provided by Elections Manitoba to conduct day-to-day business and ensure appropriate technology training for office staff and election officials

PERSONAL TRAITS AND ABILITIES

Impartiality – must abstain from all activities of a politically partisan nature, both during and outside event periods

Confidentiality - must preserve secrecy concerning all matters that come to their knowledge in the course of their work under *The Elections Act* and must not communicate those matters to any person unless required to do so

Availability – must be available during the employment term as required for the holding of a general election, by-election, or referendum, as well as any other assignment or training that may be required by the CEO

Energy and stamina – must be able to withstand considerable mental and physical strain during an event period from working long hours, meeting strict deadlines, training staff, handling complaints, and travel

Teamwork - must work well independently and in a team environment, and foster teamwork by demonstrating the values and behaviour of collaboration, co-operation, empathy and respect for differences

Problem-solving and judgment - must use logical steps and critical thinking to arrive at decisions; to research and analyze information in making recommendations and decisions; to be decisive and to accept responsibility for the consequences of actions, and to judge when to act independently and when to refer matters to the CEO

Legislative compliance - must demonstrate respect for all provisions of related legislation and regulations and follow all instructions of the CEO

Communication - must communicate effectively in writing and orally with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and make public presentations

Interpersonal relations – must maintain positive and collaborative working relationships with stakeholders, including office staff, voters, candidates, candidate representatives, and staff of Elections MB

Customer service - must deliver services based on customer needs, input and feedback. ROs often deal with angry or hostile clients and must be able to effectively apply negotiation and customer service skills to resolve issues

Travel – must be willing to travel in the ED and to Elections Manitoba HQ in Winnipeg for training conferences. ROs may be required to use a personal vehicle.