POLICY *Brief*

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POLICY THAT GOVERNS ELECTIONS: FOUNDATION OF A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

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CONTEXT

- Democracy has long been a cornerstone of western societies
- In recent years the very idea of democracy has come under attack
- It has been evident on multiple fronts:
  - The Jan 6, 2021 attack on Congress In the U.S. as part of an effort to overturn the election of November 2020;
  - The rise of authoritarianism is a theme in the current U.S. election;
  - In Europe and South America, populist authoritarian figures have emerged
- Saskatchewan and Canada have a long, well-established commitment to democracy
- It is anchored in the notion of one-person, one-vote in free and fair elections
- Freedom of speech, association and the ability to form political parties underpin our democracy

CONSIDERATIONS

- For democracy to thrive it must rise above partisan politics
- It must be rooted in policy reflecting commonly shared democratic values
- A key part of that policy framework in Saskatchewan is the Election Act
- It defines the powers and responsibilities of Elections Saskatchewan, the independent body that oversees and administers elections
- Passed by the provincial Legislature the Act is an all-party expression of the province's commitment to free-and-fair elections
- Trust in the electoral system is the foundation for public legitimacy of policy produced by government
- Improving citizens accessibility to cast their vote is a key focus of Elections Saskatchewan
- Measures such as "Voting Week" rather than "Election Day" and vote-by-mail improve accessibility and enhance public trust

QUESTIONS

- What are reasons for democracy being challenged in some nations?

- How can trust in democracy be maintained and, in some cases, restored?

- Are there policy prescriptions that might address the issue?

- Is there a need to "modernize" the electoral process?

- What is the role of the public service in advancing democracy?

- How is that role demonstrated?