

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WinnipegElection.ca Prepares for Voter Engagement

Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 14th, 2014 - The Open Democracy Manitoba (ODM) team is at it again for the 2014 Winnipeg Civic Election. This group of four friends operates WinnipegElection.ca and ManitobaElection.ca, election resources where voters can read up on and compare candidates while appreciating a better understanding of the electoral process.

The WinnipegElection.ca website was a popular resource during the 2010 election with over 45 thousand voters checking in with the site. "We're hoping to get more people learning about their candidates this election", says co-founder Jody Gillis. "I'm hearing that a lot of people don't vote because they don't know much about their candidates or what they're voting for. I'm hoping this is something we can help them with."

ODM's successful model hasn't only been recognized by voters. The group was thrilled to accept a twenty-five thousand dollar grant from the Canadian Internet Registration Authority's Community Investment Program. The Canadian Internet Registration Authority manages the .CA top-level domain, Canada's online identifier, on behalf of all Canadians. A Member-driven organization, CIRA also facilitates the development of a better Internet for all Canadians, and represents the .CA registry internationally.

With this grant money, ODM is building a general purpose election toolkit for future civic and provincial elections. This project will be open-sourced with the intention of allowing other citizen groups throughout Canada and the rest of the world to make their own election portal websites. ODM has already inspired and helped citizen's groups in Kingston, Ontario and Nanaimo, BC to build their own municipal election portals.

"Open Democracy and Open Government movements are spreading across Canada", says co-founder Kyle Geske. "On August 11th we hosted Richard Pietro on his cross-Canada Open Government Motorcycle Tour. The room was full of engaged citizens eager to learn about open government, to learn of the transparency and citizen engagement that releasing government data can bring."

"We were happy with the turnout, which included a number of city journalists and election candidates including three mayoral candidates: Brian Bowman, Robert-Falcon Oullette and Judy Wasylycia-Leis" says Geske.

Open Government is a political philosophy which holds that the data, documents and proceedings of government belong to the people being governed, in order to further the goals of transparency and accountability. In recent months transparency and accountability have been subjects of significant importance at City Hall. A more 'open government' isn't just about public oversight, but is something that gives the citizens and the press the power to better understand and take part in public affairs.

With only days until the election, the site is buzzing. Winnipeggers will go to the polls to vote for Mayor, City Council and School Trustees, on Wednesday, October 22, 2014. The information available on WinnipegElection.ca, which includes questionnaire responses from over 121 candidates, will help citizens make an informed choice at the voting box.

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Resources

2014 Winnipeg Civic Election: <http://winnipegelection.ca/>
Manitoba Election: <http://manitobaelection.ca/>
Open Kingston: <http://www.openkingston.ca/>
Nanaimo Elections: <http://nanaimoelections.com/>
Richard Pietro's Open Government Tour: <http://www.webnotwar.ca/open-government-tour-2014/>
City of Winnipeg's Open Data Portal: <http://data.winnipeg.ca>
CIRA's Community Investment Program: <http://www.cira.ca/about-cira/community-investment-program/>

Open Democracy Manitoba

Open Democracy Manitoba (ODM) is a community organization that builds online election resources with the goal of fostering government transparency and public education. ODM websites are volunteer-run and are operated in the spirit of openness, community and accountability.

WinnipegElection.ca and ManitobaElection.ca were launched during the 2010 Winnipeg civic election and the 2011 provincial Manitoba election. These sites have helped 80,000 voters research their candidates and learn about their local democratic process.

The members of the Open Democracy Manitoba board are Andrew Burton, Jody Gillis, Ken Harasym and Kyle Geske.