

Meeting Notes

PRESENT

Elections BC

- Keith Archer, Chief Electoral Officer
- Anton Boegman, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Electoral Operations
- Nola Western, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Funding and Disclosure
- Amie Foster, Manager, Executive Services and Corporate Administration

Political Parties (alphabetically by party name)

- British Columbia Liberal Party: Mark Robertson
- British Columbia Libertarian Party: Clayton Welwood
- British Columbia Social Credit Party: Carrol Woolsey, Derek Smith, Ronald Amiel
- Christian Heritage Party of British Columbia: Lynn Simcox
- Green Party Political Association of British Columbia: Laura Lavin, Taylor Hartrick, Evan Pivnick
- Land Air Water Party: Mervyn Ritchie
- The Cascadia Party of British Columbia: Billy Gibbons
- The Vancouver Island Party: Robin Richardson, Bob Marsh

Regrets

- BC NDP: Raj Sihota, Ryan Sudds, Glen Sanford
- British Columbia Conservative Party: Jeff Bridge, Joan Robinson
- Land Air Water Party: Helen Ziolkoski

The meeting commenced at 12:52 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

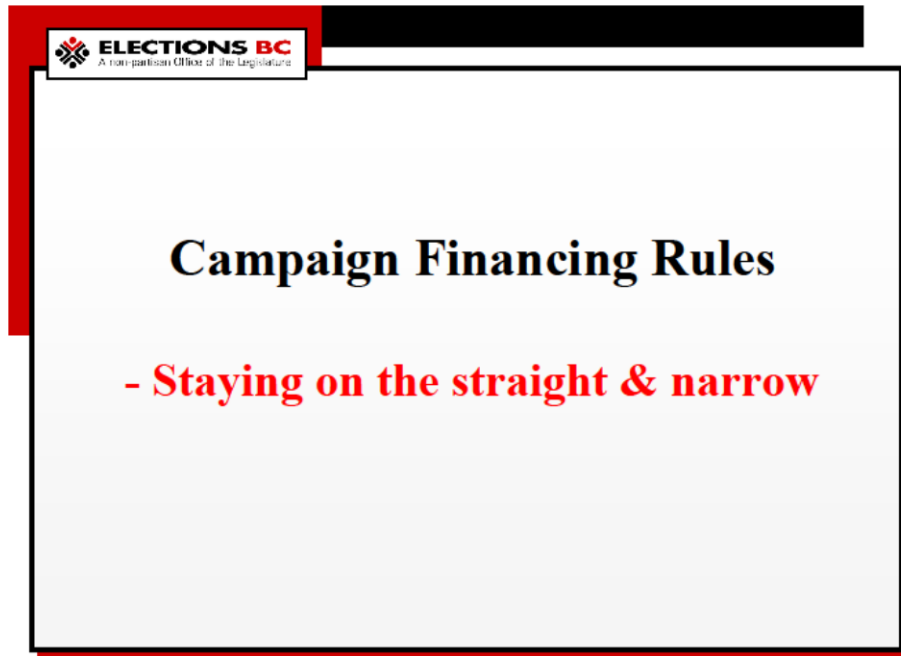
Keith Archer, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) welcomed attendees and described the purpose of the Political Party Information Session as a component of Elections BC's (EBC) overall stakeholder strategy. He also described the role of the Election Advisory Committee (EAC) which is established under sections 14-16 of the *Election Act*.

Keith explained that the meeting would focus on providing information on the 2017 Provincial General Election including substantive changes since the last provincial general election. He then highlighted some significant changes for this event including the addition of technology to the voting place for administrative purposes and a new blended (online and in-person) training model for election officials.

Keith noted the recently published discussion paper regarding the frequency of political contributions reporting. The report was published in response to a request from the Attorney General and lays out several options for more frequent reporting of political contributions. The discussion paper is available on the Elections BC website at: http://elections.bc.ca/docs/2016-Disclosure-of-Political-Contributions_Discussion-Paper.pdf. There has been no statutory change in this regard to date.

Staying on the Right Side of BC's Campaign Finance Rules

Nola provided attendees with a review of the electoral finance rules for political parties and candidates in advance of the 2017 Provincial General Election. The PowerPoint presentation has been embedded below for reference:



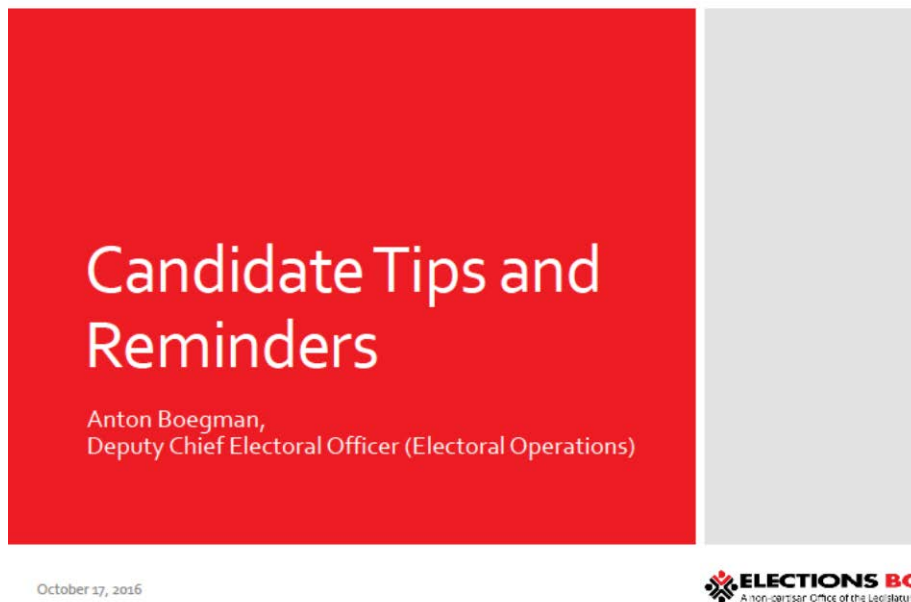
Questions and discussion

- Does the party need its own bank account? Do candidates?
 - Yes, every political party and every candidate must have their own bank account and every financial transaction must go into and/or out of that account.
- Can political contributions come from associations and unions?
 - Yes, as long as the entity is not a charitable organization.
- Can you please provide an example of a third party advertiser?
 - Some unions and business associations are third party advertisers. Third parties cannot coordinate or collude with the political party or candidate on the production of any election advertising.
- Who do third parties register with? How do they register?
 - They register with Elections BC using a form available online.
- Is there a way to know if there are third party advertisers supporting a specific party?
 - Third parties do not disclose who they support when they register. You may wish to identify them by viewing their advertisements.

- What are the spending limits per candidate?
 - Spending limits will be adjusted for changes to the consumer price index and confirmed during the last week in March 2017. The base limit is \$70,000 per candidate.
- What are the audit requirements?
 - Financial reports showing election expenses or political contributions of \$10,000 or more must be audited.

Candidate Tips and Reminders

Anton provided attendees with tips related to the nomination process, political party candidate endorsement and obtaining copies of the voters list. The PowerPoint is embedded below for reference:



Questions and discussion

- Can individuals ask nominators to include their phone number and email address on the nomination forms?
 - This information is not required for the nomination documents, and Elections BC strongly prefers that no additional information is added to the documents. However, Elections BC will not reject the forms if they have additional information. We strongly recommend that any additional information be collected on a separate document so that there is no need for Elections BC to redact that information once the forms are received.
- Does the nominator have to come from the same electoral district as the individual who would like to be nominated?

- Yes, for this reason Elections BC recommends that you collect more than 75 signatures. This will act as a buffer if some of the nominators are found to be ineligible to nominate. The nomination forms must include the complete residential address for verification purposes.
- Are the electoral district maps changing?
 - Yes, see the executive summary in the Commission's report for details http://www.bc-ebc.ca/docs/reports/BC-EBC_Final_Report-Sept_24,_2015.pdf
- What's the difference between an official agent and a financial agent?
 - An official agent can speak on behalf of the candidate, a financial agent is responsible for all of the financial transactions.
- Can candidates pay their nomination deposit with a personal cheque?
 - No they must use a cash equivalent. Personal cheques can take too long to clear, and can result in delays in processing the nomination application, or missing the nomination deadline.
- If nominators wish to obscure their residential address, what should be done?
 - They can include a P.O. Box, phone number and email address.
- Parties must endorse the candidate. Will an endorsement letter hold up the processing of a nomination package?
 - No, however the endorsement must be received before the close of nominations or a candidate will not be able to run under the party banner and will not have the party affiliation printed under their name on the ballot.

Legislation and Policy Update

Nola Western discussed the changes to Elections BC's legislation and policy since 2015.

A. *Miscellaneous Statutes (Signed Statement) Amendment Act* received Royal Assent on March 4, 2016.

This Act amended several sections of the *Election Act* that required solemn declarations by replacing the requirement for a solemn declaration with a signed statement.

Solemn declarations are no longer needed on any:

- nomination documents
- political party or constituency association registration documents
- third party advertising sponsor documents

Solemn declarations are still required by certain individuals involved with voting:

- election officials
- scrutineers
- individuals who assist a voter, including those who translate for voters
- vouchers and the voter they vouch for when a person is registering in conjunction with voting but doesn't have the necessary ID
- voters that are challenged can make a solemn declaration that they are entitled to vote

The Chief Electoral Officer can require an advertising sponsor or someone who made a political contribution to make a solemn declaration that they have not contravened the financing or advertising rules.

B. Local Elections Campaign Financing Act (LECFA)

This Act was amended in May 2016 to incorporate election spending limits for candidates, elector organizations and third party sponsors. The first election to which local spending limits will apply will be the October 20, 2018 General Local Elections – there will be no spending limits for by-elections held between now and then.

Note, since the 2014 General Local Elections, there have been 40 by-elections and 26 non-election assent votes.

C. Redistribution of Electoral Districts

All constituency associations registered under the current electoral districts will have to either voluntarily deregister, or be automatically deregistered on Writ Day, April 11, 2017. For simplicity, Elections BC recommends early voluntary deregistration. Electoral finance has written to all registered constituency associations and parties with registered constituency associations to provide information about this process. To date, 37 constituency associations have voluntarily deregistered and 34 new constituency associations have registered under the boundaries that will come into effect on April 11.

D. New Interpretation

Elections BC has updated the policy on election advertising on the Internet. Under this interpretation, election messages transmitted over the Internet are election advertising only if they meet the applicable definition of election advertising and have, or would normally have, a placement cost. The policy follows Elections Canada's policy of the same and can be accessed here for reference:

<http://www.elections.bc.ca/docs/lecfa/Bulletin%20-%20ElectionAdvertisingInternet.pdf>

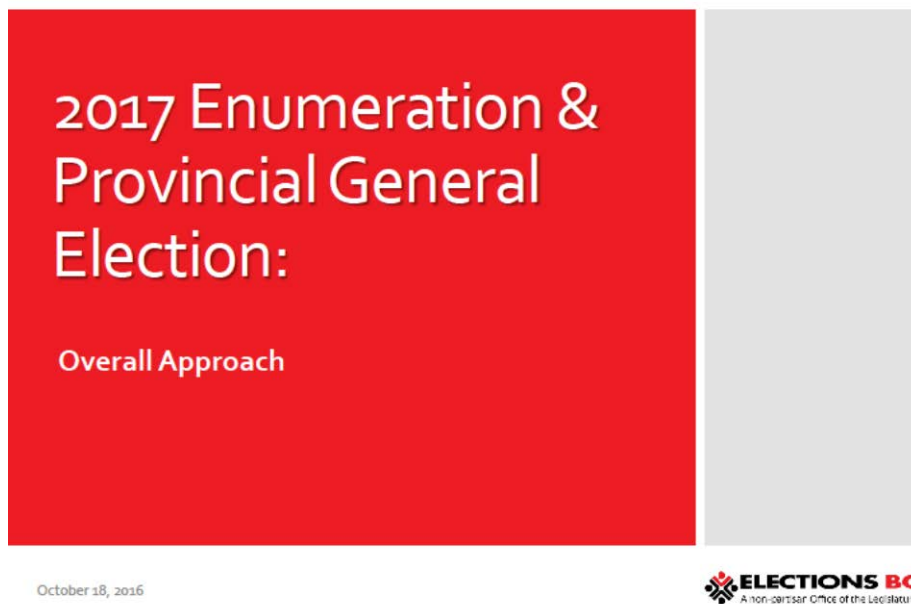
Questions and discussion

- Can you please clarify the advertising rules for online content?
 - Election-related messages that are posted online without cost are not election advertising. For example, a tweet is not election advertising, a video on a free platform such as YouTube is not election advertising. However, political parties and candidates must still include the cost of production as an election expense (unless it was created by a volunteer).
- If a video is produced and used before and during an election, is it an election expense? How is it calculated?
 - If the video is publicly available after the writs are issued the entire production cost is an election expense. If it is on the candidate or political party website and there is no cost to post it, it does not require an authorization statement because it is not election advertising, but it is still an election expense. The website cost can be prorated for just one month's use (the campaign period).

- Can candidates buy their signs before the election so that they don't have to claim them as election expenses?
 - Any goods *used* in the election must be claimed as an election expense. If a candidate re-uses signs from a previous event they must be claimed as an election expense in each event.
- Who is the arbiter of a volunteer versus a paid individual?
 - The financial agent is responsible. Volunteers may donate services but not goods.

Approach – 2017 Provincial General Election and Enumeration

Anton provided a review of Elections BC policies and procedures for the upcoming election and enumeration. A PowerPoint has been embedded below for reference:



Questions

- How can eligible voters who are homeless vote if they do not have a residential address?
 - They may use a social service agency as their place of residence for this purpose. Elections BC also works to help eligible voters who are homeless obtain identification (i.e. attestation forms).
- What are the eligibility requirements to vote?
 - An individual can vote in a provincial election if they:
 - are a Canadian citizen,
 - will be at least 18 years old on General Voting Day,
 - have been a resident of B.C. for the six months immediately before General Voting Day,
 - are registered as a voter, and
 - are not disqualified from voting.

- Is there a privacy policy template that political parties can use?
 - Yes, on Elections BC's website: <http://www.elections.bc.ca/index.php/privacy/>
- How many times will candidates receive participation information on General Voting Day?
 - Five times; at 10 am, 1 pm, 4 pm, 6 pm and 8 pm
- How can we do standing nominations if we don't know what the boundaries will be?
 - The 2017 electoral district boundaries are available at: http://www.bc-ebc.ca/docs/reports/BC-EBC_Final_Report-Sept_24,_2015.pdf
- When will advance voting locations be known?
 - We anticipate finalizing these locations 30-40 days before the election is called, however we will look at whether this can be completed earlier.

2017 Strategic Outreach

Amie provided a review of Elections BC's outreach strategy for the 2017 Provincial General Election and targeted enumeration. The presentation is embedded below for reference:

2017 Strategic Outreach



Amie Foster

Manager, Executive Services and
Corporate Administration

General Questions and Comments

Keith opened the floor to general questions.

- When will "shape files" be available?
 - The ED files are currently available on Elections BC's website. The ED-VA files will be available on December 1, 2016, when the voting areas are published in the *B.C. Gazette*

- Why do young people participate at lower rates than the general population?
 - They are less likely to be registered (i.e. they may not receive a “where to vote” card), and may be more disengaged from traditional civic participation.

- Does Elections BC have data-sharing agreements?
 - Yes, Elections BC receives personal information directly from voters, provincial political parties and constituency associations, candidates, leadership contestants, petition proponents and opponents, Members of the Legislative Assembly, election officials, local elector organizations, third party advertising sponsors, and other stakeholders according to statute. The *Election Act* allows Elections BC to receive voter information updates from Elections Canada, local governments in B.C., the B.C. Vital Statistics Agency and from the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC).

- The First Nations population in B.C. is young. If First Nations people are not participating it will affect the youth vote overall.

- Several parties engaged in a discussion of whether the current electoral system is the cause of declining civic participation, and whether it requires changing.

- One individual opined that the voting age should be as low as 13 years.

- Have you considered Internet voting to increase voter turnout?
 - There is no evidence that Internet voting consistently increases voter turnout. For more information please see the final report of the Independent Panel on Internet Voting: <http://www.elections.bc.ca/index.php/voting/ipiv/>

Closing Remarks

Keith thanked attendees for their participation. He reminded attendees to contact Elections BC staff if they have any questions in the lead up to the next election.

He also observed the current disparaging remarks on election administration as part of the American presidential contest. He thanked the parties for their partnership in ensuring positive and professional election administration in British Columbia.

Attendees may forward any questions regarding information presented at the Political Party Information Session to Amie Foster, Manager, Executive Services, by phone at 250-952-6226 or by email at amie.foster@elections.bc.ca.

The meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

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