ELECTIONS BC
A non-partisan Office of the Legislature

Annual Report

2006/07

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for the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007

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September 28, 2007

The Honourable Bill Barisoff
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Province of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 1X4

Honourable Speaker:

I have the honour to present the 2006/07 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Legislative Assembly, in accordance with section 13(1)(a) of the *Election Act*.

This Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer covers the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007.

Sincerely,

Harry Neufeld
Chief Electoral Officer
British Columbia

c. E. George MacMinn, Q.C.
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

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Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

I am pleased to submit Elections BC's 2006/07 Annual Report, covering the period of April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007. This report compares actual results to expected results documented in Elections BC's 2006/07 – 2008/09 Service Plan.

This past year has been busy for Elections BC. The year began with the Premier's announcement that the second referendum on electoral reform would not be conducted in conjunction with the 2008 local government elections. On advice from my office, the government had decided that the referendum timing should be delayed six months and held in conjunction with the May 2009 general election.

This change allowed Elections BC to switch its primary focus from preparing to potentially implement a new electoral system while delivering other scheduled electoral events, to achieving and maintaining readiness to deliver non-scheduled electoral events (by-elections, recalls, and initiative petitions) that occur between general elections. Elections BC's other main area of activity was in preparing to implement new electoral district boundaries that are expected to result from the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission's final report to the Legislature in mid-February 2008. These two themes, combined with Elections BC's ongoing operational activities, resulted in a challenging and very productive year.

At Elections BC, we are continuing to develop and refine our comprehensive planning framework to ensure effective use of resources. Planning service levels and workloads for ongoing activities, including administering the reporting activities of political parties and constituency associations, reviewing and auditing their annual financial reports, and maintaining the provincial voters list, has been combined with project and event preparation activities to better identify opportunities, challenges and priorities.

I am extremely proud of the accomplishments made by Elections BC staff during 2006/07, especially as my time was divided between my role as Chief Electoral Officer and my role as a BC Electoral Boundaries Commissioner.

Planning, teamwork, dedication, and innovation has come to define the Elections BC approach, and the resulting achievements are gaining recognition in the electoral administration world. I sincerely thank each member of my staff for their efforts and assistance in helping my office achieve the vision of leadership in electoral administration.

About Elections BC

Elections BC is a non-partisan Office of the Legislature responsible for the fair and impartial administration of provincial elections and referenda, recalls and initiatives. Elections BC is the usual name for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. As a statutory Officer of the Legislature, the Chief Electoral Officer reports directly to the Legislative Assembly through the Speaker. The Chief Electoral Officer cannot be a member of a political party, make contributions to a political party or candidate, or vote in provincial elections.

Mandate

To administer the provincial electoral process in British Columbia in accordance with the *Election Act*, *Recall and Initiative Act*, *Referendum Act* and *Constitutional Amendment Approval Act.*

Vision, Mission, Goals

Vision

To be leaders in electoral administration.

Mission

To serve democracy in British Columbia through the fair and impartial administration of the provincial electoral process.

Goals

1. Ensure ongoing support and enhancement of the electoral process.
2. Ensure effective and efficient administration of electoral events.
3. Provide an inclusive and accessible electoral process.
4. Be a learning organization that develops and shares best practices.

Our Structure

For operational purposes, the organization is divided into five program areas.

Executive

The Executive program area provides organizational leadership and is responsible for legislation, Orders and Regulations, compliance, enforcement and investigations, inter-jurisdictional liaison, reporting to the Legislative Assembly, communications (including event communications as required by the *Election Act* and *Recall and Initiative Act*), public education regarding voter registration and the electoral process, and voter outreach.

Executive is also responsible for strategic planning, the development and maintenance of the Elections BC planning framework, partnership development, risk management and performance management.

Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration

The Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration program area comprises three service units. The electoral finance unit is responsible for ensuring compliance with electoral finance legislation and maintaining the registers of political parties, constituency associations and election advertising sponsors. The unit conducts compliance reviews of the financing reports of political parties, constituency associations, candidates, advertising sponsors, leadership contestants, and recall and initiative participants. The unit also trains financial agents, performs audits of financial reports and conducts investigations.

The finance and administration unit is responsible for corporate financial administration, including budgets, facilities and asset management.

The human resources and development services unit provides human resource planning and services for Elections BC's core group of 44 public service employees and more than 30,000 temporary staff and election and voter registration officials during major electoral events. This includes the development of terms and conditions of employment for temporary employees, development of recruitment models and establishment of both corporate and event training frameworks.

Event Planning and Management

The Event Planning and Management program area is responsible for the effective and efficient planning and administration of provincial electoral events including general elections, by-elections, referenda, and recall and initiative petitions. This includes ensuring Elections BC is in a constant state of readiness for non-scheduled events, as well as leading the planning, preparation and administration of scheduled events.

Event Planning and Management also manages Elections BC's District Electoral Officers in the field, coordinates event support activities across other program areas, and leads post-event reporting, evaluation, and assessment.

Geographic and Voter Data Services

Geographic and Voter Data Services is responsible for voter registration, maintenance of the provincial voters list, maintenance of voting area boundaries, and the production of high quality electoral data and information. This includes the maintenance of a geo-spatial database containing B.C.'s electoral boundaries, road network and address data.

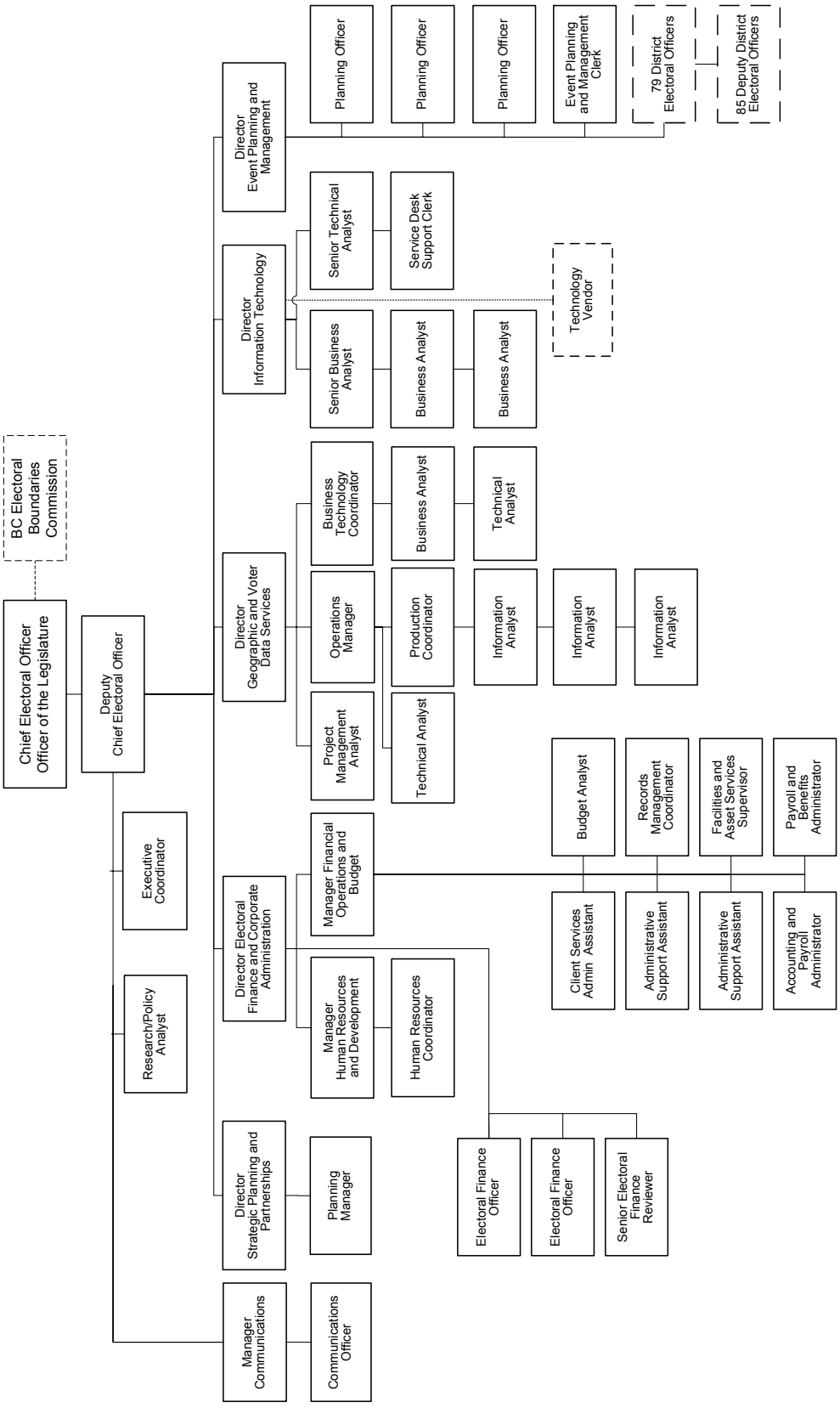
The program area is also responsible for the provision and production of a variety of products necessary for the administration of electoral events including the provincial voters list (printed or electronic), the address register, the integrated digital electoral atlas, electoral maps, street indexes, and the Location Index.

Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) program area provides information management systems, computer infrastructure and technical services for Elections BC. The program area leads IT planning, develops and implements IT policies, procedures and standards, implements corporate IT initiatives and performs systems operations, administration, security and maintenance.

IT participates in corporate level strategic and operational planning by forecasting IT requirements in anticipation of future program and business needs, and selecting technology options which best support Elections BC's goals and objectives. The program area also leads or coordinates all information systems projects and approves their associated schedules, budgets and expenditures.

Elections BC Organization Chart



Overview of Key Activities

By-Election, Recall and Initiative Readiness

Elections BC must at all times be ready for on-demand electoral events that may, and will, occur between scheduled electoral events. These include by-elections, recalls, and initiative petitions. During 2006/07 Elections BC carried out a comprehensive review of planning materials for these on-demand events, and prepared up-to-date implementation plans for each event. These plans are intended to sit "on the shelf", to be activated should an event occur. Their ongoing maintenance will ensure Elections BC's readiness for these types of events.

As part of this process, Elections BC developed a detailed event planning framework and updated key documents including the District Electoral Officer Manual. Revised Regulations were established for recall and initiative petition verification, to reflect previous changes to *Election Act* signature requirements.

Support to the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission

The BC Electoral Boundaries Commission was appointed on December 13, 2005. Commissioners include the Honourable Bruce Cohen (Chair), Stewart Ladyman, and Chief Electoral Officer Harry Neufeld. The Commission is mandated to make recommendations for new electoral district boundaries under both the current single member plurality (SMP) electoral system and the proposed single transferable vote (BC-STV) electoral system. The Commission's work is intended to inform public debate for the 2009 referendum, when voters will decide whether to adopt the BC-STV electoral system for provincial elections.

The Commission must provide a preliminary report to the Speaker by August 15, 2007, followed by their final report on February 15, 2008. Each report will be informed through public consultation sessions.

To leverage Elections BC's experience, expertise and geo-spatial assets, Elections BC and the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission signed a formal partnership agreement to have Elections BC provide data and cartographic services to the Commission. Elections BC also assisted the Commission in establishing its computer systems and necessary support contracts.

Elections BC made both oral and written submissions to the Commission during its public consultation sessions in the fall of 2006.

Electoral District Redistribution Preparations

Building from the work completed this year in support of the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission, Elections BC also commenced preparations for the pending electoral district redistribution, which will be required upon passage of new electoral boundaries by the Legislative Assembly.

Electoral district redistribution includes reassigning all voters and residential addresses to new electoral districts. Elections BC will also establish new voting area boundaries based on the new electoral district boundaries and population changes. In 1999, after the Wood Electoral Boundaries Commission, Elections BC carried out a partial voting area redistribution. The pending voting area redistribution will be a complete one, reviewing the boundaries of all 8,792 current voting areas.

After the new electoral district boundaries are established, Elections BC must deregister all constituency associations. Political parties must apply to the Chief Electoral Officer to register constituency associations for the new electoral districts.

Preparations in 2006/07 consisted primarily of detailed information gathering, a review of lessons learned, data improvement activities and an analysis of the procedures and technology associated with redistribution. This information will be used as core input into a detailed electoral district and voting area redistribution plan that will be developed early in 2007/08.

Election Finances

Every registered political party and registered constituency association must file an annual calendar year financial report with Elections BC by March 31 of the following year. The reports disclose information regarding the assets and liabilities of the entities as well as the sources of revenue and nature of expenditures. During 2006/07, the Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration program area reviewed the 2005 annual financial reports of 39 registered political parties and 164 registered constituency associations.

Each report is reviewed to ensure compliance. Identified inaccuracies or errors are discussed with the responsible financial agent and the report is amended. The original reports and all amendments are scanned and posted to the Elections BC website for public access.

Political Contributions System

During this year, Elections BC specified, designed, and developed the components required for a secure, web-based, searchable database of political contributions. The Political Contributions System (PCS) was completed in 2006/07 and will be made publicly available on the Elections BC website early in 2007/08.

PCS will allow public users to search and download information on political contributions made to registered political parties, registered constituency associations, candidates and leadership contestants. This information has previously been available on the Elections BC website in the form of scanned

images of the financial report files. PCS will provide greater ease in reviewing political contribution information and enhance the transparency of political finance in British Columbia.

Voters List Maintenance

During 2006/07 Elections BC processed 706,828 voter record transactions as part of a comprehensive maintenance and improvement program for the provincial voters list. Each year, Elections BC receives direct communication from voters, as well as data from provincial, municipal and federal sources which is used to update the list, and ensure that the list remains current. Voters are also able to update their registration through Elections BC's secure Online Voter Registration System (OVR).

As part of the voters list maintenance and improvement program, Elections BC completed the following major activities:

- Verification letters[1] sent to 37,000 voters resulting in 30,000 inaccurate or non-current records being removed from the provincial voters list
- Quality improvement of personal and address data in voter records to increase the currency and accuracy of existing voter record information, and support ongoing electoral event readiness
- Integration of provincial source road networks and municipal and census block boundaries with Elections BC's existing spatial data to improve voter address capture capabilities
- A census block conflation project[2], in partnership with the Integrated Land Management Bureau's Digital Road Atlas team, which resulted in an improved geographical base data that will facilitate future voters list maintenance and enhance accurate electoral map production
- Participation with Elections Canada in the National Data Quality Confirmation Study, which was used to determine the current quality of the B.C. voters list, and identify areas where the voters list requires improvement.

Voter Registration: Best Practices Conference

Between March 13 and 16, 2007, Elections BC hosted a voter registration best practices conference for Canadian provincial, territorial and federal election administrators. The conference was a good opportunity to share ideas and experiences, and provided an excellent source of input into initial planning for the 2009 provincial enumeration.

1 Verification letters are sent to voters having inaccurate records or whom we strongly suspect are no longer eligible to vote.

2 In cartography, conflation refers to the act of combining two distinct maps into one new map.

Our Finances

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services has responsibility for considering and making recommendations on the budgets of Elections BC.

In December 2006, the Chief Electoral Officer and senior members of his staff met with the Committee and presented Elections BC's budget requirements for 2007/08, including the 2007/08 funding necessary to plan and prepare for the pending electoral events: an electoral district redistribution, the 2009 enumeration, and the 2009 general election and referendum on electoral reform.

In its report to the Legislative Assembly in December 2006, the Committee recommended that Elections BC's 2007/08 ongoing operating budget be $7,322,700 and the operating budget to prepare for electoral events be $1,639,000, for a total operating budget of $8,961,700.

The following table compares Elections BC's financial performance in 2006/07 to the approved operating budget, and provides the approved operating budget for 2007/08.

Our Finances - Operating Budget

	2006/07 Budget $	2006/07 Actual $	Variance $	2007/08 Budget $
Funding				
Estimates	9,485,000	9,485,000	-	8,961,000
Other authorizations (Note 1)	73,000	73,000	-	-
Total Funding	9,558,000	9,558,000	-	8,961,000
Expenses (Note 2)				
Salaries of permanent and temporary employees	2,627,000	2,757,215	(130,215)	3,380,000
Employee benefits	659,000	579,997	79,003	726,000
	3,286,000	3,337,212	(51,212)	4,106,000
Travel	58,000	81,442	(23,442)	112,000
Centralized management support services	95,000	69,803	25,197	849,000
Professional services	115,000	97,028	17,972	442,000
Information systems	1,783,000	1,828,451	(45,451)	2,067,000
Office and business expenses	156,000	205,060	(49,060)	391,000
Advertising and publications	6,000	42,777	(36,777)	37,000
Utilities, supplies, operating equipment and vehicles	4,000	16,043	(12,043)	9,000
Amortization	716,000	669,640	46,360	945,000
Loss on capital asset disposal	-	6,140	(6,140)	-
Building occupancy (Note 3)	393,000	653,411	(260,411)	-
Other expenses (Note 4)	2,946,000	1,327	2,944,673	3,000
Total Expenses (Note 5)	9,558,000	7,008,334	2,549,666	8,961,000
Funding Returned	-	2,549,666		

Note 1 - Other authorizations represents Elections BC's share of the contingency vote related to the government-wide Negotiating Framework.

Note 2 - The 2006/07 budget is the Estimates budget based upon anticipated activities at the beginning of the year and does not include reallocations of budget made during the fiscal year.

Note 3 - Building occupancy charges are included in centralized management support services for fiscal year 2007/08.

Note 4 - The 'other expenses' budget for 2006/07 includes $2,940,000 for 2005 Throne Speech mandated events. Actual expenses are reported in the relevant expense categories.

Note 5 - The 2007/08 budget includes additional funding to prepare for the redistribution of electoral districts, the 2009 General Election, enumeration and referendum on electoral reform.

Performance Reporting

This section reports on accomplishments and achievements under each goal, in the context of Elections BC's objectives and strategies as outlined in its 2006/07 – 2008/09 Service Plan.

Goal 1 – Ensure ongoing support and enhancement of the electoral process

Objective 1 – Produce quality and timely electoral information through the application of appropriate processes.

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Voters list quality (%): currency and coverage	Currency 79% Coverage 90%	Currency 77% Coverage 86%	Currency 79% Coverage 89%[3]
Client and appointee contact information updates processed within three business days	Yes	Yes	Yes
Voters list – decrease operating cost per transaction	Baseline to be determined	To be determined	$9.91[4]
Voters list – decrease exception rates by data source (Vital Statistics, online voter registration, multiple address change website, local government, NRoE)	19.16%	17.16%	8.92%[5]

Objective 2 – Develop and maintain policy and legislative frameworks that permit innovation and facilitate compliance

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Annual financial filings – measure rates of late filers and non-filers	100%	100%	99.5%[6]
Recommendations for legislative amendments presented to Election Advisory Committee	Yes	Yes	N/A
Policies – current policies documented and communicated	Yes	Yes	Yes

3 This assessment has a margin of error of +/- 2%.

4 This measure is calculated by dividing annual operating cost by the number of voter transactions.

5 The significant decrease in the exception rate is attributed to extensive improvements in data processing techniques.

6 Half a percent (0.5%) of annual financial filings were filed late. All required reports were filed.

Objective 3 – Maintain a sound infrastructure that meets our organizational needs at different stages of our business cycle

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Operating budget – manage within 5% variance	Yes	Yes	No[7]
Service Level Agreement (SLA) – service level targets established and met	Yes	Yes	Yes

Objective 4 – Perform all work according to plans that are aligned with strategic objectives

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Staff – percentage of regular employees with Employee Performance and Development Plans (EPDP)	100%	100%	100%
Strategic Plan – percentage of objectives met annually	Baseline to be determined	100%	76%
No "out of plan" work initiated	Yes	Yes	Yes

7 The Premier's announcement changing the date of the referendum on electoral reform from fall 2008 to spring 2009 resulted in 26.7%, or $2.5 million of the planned 2006/07 funding being not required and returned to the province.

Goal 2 – Ensure effective and efficient administration of electoral events

Objective 1 – Maintain an appropriate level of readiness to administer all electoral events

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Target dates established for all deliverables related to event readiness	Baseline to be determined	Yes	Yes
All deliverables, as defined in readiness/event plans, complete by the established target date	Baseline to be determined	100%	50%[8]

Objective 2 – Administer electoral events within approved event plans

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Total event expenditures are managed within the established contingency of event budget	Yes	Yes	N/A[9]
Key event milestones, including all legislated dates and critical path, defined by plans	Yes	Yes	N/A
Percentage of electoral event milestones achieved	100%	100%	N/A
Monitor employee event workload – event overtime hours per employee per week during event (target – not to exceed 15)	No	Yes	N/A
Reduce number of voters impacted by election official errors, resulting in Chief Electoral Officer Orders and disqualified ballot boxes, by 50% from previous events	0.11%	0.055%	N/A

8 Half of the by-election, initiative and recall readiness milestones were achieved behind the intended schedule. By fiscal year end, 100% of event readiness milestones had been achieved.

9 There were no electoral events during 2006/07.

Goal 3 – Provide an inclusive and accessible electoral process

Objective 1 – Provide high quality services to clients in a manner that is responsive to their needs

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Annual satisfaction surveys of selected client groups to rate how well our services respond to their needs	84%	80%	72% and 95%[10]
Post-event satisfaction surveys of selected client groups to rate how well our services respond to their needs	96%	80%	N/A[11]

Objective 2 – Provide the public with easy to understand information and engaging education materials about the electoral process

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Maintain or increase public awareness of electoral process	Pre-event 87% Post-event 89%	To be determined	N/A[12]
Percentage of schools using grade 5 education kit	73%	100%	70%
Satisfaction score for schools using grade 5 education kit	100%	80%	85%
Percentage of schools using grade 11 education kit	79%	100%	41%
Satisfaction score for schools using grade 11 education kit	95%	80%	84%[13]

10 Client group surveyed in 2006/07 was financial agents. 72% were satisfied with EBC resources while 95% were satisfied with EBC service support.

11 No events were conducted in 2006/07.

12 As part of Elections BC's new public education strategy it was decided to discontinue annual surveys of public awareness of the electoral process, and replace them with more indicative measures of democratic participation.

13 Survey response rates to the education kit surveys were very low (under 10%); as such the results reported may not be representative of actual satisfaction scores.

Goal 4 – Be a learning organization that develops and shares best practices

Objective 1 – Participate in, encourage and support partnerships and inter-jurisdictional cooperation through open communications and knowledge sharing.

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Participate in electoral conferences	Yes	Yes	Yes
Participate in Electoral Technology Accord[14]	Yes	Yes	Yes
Review of all agreements with associated partners	Yes	Yes	Yes
Percentage of CERL[15] inquiries responded to within five business days of posting	80%	90%	93.3%

Objective 2 – Encourage and support staff in professional development

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Number of training days per employee	5.3	5	9
Percentage of Employee Performance and Development Plan (EPDP) training goals achieved	74%	75%	85.5%

14 The Electoral Technology Accord is a pan-Canadian interjurisdictional agreement to establish electoral data standards and share electoral technology.

15 CERL (Canadian Electoral Resource Library) is a shared intranet site that provides a forum for all national, provincial and territorial election administrators to consult and share information.

Goal 4 continued

Objective 3 – Establish a culture of learning that fosters innovation

Measure	Base	Target	Actual
	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07
Workshops conducted	27	18	18
Percentage of new staff who have completed "core curriculum" or "rookie" training within six months of joining EBC	None	100%	67%[16]
Recognize staff for innovations that improve the way we do our business	Yes	Yes	Yes

16 Due to delays in hiring a new Elections BC human resources manager, the new staff orientation program was not completed and delivered until the month following the end of the 2006/07 fiscal year. 100% of new staff received this training during the week of April 16 to 20, 2007.

Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix A - Political Party Registration

The following political party registration activities occurred between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2007. As of March 31, 2007, a total of 40 political parties were registered in B.C.

Political parties that were newly registered

- Planting Seeds Party – effective June 16, 2006
- Advocational International Democratic Party of British Columbia – effective November 28, 2006

Registered political party name changes

- Progressive Nationalist Party of British Columbia from the Bloc British Columbia Party – effective November 20, 2006

Appendix B

Appendix B - Constituency Association Registration

The following constituency association registration activities occurred between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2007. As of March 31, 2007, a total of 164 constituency associations were registered in B.C.

Constituency associations that were newly registered

- Richmond-Steveston Constituency Association British Columbia Liberal Party – effective November 7, 2006

Registered constituency associations that voluntarily deregistered

- Richmond-Steveston Constituency Association British Columbia Liberal Party – effective November 30, 2006

Appendix C

Appendix C - Orders of the Chief Electoral Officer

Section 280 of the *Election Act* establishes the authority of the Chief Electoral Officer to make specific or general Orders under certain circumstances. Between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2007, three Orders were made by the Chief Electoral Officer.

ORD002-2006
June 28, 2006
The BC Marijuana Party was granted an extension to July 7, 2006, to file with the Chief Electoral Officer its annual financial report for the 2005 calendar year.

ORD001-2007
March 30, 2007
The Surrey-Green Timbers Constituency Association New Democratic Party of British Columbia was granted an extension to May 1, 2007, to file with the Chief Electoral Officer its annual financial report for the 2006 calendar year.

ORD002-2007
March 21, 2007
The Powell River-Sunshine Coast Constituency Association Green Party Political Association of British Columbia was granted an extension to April 23, 2007, to file with the Chief Electoral Officer its annual financial report for the 2006 calendar year.

Appendix D

Appendix D - Minutes of the Election Advisory Committee

Minutes
Election Advisory Committee
May 9, 2006

2:00 – 4:00 pm
BC Electoral Boundaries Commission Office
#601-700 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, British Columbia

Attending:

Committee members (in alphabetical order by political party name)
BC Liberal Party: Hoong Neoh (on behalf of Hector MacKay-Dunn and Kelly Reichert)
Green Party of BC: John Hague
New Democratic Party of B.C.: Nikki Hill, Laura Nichols

Elections BC
Harry Neufeld, Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)
Linda Johnson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer
Linda Shout, Executive Coordinator (minutes)

1. Introductions and Administrative Matters

Election Advisory Committee (EAC) members and Elections BC (EBC) staff introduced themselves. Harry Neufeld welcomed new EAC members Laura Nichols and John Hague.

2. BC-STV Design and Implications

Deputy Chief Electoral Officer Linda Johnson delivered a presentation providing an overview of the different types of electoral systems, key features of the BC Single Transferable Vote (BC-STV) system and its implications for voters, the Electoral Boundaries Commission, political parties and candidates.

Political Campaigning: John Hague of the Green Party noted that parties may decide to run one candidate and encourage voters to support only that candidate, in opposition to the Citizens' Assembly goal of facilitating increased voter choice. However, Linda Johnson noted that in STV systems, getting the most first preference votes doesn't necessarily result in achieving the threshold required for election, which could exclude that candidate early in the count. This feature is called "nonmonotonicity." Political parties will have to learn how to campaign

effectively under BC-STV – it is very different from campaigning under the current single member plurality (SMP) system.

Further to this, John Hague noted that if a voter's first preference is excluded this way, it seems unfair. However, voters are able to maximize their vote by expressing a number of preferences, so at least some of those preferences may be realized.

Linda Johnson distributed a publication entitled "Campaigning under the single transferable vote: a guide for agents and parties in Scotland" developed by the Electoral Reform Society (www.electoral-reform.org.uk). The publication covers campaigning basics, candidate issues, and campaign techniques.

Counting and Transparency: John Hague suggested that, at least for the first few elections, a parallel manual count be conducted if the main count is conducted electronically, in order to build trust in the system and counting methodology.

In North America, Cambridge, Massachusetts is the only jurisdiction that uses STV (for local government elections). The alternative vote (AV), a majoritarian system, was used in B.C. in the 1952 and 1953 provincial general elections. It was not retained for a number of reasons, including the length of time it took to count the ballots.

John Hague pointed out that the public needs to understand the system. If candidates were campaigning door to door, they could explain the system to voters, but candidates are not able to devote adequate time to this. There will be a challenge to educate voters about the system, ensure they have confidence in the count and the results without overwhelming them with the intricacies of the system.

Referendum on Electoral Reform: Harry Neufeld distributed a press release regarding the Premier's decision to change the date of the referendum on electoral reform. The Chief Electoral Officer had provided information to government regarding the significant challenges of conducting the referendum in tandem with municipal elections. The referendum date was changed to coincide with the next provincial general election on May 12, 2009.

It is expected a Referendum Information Office will be established to provide the public with information on the referendum question and issues. Voters will also have information on the new electoral district boundaries under both the current SMP system and proposed BC-STV system. The Electoral Boundaries Commission will issue its preliminary report by August 15, 2007, conduct public hearings in the Fall of 2007, and present its final report to the Legislative Assembly in February 2008.

In addition, government has committed to funding yes/no committees. No public policy decisions have been made as yet by government regarding funding criteria or administration.

The Citizens' Assembly contemplated an evaluation of the BC-STV system, should it be implemented, after the third general election. This timeframe was found to be reasonable by other jurisdictions that had undergone electoral system change. An evaluation framework may be built into BC-STV legislation.

At this time, it is not known whether legislation for BC-STV will be developed and made public before the referendum is held. Government could pass BC-STVegislation before the referendum, with proclamation being deferred until the referendum outcome is known.

3. Political Party Platforms on Elections BC's Website

In the previous provincial general election, EBC invited registered political parties to provide their party's platform for publication on EBC's general election website. The idea was initially discussed at the EAC meeting on April 6, 2004 and reviewed again at the meeting of January 28, 2005. Although the idea was somewhat controversial, there was agreement that it was worthwhile to go ahead, given the desire to increase voter participation, particularly amongst youth, by making it easier to access political party information. Committee members were asked whether they agreed that this practice should continue.

BC New Democratic Party representative Nicola Hill agreed that party platforms should be available on the EBC site, as this is a valuable tool for voter engagement. Hoong Neoh of the BC Liberal Party questioned whether it would be better for EBC, as an independent office, not to post statements and allow users to access party website links (available on the candidates, political parties and constituency associations page) for information.

Linda Johnson noted that political science professors have indicated that younger voters find it easier to access the information all in one place. Research has shown that not knowing enough about the political choices available and the fear of making a mistake is a particular barrier for young voters. They also tend to be less inclined to visit multiple sites for their information.

Committee members agreed in principle to posting political party platforms on the EBC website. For a calendared event (such as a general election), a deadline will be established for parties to submit their platforms. In the case of uncalendared events such as by-elections, parties will be invited to submit their statements once a vacancy in the House occurs.

4. CEO Report on Recommended Legislative Changes

Harry Neufeld has met with the Attorney General, asking him to implement the over 60 non-controversial recommendations contained in the report. Although legislative drafting for these amendments may not be onerous, the resulting Bill would be substantial and may take a fair amount of time in the House. There are also a number of public policy issues provided for government to consider. These issues may take longer for government to assess.

5. Other Business

No other items were raised.

6. Future Agenda Items

Harry Neufeld noted that prior to the last election some modest changes were made to the data format of the voters list provided to political parties (reviewed at the EAC meeting of September 24, 2004), and a commitment was made that, following the election, the EAC would discuss whether further changes should be made to the data format.

In addition, the mechanism of distributing voters lists to political parties is open to review. At the moment, a password-protected CD-ROM is provided, with signed documentation required before the password is given. However, there may be a more efficient way to provide list data on a more regularized basis, while maintaining the highest level of security.

Discussion of these matters could be done via a survey of EAC members, a special meeting of party technical personnel, or facilitated individual sessions with party representatives. Committee members agreed to raise this with their parties, and a decision will be made at the next EAC meeting on how to proceed.

Minutes of the Election Advisory Committee

Minutes
Election Advisory Committee
January 19, 2007

10:00 – 12:00 a.m.
BC Electoral Boundaries Commission Office
#601-700 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, British Columbia

Attending:

Committee members (in alphabetical order by political party name)
BC Liberal Party: Hoong Neoh, Dallas Henault (on behalf of Hector MacKay-Dunn and Kelly Reichert)
Green Party of BC: John Hague
New Democratic Party of B.C.: Nikki Hill, Laura Nichols

Elections BC
Harry Neufeld, Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)
Linda Johnson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer
Nola Western, Director, Electoral Finance
Linda Shout, Executive Coordinator (minutes)

1. Introduction and Administrative Matters

Harry Neufeld introduced Dallas Henault to the committee and reviewed the agenda.

2. Legislation Update

The Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on Recommendations for Legislative Change, which had been reviewed with Committee members, was tabled with the Legislative Assembly on March 30, 2006. Linda Johnson reported that Elections BC has not been advised of any action taken on the recommendations. In spring 2008, the Legislative Assembly must address the final report of the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission, due to be completed in February 2008, and enact legislation for new electoral district boundaries during that legislative session. Elections BC is hopeful that any Election Act amendments government chooses to make will be passed in the Spring 2008 session, as well as amendments to the Electoral Reform Referendum Act that will be required for the 2009 referendum.

Elections BC anticipates being very involved with the development of the regulatory framework for the referendum, and expects that it will be very similar

to that of the previous referendum. One major exception will be the model for registration and public funding of yes/no groups.

Members were encouraged to contact Linda Johnson should they have further recommendations for legislative change.

3. Voters List Data Content

During previous meetings, Committee members had discussed potential changes to the data format of the voters list file provided to parties and candidates during an election. Committee members had agreed to revisit the issue following the 2005 election, and were provided the opportunity to suggest changes to the data format that their parties would find useful.

No suggestions have been made. Elections BC does not intend to make significant modifications to its computer systems prior to the 2009 election and referendum. Harry Neufeld proposed that the data format for electronic voters lists therefore remain unchanged. Following the 2009 election, Elections BC must replace its electoral information system and will be reviewing data format, systems and processes.

Committee members agreed there was no need to make changes to the data format at this time. Harry Neufeld encouraged Committee members to advise Elections BC on the types of data, technology and procedures they would like to see in place in the future, which will be taken into account during development of the new system. Further discussion on this matter will take place at future meetings.

4. Financial Reporting

Searchable political contributions database
Nola Western reported that development of an online searchable database, the Political Contributions System (PCS), is nearing completion. This web-based system will contain the same political contribution information for contributors who made political contributions over $250 in a reporting period that is currently scanned and published on the Elections BC website, but the data will now be searchable. Contributions to election advertising sponsors will not be included, as they are not political contributions. The database will include contributions over $250 to registered parties, candidates, registered constituency associations and leadership contestants.

Users will be able to search the system by full or partial contributor name, recipient (for example, candidate or party name), electoral district or date, or a

combination of these criteria. Search results will be displayed in a table, and will be available to download for analysis or to print.

The searchable database will meet public expectations for transparency in financial disclosure, and is consistent with the approach taken by other electoral jurisdictions. The system will allow automation of some review processes by providing exception reports (where information is not disclosed consistently) and reports identifying key information that has not been included. The review and analysis of financial reports performed by Elections BC staff is complex and time-consuming, and the new system will save time and resources.

The system is expected to be ready for testing this spring. Populating the database will be time consuming, as all contributions over $250 from the annual and election financing reports of 2005 must be data-entered. The taxpayer-funded resources required to populate the database will be substantially reduced if political parties provide their data electronically to Elections BC. A letter will be sent to political party contacts in the coming weeks advising them of the new system and inviting them to submit their data electronically.

Quality of financial reporting
Elections BC intends to focus in the coming year on improving the accuracy and quality of financial reporting. Timeliness of submitting initial financial reports has improved significantly in recent years. However, the majority of reports contain errors and follow-up to correct errors and omissions can, in some cases, drag on for months. Elections BC has been extremely flexible in the past, but in the interests of ensuring disclosure reports are completed accurately and in a timely way, parties and constituency associations will be receiving "30-day" letters sooner than in the past. These letters give the recipient 30 days from receipt to file an amended report, or risk the serious penalties imposed by the Election Act.

Nola Western invited Committee members to advise Elections BC if they, or members of their parties, have suggestion on how to make the process easier and more accessible. Annual training sessions for financial agents will be taking place in Victoria on February 7th and Vancouver on February 17th. Elections BC staff are also available to meet with parties in other locations and on alternate dates if needed.

5. Results of Post-Election Investigations

Linda Johnson reported on Elections BC's investigations of possible multiple voting during the 2005 general election. Of the 1.7 million people who voted,

only 44 possible cases were found of individuals voting more than once. Of those 44, there was no discernible pattern or evidence of a concerted effort.

The 44 cases were examined in depth. Twenty-eight cases were discarded on the basis that either the voter was quite elderly or election official error had contributed to or caused the problem. For example, the wrong name may have been marked in the voting book or an election official issued two certification envelopes to the same voter. In some cases, the voter appeared to be trying to correct an election official error. In one instance, a voter was assigned to the wrong electoral district when voting advance absentee, and the voter subsequently went to their correct voting place to vote.

Elections BC staff attempted to contact the remaining 16 individuals to ask them what happened. Linda Johnson noted that intent must be proved to ascertain whether fraudulent, versus inadvertent, voting has taken place. Elections BC found no incidence of fraudulent voting. One person thought their first vote was for a primary. One was confused because a municipal vote was taking place at the same time. Another voter was ill and confused, but expected that Elections BC would figure out which vote to count.

Elections BC's conclusion is that there was no intention to vote fraudulently. In some cases, the analysis of possible multiple voting cases identified areas where administrative practices could be improved and there is a need to better educate voters how the system works.

Linda Johnson noted that Elections Canada is opposed to proposed legislation requiring all voters to produce identification, on the grounds that voter fraud is not a significant issue. Elections Canada has prosecuted one person in the last 10 years for multiple voting, with one previous prosecution in 1993. The prosecution resulted in a $350 fine. The federal election commissioner has published some compliance agreements with individuals who voted more than once. In those cases, the voters resided in one district and owned property in another electoral district and believed they were allowed to vote in both districts. In jurisdictions like B.C., that permit non-resident property owners to vote in local government elections, voters may expect they have that right at all levels of government.

John Hague of the Green Party inquired whether there is any evidence of political party misconduct. Linda Johnson stated there is no evidence to suggest that is happening. Parties are not generally involved in voter registration. There have been some concerns and complaints about party conduct on voting day, but this activity tends to be on the part of overzealous party supporters. Voters are quick to complain of perceived misconduct around voting places, and election officials quickly curtail such activity.

6. BC Electoral Boundaries Commission Update

Harry Neufeld reported that work has begun on the Commission's preliminary report. The report will be published on August 15th, 2007, and Commissioners will then commence six months of public hearings. Transcripts of the hearings will be published on the Commission's website. Sessions with political parties will be scheduled first, and MLAs will be consulted last (as required by legislation).

The final report will be tabled in the Legislature on February 15th, 2008. It is hoped that legislation will be introduced early in the spring 2008 session to introduce the new boundary set. Extensive work will be required once the boundary legislation is passed to prepare for an election based on new boundaries. Redistribution products, such as district maps and the street index, will be reviewed with the Committee at a future meeting. Elections BC hopes to have all products delivered to the parties by December 2008, but actual delivery depends on whether the new boundary legislation is passed without significant changes by the Legislative Assembly.

7. Other Business

No other business was raised.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place in late May. Attendance will be restricted to the individuals appointed by parties as their official representatives to the EAC. Topics will include results of ongoing research into administration of an STV election, and the focus of future EAC meetings.