

Election Advisory Committee (EAC) Minutes

Tuesday, October 23, 2012

1-4 p.m.

Fairmont Waterfront Hotel
900 Canada Place Way, Vancouver, British Columbia

PRESENT

Committee Members (alphabetically by political party name)

Michael McDonald, BC Liberal Party

Jan O'Brien, BC NDP

Murray Weisenberger, Green Party Political Association of British Columbia

Elections BC Staff

Keith Archer, Ph.D., Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)

Nola Western, C.A., Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Funding and Disclosure

Anton Boegman, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Electoral Operations

Amie Foster, Manager, Executive Services (minutes)

REGRETS

Cathy Young, BC Liberal Party

Leslie Kerr, BC NDP

Meeting convened at 1:04 p.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Keith Archer apologized for the late cancellation of the Election Advisory Committee (EAC) meeting planned for October 15, and thanked attendees for making time to attend this rescheduled meeting. He noted that the cancellation resulted in the EAC meeting being held after the Political Party Information Session (PPIS) – an unusual sequence of meetings.

Keith acknowledged that Jan O'Brien and Murray Wiesenberger had both attended the PPIS meeting and agreed to send the notes of that meeting to Michael McDonald for reference.

Keith's brief comments introduced the strategy for the 2013 Enumeration. He explained that Elections BC (EBC) takes the quality of the voters list very seriously and that a recent change in the *Election Act* allows the CEO to determine the enumeration method. The planned enumeration is expected to be more effective and less expensive than a province-wide door-to-door event. He explained that the strategy includes targeted local activities, including door-to-door enumeration in some underrepresented areas, and a province-wide mail out.

Keith also introduced planned voting process changes and explained that District Electoral Officers and Deputy District Electoral Officers were currently being trained in Richmond.

Discussion

Murray Weisenberger stated that he would rely on the expertise of Elections BC regarding enumeration and that he felt that the Act should not be too prescriptive in this area.

Mike asked if there was a visitors' program planned for the 2013 General Election.

Keith confirmed, and they agreed to discuss it further offline.

2. Legislation update

Nola Western explained that the only change in legislation since 2009 was the repeal of the requirement for a door-to-door enumeration. This change is expected to result in a voters list as good as, or better than in 2009, with costs reduced from \$29.9 million to \$7.5 million.

Nola also explained that the Court of Appeal had ruled that the pre-campaign period for third-party election advertising sponsors was unconstitutional – the entire pre-campaign period no longer applies to third parties.

Nola explained that the CEO must consult with the EAC before making a Regulation at any time other than during an election period for a general election. She then presented EAC members with two regulated forms for third parties that require updating to reflect the Court's decision.

The EAC members in attendance endorsed the changes by consensus.

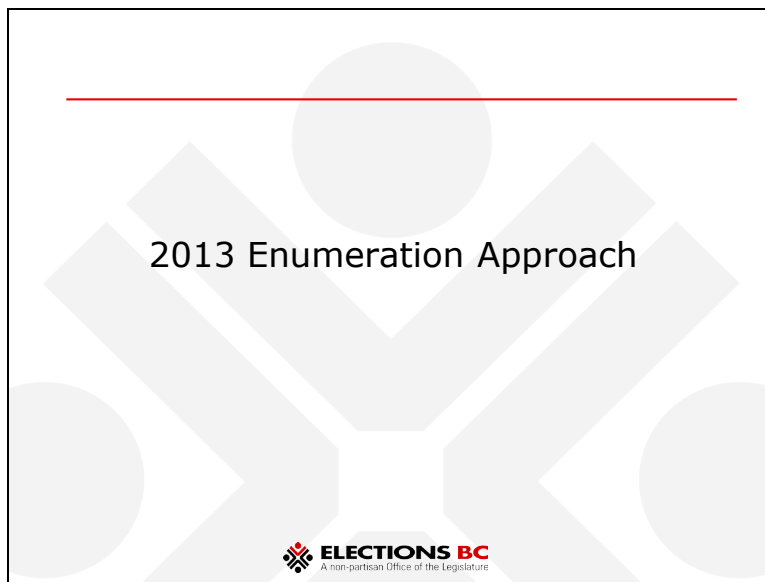
Finally, Nola advised that authorization statements no longer need to be displayed on election advertising on the Internet if clicking on the ad takes the reader to another page

containing the statement. Nola likened this to the way one would read a brochure with the statement on the back flap. Letters clarifying this change were sent to all political parties on October 19.

Keith added that while there is no legislation, he sought funding from the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for a possible Senate Nominee Election in conjunction with the 2013 General Election. He explained that time was of-the-essence to ensure that EBC's information technology systems could manage concurrent electoral events if required to do so. The Committee agreed to recommend funding of \$250,000 to be spent this fiscal year prior to legislation being passed and an additional \$768,000 to be spent if legislation is passed.

3. 2013 Enumeration approach

Anton Boegman provided attendees with a high-level overview of the 2013 Enumeration strategy. Click on the slide below to view the PowerPoint presentation:



Discussion:

Jan asked if the province-wide mail-out would be addressed to mailing or residential addresses. She also asked for clarification on the strategy to reach out to individuals living in secondary suites without a separate mailing address.

Anton explained that the mail-out would be addressed to either the mailing or the residential address of a voter, depending on the information supplied by that voter. He also explained that the strategy for reaching voters in secondary suites was in

development, but that the general concept is to identify areas of high-mobility or underrepresentation on the list and have enumerators go door-to-door. He also explained that the messaging in the mail-out was inclusive.

Murray asked if the ICBC data that Elections BC receives contains information regarding secondary suites.

Anton confirmed that ICBC is the primary source for this type of information. He explained that EBC receives monthly updates, but that some individuals use an alternate address to reduce their insurance rates.

Jan asked how EBC will reach out to women who, for cultural or other reasons, do not drive.

Anton explained that registration information would be published widely in local media. The plan also includes outreach to local community leaders.

Michael asked how EBC defines coverage versus currency. Anton explained the following:

- coverage is the number of people on the voters list
- currency is the number of people on the list at the correct address
- net currency is the coverage times the currency, resulting in the percentage of eligible voters in B.C. at the correct address

Jan asked what role the political parties will have on the DEO advisory panel.

Anton explained that EBC would post the plans established by each DEO for their electoral district.

Jan clarified by asking what role the political parties would have at the planning level. She noted that candidates are familiar with their electoral districts and that they too have a role in getting people out to vote.

Keith replied that while EBC is interested in party input, it is very important for Elections BC to remain neutral in their dealings with the political parties; the organization must not become an instrument for parties to compete with one another.

Jan asked if the DEOs had been appointed for the 2013 General Election, and if they had completed their enumeration plans.

Anton answered that they had been appointed and that their enumeration plans will be complete by the end of the calendar year. When complete, the plans will be reviewed by the Director of Voter Registration and Boundaries.

Murray asked how many DEOs were DEOs in the last general election.

Anton told the Committee that approximately 60-70% of the DEOs and their Deputies have returned, and that some hold concurrent federal Returning Officer appointments.

Murray asked if voters could go online to determine if their registration information was correct, and if that information was part of the communications/advertising strategy.

Anton confirmed.

Jan asked for clarification regarding the criteria for selecting voting locations.

Anton said that accessibility is a primary factor, as is public transportation. Anton also explained that DEOs reach out to community leaders to establish the needs in that area. For example, some First Nations Communities appreciate mobile teams in their communities; others would prefer to vote at a voting place elsewhere.

Michael asked how areas for door-to-door enumeration were identified/prioritized.

Anton told the Committee that these areas will be identified and prioritized by DEOs based on their local knowledge, and that Elections BC worked with BC Stats to identify areas with lower-than-average net currency. Anton added that teams of enumerators will be assigned to these areas; they will visit each residence up to three times, and will leave behind a card with registration information.

Jan asked if the enumerators will work evenings and weekends.

Anton confirmed that these teams will work during times they are most likely to reach residents. He added that each team will be given registration information for that walk only, and that to limit risk to personal information in the field, enumerators will be instructed to mail the completed forms back to Elections BC on the same day.

The dates for the field enumeration are March 6 - 23, 2013.

Murray asked if Elections BC will have access to new apartment buildings.

Anton answered that EBC has the authority to access the buildings, but that there are practical constraints (locked doors on each floor, etc.). In some cases, it is more practical for DEOs to work with building managers to set up a table in the lobby or find another solution.

Jan asked if there would be any enumeration activities taking place in February.

Anton replied that the provincial mail-out and advertising will happen in February, but that the targeted registration activities will occur in March.

Jan asked if DEOs could request larger numbers of enumeration staff for their electoral districts as necessary.

Keith confirmed that there will be districts with very stable populations that need fewer enumeration resources and others with high mobility that require more. He explained that DEOs will have some latitude to define their needs.

Jan asked if urgency, rather than budget, would be the primary driver in making those decisions.

Keith confirmed that this was the case.

Keith offered a re-cap of the conversation by explaining that Elections BC did not view province-wide door-to-door enumeration as an efficient or cost effective method for enumeration. However, Elections BC believes that door-to-door enumeration is a useful tool in some areas. Initially EBC planned to undertake the same strategy as was used in 2009 with a similar budget; however, the debate over Bill 33 caused Elections BC to consider additional activities targeting voters that are more likely to need to register or update their information.

Jan asked if political parties could place online-fillable registration forms on their party websites.

Anton clarified that this would result in concurrent creation of registration information and a potential supporter database for the party and that there may be privacy concerns.

Keith committed to exploring this request in further detail.

Keith explained that enumerations in Quebec are different than in B.C. In Quebec, the legislation provides for negative check-off, meaning that newly eligible voters (new Canadians, new residents, people who will be 18 at the time of an election) are automatically added to the voters list unless they formally request otherwise. Their data comes from health records and from the provincial citizenship office. The result is the highest quality voters list in the country.

Anton noted that the BC Services Card project might allow for better agency integration, including the establishment of a Quebec style enumeration model, and added that after the 2013 General Election, Elections BC will undertake some strategic planning regarding the voters list.

Murray asked if legislative change would be required.

Anton confirmed that some legislative change may be necessary.

4. 2013 General Election

Anton provided attendees with a high-level overview of the voting modernization and communications strategy for the 2013 Provincial General Election. Click on the slide below to view the PowerPoint presentation:



Discussion:

Michael noted that during the by-election in Chilliwack-Hope more voters used advance voting than at previous events. He explained that this contributes to the efficiency of the get-out-the-vote efforts of the parties. Michael added that it would have been useful if there had been more advance voting locations in that electoral district, and suggested that EBC look at that for future events.

Anton agreed to do so.

Jan concurred with Michael and added that it would have been beneficial if the mobile teams remained in one location for longer periods of time (some locations offered mobile voting for one hour only).

Anton clarified that advance voting is conducted in one location for four days from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mobile teams are tasked with administering voting to voters who are unable to attend a voting place, including voters on some reservations, in remote work camps, in remote communities, and in seniors' homes, etc. These teams focus on their target groups and move on.

Michael asked when voting places would be finalized.

Anton explained that the assignment of voting places is ongoing until about 10 days prior to the writs being issued (April 16).

Murray asked if most would be confirmed before that time.

Anton said yes and explained that EBC tries to limit changes to voting locations once established.

Murray stated that the parties dislike it when voting locations change. Nola added that the public holds a similar view.

Michael asked about the process for administering absentee voting-by-mail.

Anton explained that this process is changing. Voters can now request an absentee voting package anytime. Packages may be shipped beginning 30 days prior to Writ Day, depending on where the voter is; for example, a voter who is currently outside of the province will be able to receive an early voting package. Voters may not vote (mark and return the marked ballot) until after the writs are issued, but this new process will allow for better participation from voters who are abroad at the time of the election.

Michael asked about the new voting area catchment map booklet. He explained that this would be a useful tool for parties.

Anton agreed to post a PDF of this document on the EBC website.

Michael asked if voters had to be on the voters list to receive a vote-by-mail package.

Anton explained that when they call to request the package they are prompted to register or update as necessary.

Jan explained that the NDP was developing a handheld application for the 2013 General Election. She asked when voting place location information would be available.

Anton stated that that information would be finalized on or around April 5.

Jan and Murray gave positive feedback regarding the voting modernization and communications strategies.

5. Independent Panel on Internet Voting (IPIV)

The Independent Panel on Internet Voting is underway. Keith is Chair of the panel, which will consider prospects for Internet voting at the local government and provincial levels in British Columbia. Panelists were invited in August/September and the group has met twice since that time. The authority for the establishment of the panel is section 12 of the *Election Act*. The budget for the panel's work is \$420,000, which is expected to be spent over two fiscal years. Feedback from the public will be welcomed through the IPIV website in due course, and will likely be formatted to ask specific questions. The detailed work plan will be defined in December.

Discussion

Jan cautioned Keith to move slowly with regard to Internet voting - citing the recent experience of the federal NDP during their leadership contest.

Keith acknowledged her comment and added that the panel would look at a range of experiences from many different jurisdictions.

6. General discussion

Jan drew attention to the process for providing scrutineers with participation information on General Voting Day. She suggested that Elections BC consider modifications to the current processes to include "carbon" or "bingo" sheets for scrutineers (similar to the process used by Elections Canada). This would prevent scrutineers from being intrusive and having to copy sequence numbers for party reference.

Anton committed to investigate possible options allowable under current legislation.

Michael supported Jan's statements. He explained that the current process is inefficient, and that his party also wants to encourage better turnout. Currently the BC Liberal Party sends runners into voting places to collect "bingo sheets." However, it is becoming more difficult to get volunteers to work as scrutineers. Michael stated that he would welcome a work-around.

Anton added that a scrutineer's primary role is to view voting proceedings and to draw attention to any issues so that they can be corrected by a supervisor on-site. They are a check on the process that enhances transparency.

Jan explained that scrutineers have a bigger role than gathering names - that they need that information to get the vote out.

Anton added that legislative change had recently resulted in a modified Elections Canada process.

Jan asked about the process for obtaining a record of voters who voted during advance voting, and suggested that access to this information can be inconsistent between electoral districts.

Anton explained that if parties are not given access as intended by legislation and procedure, they should contact Elections BC or him directly.

Jan asked if parties could be provided with a data extract of voters who participated following the election. She explained that this information would help with engagement efforts.

Anton explained that that is not something that is currently produced, and agreed to consider whether this would be allowable under the current legislation.

Michael expressed that he would also support this. He explained that while they can collect voter participation information at voting places, it is inefficient for the party. He explained that the BC Liberal Party stops collecting participation information after 7:15 p.m. on General Voting Day because its get-out-the-vote efforts are complete by then. He added that a voter participation extract would benefit parties in their efforts to get the vote out.

Anton and Keith explained that they would be surprised if supplying the extract was not allowable under the Act because the same information can be collected at the voting place on General Voting Day.

Murray stated that he is really happy with how things are going.

Michael stated that the meeting was informative.

The discussion shifted to voter participation. Anton again highlighted the benefits of the Quebec enumeration model.

Keith added that the Quebec model would have an impact on the number of young people on the list.

Anton followed with a statement on the importance of encouraging registered voters to update their voter registration information when they move. He closed his comments by adding that while Elections BC provides teachers with teaching tools targeted at Grade 11

students, the students have no action step at that time. An ongoing recommendation to allow Elections BC to maintain a provisional voters list for people aged 16-17 remains a priority.

7. Closing comments

Keith thanked members for their attendance and reminded them that the next meeting of the EAC was expected to take place in the Fall of 2013.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.