

# **Election Advisory Committee (EAC) Minutes**

**Thursday, October 10, 2013**

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

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

## **PRESENT**

### **Committee Members (alphabetically by political party name)**

Jeff Bridge, BC Conservative Party

Laura Miller, BC Liberal Party

Sharon White, BC Liberal Party

Jan O'Brien, BC NDP

Matt Hannah, BC NDP

Mike Hickey, Green Party Political Association of British Columbia

David Pearce, Green Party Political Association of British Columbia

### **Elections BC Staff**

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

Nola Western, CPA, CA, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Funding and Disclosure

Anton Boegman, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Electoral Operations

Amie Foster, Manager, Executive Services (minutes)

## **Meeting convened at 9:04 a.m.**

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Keith welcomed attendees and described the role of the Election Advisory Committee (EAC) which is established under sections 14-16 of the *Election Act*.

Keith also explained that the Political Party Information Session would follow the EAC meeting, and is an important component of Elections BC's (EBC) overall outreach strategy.

Keith addressed a request raised by EAC members at the October 2012 EAC meeting regarding political party access to voter participation data. He advised members that under current legislation Elections BC does not have the authority to provide political parties with extracts of voter participation information.

Keith explained that British Columbia has the most accessible ballot in Canada and that the strategy guiding the 2013 Provincial General Election was to emphasize the notion of voter accessibility.

Keith provided attendees with a high level overview of the 2013 Provincial General Election. The PowerPoint presentation has been embedded below for reference:

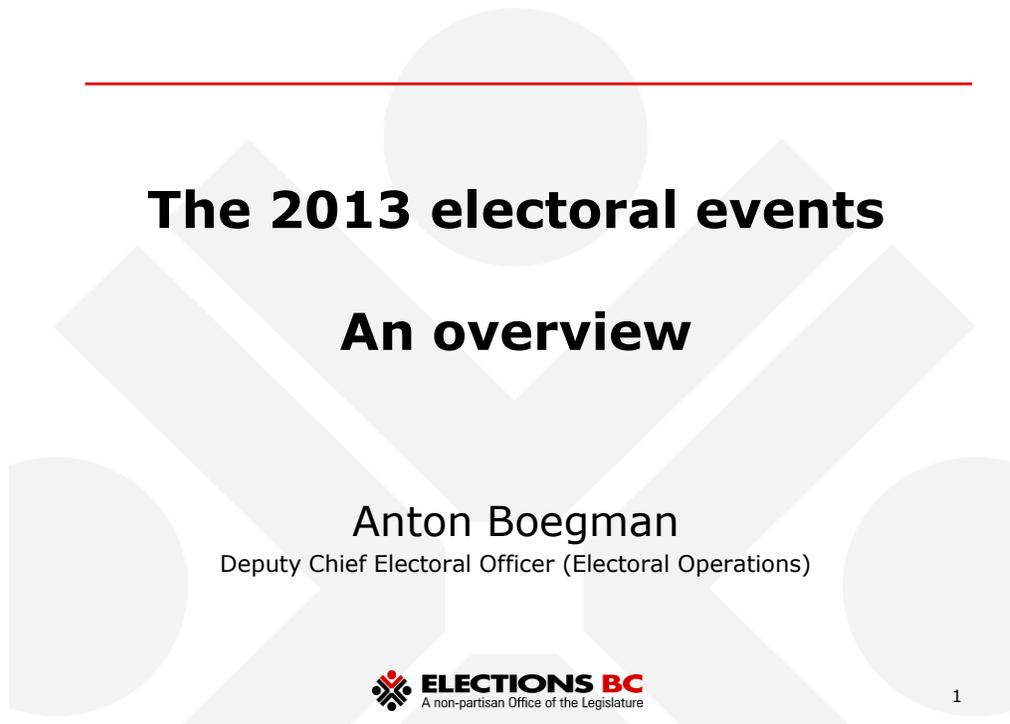


## Discussion

- A member asked that the decision regarding access to the voter's list participation information be provided in writing.
  - Keith agreed.
- How do you determine the quality of the voter's list?
  - It is a formula of currency (percentage of eligible voters at the correct address) multiplied by coverage (percentage of eligible voters on the voters list).
- Further questions were deferred to the post event evaluation and general discussion segment of the meeting.

## 2. 2013 Provincial General Election Overview

Anton provided members with a detailed overview of the 2013 Provincial General Election and Enumeration. He described things that worked well, things that did not go as planned and things that could be improved. He also invited members to contact Elections BC at any time with additional feedback. The PowerPoint presentation has been embedded below for reference:



## 3. Electoral Finance Update

Nola provided attendees with an electoral finance update:

### Changes to Legislation

There were no legislative changes affecting candidates or political parties between the 2009 and the 2013 Provincial General Elections.

There was a court decision regarding third party advertising that resulted in a change to the rules for third parties. For the 2013 Provincial General Election, advertising by third parties was not limited or regulated until the start of the campaign period itself, which began on April 16. Although there were pre-campaign period spending limits on candidates and political parties, there were none for third party advertisers.

## Financial Agent Training

As part of EBC's preparation for the 2013 Provincial General Election, electoral finance created an online training website for financial agents. This multi-media site covered all of the rules, tips and FAQs about election financing. EBC is pleased that financial agents outside of the Lower Mainland and Victoria can now have access to training without having to attend a financial agent training session.

In the months leading up to the 2013 Provincial General Election, the electoral finance group conducted 12 financial agent training sessions in the Lower Mainland and Southern Vancouver Island with over 256 attendees. They also conducted three training sessions for third party advertisers with over 60 attendees. Electoral Finance staff also logged over 4,000 one-on-one contacts with clients.

## Increase in Social Media

During this election there was a considerable increase in the use of social media by candidates, political parties, and voters. Digital media use by the candidates, EBC and voters played an increased role in helping people connect and in making information accessible and timely.

## Number of Candidates, Political Parties and Election Advertising Sponsors

A total of 376 candidates, 19 political parties, and 286 advertising sponsors participated in the 2013 Provincial General Election compared to 345 candidates, 15 political parties and 301 advertising sponsors in 2009. Some of the change in the number of advertising sponsors may have been due to an increased awareness of what does and does not constitute election advertising and perhaps the shortened period during which third party advertising was regulated.

There were four political parties deregistered immediately after the 2013 Provincial General Election for failing to field sufficient candidates. These parties can apply to reregister one year after they have filed a deregistration financial report. Four more parties are at risk of deregistration if they do not run at least two candidates in the 2017 Provincial General Election.

## Nomination Deposits

183 of 376 candidates received 15% or more of the votes counted in their electoral district. As a result they had their nomination deposits returned in June.

## Financial Reports

The election financing reports required for candidates, political parties, constituency associations and election advertising sponsors were due on August 12:

- Three candidates and two constituency associations had extenuating circumstances and were granted short extensions to the August 12 deadline as

- allowed under the *Election Act*. Several others paid a \$500 late filing fee and filed their report by September 11.
- Four constituency associations failed to file by September 11 and have been deregistered.
  - All candidates filed.

The Westside-Kelowna by-election reports were due on October 8:

- 21 were filed.
- One political party failed to file. However, there is a late filing period so they may still file if they pay \$500.

### Financing Reports

EBC is now reviewing the financing reports and following up with financial agents to resolve issues and make corrections where necessary. Many reports contain minor errors and discrepancies like adding mistakes and carry-forward errors.

Some completed candidate files may have to be re-opened during EBC's review of the annual financial reports (AFR) next April as fundraising functions and transfers reported in the annual reports are reconciled with those reported in the election reports.

Nola reminded attendees that candidates who still have bank account balances need to transfer those surplus funds to their registered constituency association, or to the political party if there is no registered constituency association. The transfers will then need to be reported in supplementary reports by the giver and the receiver.

Nola also reminded attendees that any candidate who still owes money to any supplier or lender needs to resolve those outstanding debts and file a supplemental financing report reporting those transactions.

Finally, Nola reminded attendees that if their party's financial agent has not already received all political contribution information from their candidates, that they must follow-up to get that information. The *Election Act* requires that all details of all political contributions to candidates, even those under \$250, be given to the party financial agent within 60 days of General Voting Day. This is to ensure that the party has the information it needs to file its report on combined contributions over \$250 next March.

### Local Government Elections Reform

On September 9, the government issued a [White Paper on Local Government Elections Reform](#) that outlined government's intention to introduce legislation in the spring of 2014 that would significantly change and increase the mandate of Elections BC. Specifically, the proposed *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* would make Elections BC responsible for the campaign financing and third party advertising of local government elections, including ensuring the compliance and enforcement of those provisions. This proposed increase to EBC's mandate would have significant implications for EBC, but whether the legislation is passed is a decision for the Legislative Assembly.

#### 4. Independent Panel on Internet Voting

The Independent Panel on Internet Voting (IPIV) was struck in August 2012 after a request from the Minister of Justice. The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) agreed to convene and chair the panel to investigate the challenges and opportunities associated with Internet voting under the following conditions:

- The CEO would identify and select the panelists.
- The panel would develop its own work plan including scope and reporting timeframe.
- The panel would be funded by the Legislative Assembly.
- The report would be tabled in the Legislative Assembly through the Speaker.

The panel comprises:

- Dr. Keith Archer, Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)
- Dr. Konstantin (Kosta) Beznosov, Associate Professor at the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of British Columbia (UBC)
- Lee-Ann Crane, Chief Administrative Officer, Regional District of East Kootenay
- Dr. Valerie King, Professor of Computer Science, University of Victoria
- George Morfitt, FCA, former Auditor General of British Columbia

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 over two fiscal years. Information about the panel's work can be accessed at [www.internetvotingpanel.ca](http://www.internetvotingpanel.ca).

The Panel has met 13 times since September 2012. The preliminary report is nearing completion and is expected to be published before the end of October. The panel will welcome public input over a six week period. The final report is expected to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in February 2014.

#### 5. Post Event Evaluation and General Discussion

- Members reiterated their interest in obtaining voter participation information.
- Political parties would like to be notified when the preliminary report of the Independent Panel on Internet Voting is published.
  - Agreed.
- A member expressed concern that there was some disparity in the level of activity between the targeted enumeration activities in some electoral districts.
  - The enumeration was conducted under a new model. Members were invited to submit detailed feedback where possible so that services can be refined in future events. Overall this model was financially responsible and effective, and details will be available in the *Report of the Chief*

*Electoral Officer on the 2013 Provincial General Election* which is expected to be tabled in March 2014.

- What are the rules of residency for students?
  - Rules for determining where an individual is resident can be found in [section 32 of the \*Election Act\*](#).
- What are EBC's plans in determining new electoral district boundaries? There will be no new census before the boundaries are re-drawn – how much change can there be?
  - The timing of the boundaries commission is determined by the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*. The commission must be struck within one year of the 2013 Provincial General Election. Implementing the boundaries after new boundaries have been passed by the Legislative Assembly will take 12 months.
- One member opined that “the *Election Act* has not kept up with the times regarding social media” and asked whether EBC could better explain the advertising rules related to social media use by Candidates on General Voting Day.
  - Yes, Elections BC will provide information to candidates about social media use on General Voting Day.
- One member added that the District Electoral Officer (DEO) of Westside-Kelowna (WTK) was very capable and professional.
  - The DEO changed her personal holiday plans on short notice in order to administer the by-election in WTK. Also, administrative feedback from the 2013 Provincial General Election was quickly implemented in the by-election.
- How are voting locations selected?
  - There are a number of factors influencing voting place selection, including availability, legislated access, wheelchair accessibility, previous use, traffic patterns and more.
- How can political parties provide input to the selection of voting places, and enumeration outreach activities?
  - Contact the local DEO to provide input. EBC will communicate deadlines and ensure DEOs understand that they should accept input, and ultimately make decisions in a non-partisan manner.

## **6. Closing Comments**

Keith thanked members for their thoughtful comments. He advised members that the *Statement of Votes Report on the 2013 Provincial General Election* is expected to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in January 2014 and the *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 2013 Provincial General Election* will be tabled in March. The *Report of*

*the Chief Electoral Officer on Recommendations for Legislative Change* is expected to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly following a meeting (in early spring) with the Election Advisory Committee.

Attendees may forward any questions regarding this meeting to Amie Foster, Manager, Executive Services, by phone at 250-952-6226 or by email at [amie.foster@elections.bc.ca](mailto:amie.foster@elections.bc.ca).

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**The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.**