

**Minutes  
Election Advisory Committee**

**January 19, 2007**

10:00 – 12:00

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 7<sup>th</sup> and Vancouver on February 17<sup>th</sup>. 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 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 15<sup>th</sup>, 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.