

**Advisory Committee of
Political Parties**
Meeting Summary – April 12, 2018



Table of Contents

1. Meeting Summary.....	2
2. Introductory Remarks and Round Table	2
3. Electoral District Association Training.....	3
4. Triennial Party Review	4
5. Field Pre-Event Assignments	6
6. Forward Calendar and Meeting Adjournment	8
Appendix A: Agenda	9
Appendix B: Meeting Participants	10

1. Meeting Summary

The objectives of the April 12, 2018, meeting were to update the Committee on the activities that Elections Canada (EC) has conducted since the last meeting and to inform the Committee on matters that may impact parties and candidates.

This summary follows the order of the agenda included in Appendix A. A list of the participants is included in Appendix B.

2. Introductory Remarks and Round Table

Stéphane Perrault, Acting Chief Electoral Officer (A/CEO), welcomed members of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties (ACPP) to the April 2018 meeting and thanked them for their participation in the previous day's workshop on elector services for the 2019 general election (GE).

Mr. Perrault discussed some of the agency's planning assumptions, expectations and timelines with regard to forthcoming legislation and the appointment of a new Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), each of which were anticipated in the following weeks.

Mr. Perrault updated the Committee on EC's Electoral Services Modernization projects, and reminded members of the two strategic priorities EC has been pursuing since the last GE: improving electoral services through a range of initiatives; and replacing and improving key infrastructure assets that are required for the delivery of elections, such as data centres, IT networks, telecommunications services and the pay system for poll workers.

Mr. Perrault also updated the Committee on other ongoing projects, such as voting on campus, the Policy on Selecting Suitable Polling Places, ballot production modernization, the Elector Services in Remote Indigenous Communities (ESRIC) project, and the Political Entities Service Centre (PESC). He then introduced the members to EC's Inspire Democracy initiative, which is a way for the agency to enhance its stakeholder engagement activities through a series of workshops and information kiosks held during stakeholder events and conferences.

Mr. Perrault indicated that cybersecurity and the broader issue of disinformation were significant challenges for the agency when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in February 2018. The Communications Security Establishment had estimated that multiple groups will very likely deploy cyber-capabilities in an attempt to influence the democratic process during the 2019 federal election. In response, EC is taking a number of steps to strengthen its security posture. For example, the security design of EC's IT network has been improved and the new data-hosting service will offer a range of additional protections. The agency is also commissioning an independent audit of its IT security controls, which should be completed this spring.

With respect to the broader issue of disinformation, EC's integrity branch is working with the Commissioner of Canada Elections to keep abreast of developments. EC's main role is ensuring that Canadians have the correct information on where, when and ways to register and vote. To that end, as part of the 2019 Voter Information Campaign, the agency will ensure that its advertising is clearly branded and will publish a repository of all of its communications products and messages on our website. This will allow anyone who may be in doubt about whether a message is from EC to verify the message.

Mr. Perrault also mentioned that there have been references to the fact that political parties are not subject to privacy laws at the federal level, which is an issue of concern raised by the Privacy Commissioner. The former CEO also made recommendations to Parliament on this subject in his 2013 and 2016 reports following elections. It was unclear at that point whether the government would include privacy protection measures as part of its legislative package. In any event, parties will likely have to take steps to reassure Canadians regarding the use and safeguarding of their personal information.

3. Electoral District Association Training

Wendy Larose-Marois, Manager, Regulatory Instruments Secretariat, provided the Committee with an overview of EC's electoral district association (EDA) training for 2018, which includes in-class training and online components.

The agency held 33 sessions of in-class training in 24 cities across Canada, with a total of approximately 281 participants (there was a higher than usual dropout rate due to poor weather conditions). Over 60% of participants were financial agents. In response to numerous requests from past years, a new training format was used, with hands-on lab training on Electronic Financial Return (EFR) and two pilot sessions with laptops.

While participants enjoyed the hands-on EFR training, they mentioned they would appreciate training that covers compliance rules and EFR, as opposed to one or the other. Participants also requested additional training products, such as training specific to auditors' specific needs, and nomination contestant training.

Ms. Larose-Marois presented the new WebEx sessions on political financing that were launched one year ago. EC now offers monthly sessions for new financial agents and on fundraising, as well as customized sessions scheduled on request. So far, approximately 40 WebEx sessions have been held, and over 200 participants have been trained.

Ms. Larose-Marois also presented the 14 new political financing training videos that are now available on the EC website and informed the Committee that EC plans on publishing an additional 12 videos in the next year (including fundraising, volunteer labour and candidate-specific modules).

In closing, Ms. Larose-Marois shared EC's communication plan to raise awareness about their existing and new training products through social media and email. These messages will be easy for political entities to share.

Round Table Discussion

Overall, participants were satisfied with the addition of online training and WebEx sessions. There were some questions regarding the differences in effectiveness and results between online and in-class training. There was also a request to implement a certification process so that parties may have some assurance that the person who is taking the classes is certified at the end.

Some members inquired whether EC could expand their training to institutions such as banks, property owners, law enforcement, etc. Mr. Perrault explained that while EC's limited capacity does not generally allow for training outside of political parties, the agency does interact with banks, as there are specific requirements for accounts, such as account names, etc. The Commissioner of Canada Elections also does local outreach with police officers during an election, and there is a downloadable letter on the EC website that candidates can use with landlords to exercise their right to campaign and canvass.

4. Triennial Party Review

Mr. Perrault presented the process for the triennial confirmation of members in 2019. He explained that every three years, at the time of the annual update, registered parties and eligible parties are to provide the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) with the names and addresses of 250 electors in the prescribed form, attesting that they are members of the party. The CEO also has an ongoing obligation under the CEA to be satisfied that every registered party has at least 250 members. These requirements ensure the legitimacy of the registered party regime and protect its integrity. Organizations benefitting from the political tax credit must be authentic political party organizations intending to participate in the electoral process.

At the ACPP meeting in June 2017, some political parties raised issues, submitted comments and offered proposals to improve the 2016 process. EC has considered their comments, taking into account the agency's obligation to protect the integrity of the electoral system. As a result, a new process was proposed for the 2019 triennial review.

Mr. Perrault informed participants that political parties may send to EC their completed membership forms starting January 2, 2019, with July 2, 2019 as the deadline. The membership forms should be submitted to EC only when the requisite number of forms has been collected. EC strongly recommends that parties submit additional forms to ensure that at least 250 forms have been duly completed and are valid. To be valid, the form must be signed and dated within the 12 months preceding the submission of the 250 forms. The audit of membership forms for the parties represented in the House of Commons will consist of a review that the documents

provided are properly completed. For parties not represented in the House of Commons, EC will proceed in the following manner:

- After verifying that there are 250 valid memberships, 50 members will be randomly picked to receive a questionnaire.
- The 50 members will have one month to complete and return the questionnaire in the pre-addressed and pre-stamped envelope included with the questionnaire.
- Following the analysis of the responses obtained, the CEO will decide whether he is satisfied that the party complied with its obligations regarding the number of members they must maintain at all times.
 - In performing the analysis, the CEO will consider the number of forms returned and the number of positive and negative responses.
- If, following his analysis, the CEO is not satisfied that the party is compliant with its obligations, he will take additional steps, which may include contacting all members for which EC received a declaration.
- If a party does not provide 250 membership declarations by the July 2nd deadline, it has not complied with its triennial obligation.
- In that case, the CEO will notify the party in writing of its obligation to rectify the omission within 30 days or to satisfy the CEO that the omission was not the result of negligence or lack of good faith to obtain additional time to rectify the omission.
- Failure to meet these conditions could lead to the party's deregistration.

Mr. Perrault noted that in order to get a high response rate, EC encourages parties to inform their members of the process and to complete and return the questionnaire as soon as possible. Questionnaires will not be mailed to members between the issue of the writs and the end of October 2019.

The process for the triennial confirmation of members of political parties will be posted on the EC website.

Round Table Discussion

Some participants asked questions of clarification with regards to the two-tier verification process and the submission of signatures. Mr. Perrault explained that, under the CEA, all parties have the same obligation to provide their signatures and satisfy the CEO, and the CEO has the obligation to be satisfied. To that effect, the CEO could have decided to do a wall-to-wall approach. However, Mr. Perrault noted that he has no reason to be concerned about parties represented in the House, as their level of activity indicates that they meet the membership requirements under the CEA. What he is proposing is a much lighter version of the verification process, where EC will send out the questionnaire to 50 members, and will examine the result to see whether there are red flags and exercise judgment accordingly. In that case, EC will call the party and have a conversation about it. Overall, the expected result is a reasonable approach that is much less intrusive or burdensome.

Some participants expressed their concerns about the threat of discrimination that may be experienced or perceived by some of their members who do not wish to be publicly associated with a political party. A participant also noted that the second letter is problematic for some political party members who have been discriminated against by employers because of their political affiliation, and they are now frightened by this verification process. Mr. Perrault reassured participants that EC is sensitive to that issue and that the totality of circumstances will be taken into account. He further noted that EC is aware that each party has unique circumstances. Again, he mentioned that, if there is a problem, EC will call the party and discuss the challenges they are facing.

Comments also alluded to the fact that the tone of the letter could be reviewed to alleviate some of these concerns. There were some suggestions that correspondence from EC to political party members is quite officious and that a more positive and welcoming tone and approach might yield better results.

5. Field Pre-Event Assignments

Danielle Duquette, Associate Director, Operational Oversight and Financial Administration, highlighted EC's new field pre-event assignments strategy and provided an overview of the work that lies ahead for returning officers (ROs) and their teams as they start preparing and planning for the 43rd GE.

EC has significantly changed its approach to readiness for 2018 and all activities have been grouped into four main themes:

- **Theme 1:** Polling Place Search and Geography
- **Theme 2:** Electoral Material Management
- **Theme 3:** Field Office and Staff
- **Theme 4:** Outreach and Remote Training

Theme 1 activities started on April 16, 2018. During this phase, ROs identify, visit and assess the suitability of more than 20,000 polling sites across the country. These visits have to be completed with the following criteria in mind and in keeping with the guiding principles of the new Policy on Selecting Suitable Polling Places: accessibility, proximity, familiarity and suitability. ROs will be required to contact landlords, schedule site visits and begin lease negotiations. As ROs get mobilized, they will also seek to broaden their contacts network to start promoting the various voting options, work opportunities and general outreach.

Theme 2 activities will start in September 2018 and enable ROs to review and validate the quantities of some of the 2.5 tons of material they typically receive for any electoral event. This is aimed at ensuring that adequate quantities of materials are assembled and shipped. Early

validation of election materials means that we will produce and acquire only required quantities and perhaps gain economic and logistics efficiencies and certainly reduce waste.

Theme 3 activities will start in January 2019 and are split into two phases. In the first phase, ROs will identify their local office and their AARO offices in larger rural electoral districts. In the 42nd GE, aside from the 338 RO offices, EC opened 148 AARO offices across the country. Additionally, ROs will start identifying their key office staff (automation coordinator, financial officer and service point supervisor). This process will also include security screening checks, since the incumbents have access to elector or election administrator information.

Finally this phase will conclude with the identification of the local commercial printers. Since the 42nd GE, we've worked with ROs and industry experts to modernize and streamline how we produce and distribute ballots. We will continue to produce ballots locally, so ROs need to identify available commercial printers within their area.

During the second phase of this theme, ROs will continue to identify some of the key positions in their offices. This is also an important period in the readiness cycle as we anticipate undertaking extensive training of automation coordinators and service point supervisors. The service point supervisor is a new position created to support the new in-office service model that we showcased at Demonstration Day¹ and presented to ACPP last year.

In this phase, ROs will review and confirm their election operating budgets. The CEO will review and finalize each RO budget just ahead of the election call in September 2019.

Finally, it is during this period that ROs across the country will be planning/defining their poll worker recruitment strategies. As such, they will be expected to include in their plans recruitment strategies within pools of the various groups that are the very fibre of their respective electoral districts.

Theme 4 activities will start in March 2019, and ROs will be required to undertake the planning activities and determine the best and most efficient and effective ways to reach target groups in their respective electoral districts. In summary, they will be required to develop an outreach plan; to establish contacts and build relationships with local and remote communities, including Indigenous communities. As previously mentioned, ROs will proactively engage with their elector communities to promote the various voting options and employment opportunities.

Ms. Duquette then informed participants that EC is currently planning to host regional meetings with election administrators across the country between October and November 2018. These meetings will promote change and engagement with ROs, their AROs and field liaison officers. She also mentioned that EC is planning a simulation in March–April 2019. Back in 2015, EC executed an election simulation exercise and it was very useful to support the 42nd GE, as it enabled EC to confirm that systems, processes and services were GE-ready.

¹ On April 11, 2018, EC held its first Demonstration Day. Members of several stakeholder groups representing electors who face barriers to the electoral process (Indigenous electors, persons with disabilities, new Canadians and youth)—as well as representatives of political parties and from provincial election management bodies—were invited to experience and provide feedback on several innovations in how elections will be delivered in 2019.

In closing, Ms. Duquette asked participants two engagement questions to guide the subsequent round table discussion:

1. ROs often face challenges in recruiting enough election officers. How can you help ROs recruit election workers for the 43rd GE?
2. In the context of readiness, ROs will be required to plan a meeting with local electoral district associations (EDAs) in September 2019, prior to the issue of the writs. What could the objectives and agenda topics be for this meeting?

Round Table Discussion

There were some suggestions that the meetings with EDAs should focus on what the rules are with regards to access to buildings and approaching landlords, and where to find the related forms, so that ROs and candidates would be well informed. Some participants also suggested that those meetings should address signature requirements, as there seems to be some inconsistencies among the ROs, who are asking for different things or invalidate signatures based on different criteria.

Michel Roussel, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer – Electoral Events and Innovation, noted that parties should not hesitate to call EC’s hotline, should there be any issues to be resolved, and he reminded participants that the meetings with EDAs do not replace the briefings with nominated candidates during the election period, which is another opportunity to receive and share information candidates may need.

6. Forward Calendar and Meeting Adjournment

In closing, the A/CEO thanked ACPP members for their participation, feedback and comments. He reminded members that they should expect to be consulted on current and upcoming initiatives, as the agency will need to get parties’ views on some courses of action.

Appendix A: Agenda

Meeting of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties and Broadcasting Arbitrator Meeting

Crowne Plaza Hotel
2 Montcalm Street, Gatineau, Quebec

AGENDA

Thursday, April 12, 2018

Time	Agenda item
➤ 8:00–9:00	<i>Breakfast and registration</i>
➤ 9:00–9:05	Welcome
➤ 9:05–10:15	Introductory Remarks and Round Table
➤ 10:15–10:30	<i>Break</i>
➤ 10:30–11:00	Electoral District Association Training
➤ 11:00–12:00	Triennial Party Review
➤ 12:00–1:00	<i>Lunch (served on site)</i>
➤ 1:00–2:00	Field Pre-Event Assignments
➤ 2:00–3:00	Forward Calendar and Closing Round Table
➤ 3:00–3:15	Meeting Adjournment
➤ 3:15–4:45	Broadcasting Arbitrator Meeting

Appendix B: Meeting Participants

Political Party	Representative(s)
Animal Protection Party of Canada	Stephen Best Liz White
Christian Heritage Party of Canada	Rod Taylor Peter Vogel
Communist Party of Canada	Andrew Garvie Elizabeth Rowley
Conservative Party of Canada	Greg Labuschagne Dustin Van Vugt
Green Party of Canada	Sarah Potts Marlene Wells Nick Carter (Observer)
Liberal Party of Canada	John Arnold Derek Lipman
Libertarian Party of Canada	Coreen Corcoran
Marijuana Party	John Akpata Talis-Ilmars Brauns
Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada	Anna Di Carlo Nick Lin Louis Lang (Observer)
New Democratic Party	Malkeet Sandhu James Wardlaw
Progressive Canadian Party	Al Gullon
Rhinoceros Party	Jean-Patrick Berthiaume Pascal Gélinas