



Advisory Committee of Political Parties

Meeting Summary
Annual General Meeting

June 18 and 19, 2018

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1. Meeting Summary

On June 18 and 19, 2018, the Advisory Committee of Political Parties was convened to update members on the activities that Elections Canada (EC) has conducted since the last general meeting. EC also provided an overview of Bill C-76 (the *Elections Modernization Act*, tabled in the House of Commons on April 30, 2018), with a focus on how the bill would impact the delivery of the 2019 general election.

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 by the Acting Chief Electoral Officer

Stéphane Perrault, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), welcomed members of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties (ACPP) to the 2018 Annual General Meeting (AGM). He updated the Committee on the agency's activities since the 2017 AGM and introduced some of the legislative changes that would impact EC if bill-C-76 were to receive Royal Assent.

Committee members' questions related to the implementation of Bill C-76, the Voter Information Card, political party audits, as well as privacy and oversight of party activities. Mr. Perrault was also asked to clarify rules about campaign signs, given observations that some municipalities might have imposed signage fees during the 43rd GE. There was also a question about compensation for official agents. On this point, the CEO noted that while his recommendation to Parliament on compensation for official agents was not included in the legislative package, EC will develop a robust training program and recognition mechanism for them, with the hope that there will be compensation included in future legislation.

3. Legislative Updates – Voter and Political Entity Services

Anne Lawson, General Counsel and Senior Director, Legal Services and Trevor Knight, Senior Counsel, Legal Services, provided the first of a two part summary of the amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* proposed in Bill C-76.¹ The presentation explained that Bill C-76 involves partial implementation of 116 of the 132 recommendations made by the former CEO in the 2016 Recommendations Report, for which ACPP was consulted. They further noted that Bill C-

¹ Bill C-76 was still under parliamentary review at the time of the AGM.

76 incorporates all of the amendments proposed in Bill C-33. Presentation topics included key changes to:

- voter services (e.g. election officers, definition of polling station)
- electoral processes (e.g. fixed election period, voter identification, candidate services, election officer appointment, accessibility, etc.)
- special voting rules (e.g. early voting, transfer certificates, international electors, etc.)
- additional substantive amendments (e.g. Register of Future electors, voting technology)

On voter service improvements, members asked for clarification on what the bill said about the lowering the age of registration, hours of operation for advance polls, and about services to voters who have been out of the country for more than 5 years. There were also questions about mobile polls in remote areas and there was a recommendation to make these more widely available in remote indigenous areas.

On political financing, there were question on the removal of the \$1,000.00 deposit for candidates, new auditing requirements and role of the auditor, as well as enforcement of campaigning rules. There were also questions on voter lists, pertaining to the inclusion of gender data. EC clarified that under the bill, gender will not be included on the voter's list; but that EC will data will continue to be collected for statistical purposes. Other questions involved requests for the expansion of electronic services and products (including maps and bingo sheets). Members also expressed interest in electronic submission of nomination papers, in the context of the new bill and planned roll-out of the Political Entities Service Centre (PESC).

There were questions on the changes to the nomination process. Members expressed interest in obtaining more information from EC on updates to the process for providing proof of a commonly known name and endorsing candidates. The CEO informed committee members that the revised nomination package would be shared with them upon passing of the new legislation.

4. Preparing for the 2019 General Election

Michel Roussel, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer (DCEO), Electoral Events and Innovation, provided an update on the Agency's preparations for the 43rd GE. Discussion topics included: regional meetings with field staff, testing of systems and services and operationalization of legislative changes. The DCEO further noted some of the pilot projects that EC would undertake in fall 2018 by-elections, which included the new ballot and the polling place process enhancements. Finally, the DCEO outlined readiness activities that will involve political parties, local associations and candidates, noting that EC will deliver training sessions for political party associations and candidate official agents upon passing of Bill C-76.

There were comments and questions on the voting process, geography and changes related to C-76. On the voting process, EC was asked whether the introduction of the new poll book and voting process would affect the way votes are counted; Mr. Perrault responded that EC has looked to make changes, but the delay in legislation has forced EC to wait to implement these changes until after the 43rd GE. He indicated that the voting model has been changed for advance polls for the 43rd. On geography, members suggested that EC provide parties with PDF versions of electoral district and polling division maps. On the implementation of C-76, there were questions on what elements of Bill C-76 would be implemented given the delay in legislation. Mr. Perrault assured that any mandatory aspects would be implemented.

5. Voter Information Card

Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, presented on the CEO's decision to authorize the voter information card (VIC) as one of two pieces of identification (ID) that voters can use to prove their identity and address when they vote, which would be allowed under the changes introduced in Bill C-76. Parties were then asked to provide feedback on the implementation of this change from the previous election.

The majority of members were supportive of the CEO's decision to allow the VIC as a piece of ID, with few exceptions. Concerns were expressed about the accuracy of EC's elector database which may lead to VICs being distributed erroneously, and about the extensive list of acceptable pieces of ID that render the addition of the VIC unnecessary. Mr. Perrault clarified that the risk of VICs being used fraudulently is quite low, given that it would have to be used in combination with another piece of ID. He further remarked that the risk of using a VIC would be similar to a voter proving address by other means, as voters must also bring a separate piece of identification.

6. Update on the Political Entities Service Centre and Electronic Financial Returns Workshops

Denis Bazinet, Director, Electoral Operations Planning and Administration, and Jeff Merrett, Director, Regulatory Instruments and Systems, provided an update on recent consultations conducted on the Political Entities Service Centre (PESC) and the Electronic Financial Returns (EFR) projects. In addition to summarizing the feedback that EC received on these applications during spring tests, which several ACP members attended, they also provided an overview of completion timelines and next steps. On PESC, it was also clarified that the portal would be released in fall 2018 as a controlled by-election pilot, with minimal functionality. Select users would be invited to register to the portal via email. This pilot would allow EC to determine the

issues to be addressed before the 43rd GE, which will see a public release of the portal open to all Canadians to become candidates.

Parties offered feedback on the process for distributing bingo sheets. Mr. Bazinet noted that lists would continue to be made available via USB keys and via the online portal.

7. Legislative Update - Political Financing

Anne Lawson, General Counsel and Senior Director, Legal Services and Trevor Knight, Senior Counsel, Legal Services, presented the second part of the legislative update, which focused on the implications of Bill C-50 and Bill C-76 on political financing and the enforcement of the Act. Anne Lawson reviewed the changes enacted through Bill C-50, which would come into force in December 2018. These changes related to the advertising and reporting regime for fundraising events attended by Ministers, party leaders, or leadership contestants; and the harmonization of rules used to contest expenses of nomination contestants and leadership contestants with the rules applicable to election expenses of candidates. Presenters also reviewed the implications of Bill C-76 for political financing, including: the regulation of pre-writ spending limits, the new third-party regime, additions and changes to expense categories, EDA activities, audit report requirements, ticketed fundraising events and conventions, and expense incursion authorization. Updates on C-76 requirements also included the following topics: OGI production timelines, privacy policy publication requirements, the return the Office of the Commissioner to Elections Canada, and the power to compel witnesses and lay charges or impose Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPs) for offences committed under the Act. Implementation timelines were also explained to the committee.

Questions revolved around the definition of a third-party, for which the CEO provided clarification of what was included in the legislation. There were questions on financing limits for eligible parties, partisan advertising during the pre-writ and writ period, administrative monetary penalties, criminal sanctions and the overall complaints regime. Questions were also raised on accessibility expenses.

8. Electronic Financial Returns (EFR) Modernization

Jeff Merrett, Director, Regulatory Instruments and Systems, provided an update on the modernization of the EFR application. He shared the release schedule for the application, which begins in January 2019 and concludes in July 2019. He also presented the results of the survey sent to political entities in September 2017, which revealed positive results and highlighted areas for improvement.

Topics of interest during the discussion period included details about the roll-out schedule, technical features and functionalities, and data encryption. Members also asked EC to better communicate its plans for change management and training.

9. Meeting Adjournment and Forward Calendar

In closing, the 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. Items noted for the forward calendar include:

- Implementation strategy for Bill C-76
- Consultations for updating handbooks and guidelines
- Update to the IT system
- Continued engagement on administrative activities
- Piloting new ballot design during Fall 2018 by-elections
- Additional technical session in on the portal
- Next meeting – unknown
- Annual AGM – June 2019

Parties were asked to provide feedback on best practices for party engagement and communications concerning future ACPP meetings.

Appendix A: Agenda

Agenda for the Annual General Meeting of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties June 18-19, 2018

Hilton Lac-Leamy, 3 Casino Boulevard, Gatineau, Quebec, Chopin room

AGENDA

DAY 1 – June 18, 2018

8:00–9:00 *Breakfast and registration*

- 9:00–9:05 Welcome
- 9:05–9:20 Introductory remarks by the new Chief Electoral Officer
- 9:20–9:50 Roundtable with the Chief Electoral Officer
- 9:50–10:05 *Break*
- 10:05–12:00 Legislative updates related to voter services
- 12:00–1:00 *Lunch (served on site)*
- 1:00–2:00 Preparing for the 2019 general election
- 2:00–3:00 Authorizing the voter information card as a piece of identification
- 3:00–3:15 *Break*
- 3:15–4:00 Update on the Political Entities Service Centre (PESC) technical workshop

DAY 2 – June 19, 2018

- 8:00–9:00 *Breakfast*
- 9:00–9:05 Welcome
- 9:05–10:35 Legislative updates related to political financing and enforcement
- 10:35–10:50 *Break*
- 10:50–11:30 Electronic Financial Returns (EFR) modernization
- 11:30–12:00 Forward calendar
- Adjournment*
- 12:00–1:00 *Lunch*
- 1:00–3:00 Written Opinions, Guidelines and Interpretation Notes (OGI) Steering Committee

Appendix B: Meeting Participants

Political Party	Representative(s)
Animal Protection Party of Canada	1. Stephen Best 2. Lia Laskaris
Christian Heritage Party of Canada	3. Rod Taylor 4. Peter Vogel
Communist Party of Canada	5. Elizabeth Rowley 6. Andrew Garvie
Conservative Party of Canada	7. Greg Labuschagne 8. Dustin Van Vugt
Green Party of Canada	9. Nick Carter 10. Marlene Wells
Liberal Party of Canada	11. John Arnold 12. Jessica Spinder 13. Jenni Porter (Observer)
Marijuana Party	14. John Akpata 15. Talis Brauns
Libertarian Party of Canada	16. Jean-Serge Brisson 17. Peter d'Entremont
New Democratic Party	18. Brent Cotter
Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada	19. Anna Di Carlo 20. Enver Villamizar
Progressive Canadian Party	21. Al Gullon 22. Paul Lewis