

Post-Event Regional Meetings

What Our Facilitators Heard

42nd General Election

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Post-Event Regional Meetings

What our facilitators heard – 42nd general election

“From coast to coast, field administrators told us: Work with us to implement change.”

Foreword

From January 19 to February 20, 2016, Elections Canada managers and directors met with returning officers (ROs) and field liaison officers (FLOs) across Canada to gather their insight, feedback and solutions from their experiences from the 42nd general election. The workshops focused on several key topics including Engagement, Technology, and RO Support and Governance. With over 300 participants, 27 days on the road and 70 RO workbooks completed, our facilitators genuinely understand the priorities for field administrators, their staff and electors.

From coast to coast, Elections Canada listened to what our ROs had to say, empathized with their “on-the-ground” experiences and bridged the gap between the field and Elections Canada Headquarters (ECHQ). The response from ROs and Elections Canada participants was overwhelmingly positive. Most commented that the meetings confirmed our willingness to engage field administrators.

The following pages highlight the messages that we heard loud and clear from our ROs.

RO Governance and Support

“EC must rethink field administrator support functions.”

- Clarify the role of the FLO
- Centralize and simplify information
- Give ROs more freedom to make management decisions
- Replace ECSN Tier 1 with dedicated coordinators

Additional Notes

- Add a single, fast, emergency contact system for ROs
- Move away from the “one size fits all” model
- Memos and communications need to be done differently – too much information in too many places – too late
- Integrate pre-event tasks
- Condense RO Manual
- Task-based resources/aide-mémoire
- Integrate RODS better with other apps and simplified
- Ability to track tickets
- Not all responsibility should be tasked to the RO
- Assistant returning officer (ARO) should always be included

Engagement

“Walk the talk!”

- RO skills and experience should be leveraged as a knowledgeable resource at all levels
- Maximize magnitude of RO skills from outset, not once “project” is in the bag
- Keep RO current, trained, and provide regular timely communication using face-to-face, conference calls and written communications

Additional Notes

- ROs are very excited that they will be engaged
- Hold more regional meetings (at least annually)
- Hold video conferences (webinars)
- Create RO advisory committees
- ROs want to contribute to all projects
- What is the strategy to include AROs?
- Encourage regional support groups/forums
- Field testing of everything is important
- ROs want to be involved and want EC to listen and produce what EC currently says
- Listen to local regional concerns
- Inform ROs of projects we are working on and who is collaborating
- Engagement starts the day after the general election, not 6 months before the next event

Voting Operations Renewal – Electoral Services Modernization

“Let’s work together to improve our tools.”

- Give us one login to a suite of integrated applications available to ROs, AROs, additional assistant returning officers and FLOs between and during events
- Improve Internet connection and give e-mail accounts to more people in the office
- Review and improve phone systems including BlackBerry’s, landlines, voicemail and call display
- One size does not fit all (remote, rural, urban)

Additional Notes

- Integrate office applications
- Bring office and tools into the 21st century
- Think of remote areas and their challenges
- Recruitment needs voicemail

Human and Financial Resources

“Trust us! We are accountable! We are managers!”

- Consider regional differences (tariff of fees, budget and geography)
- Give ROs the flexibility to manage their budget with fewer constraints
- ROs want more input on budget planning – better buy-in and accountability

Additional Notes

- Introduce a discretionary fund
- ECHQ should provide more latitude and training to financial officers
- Integrate the Recruitment Management System and the Payment System
- One size does not fit all
- Review tariff/total compensation – reduce number of different pay rates
- ECHQ to distribute the budget before the issue of the writ
- Eliminate the need to enter a timesheet for fixed fee positions
- Ensure that revision supervisors have hours in budget after Day 6
- Ensure key staff have access to forms after the event

Election Officer Competency

“Simplify, Simplify, Simplify.”

- More hands-on and practical training for poll workers, central poll supervisors (CPS) and training officers
- Legal parameters in which poll workers are recruited and perform their duties need to be simplified
- Simplify forms and procedures to increase compliance

Additional Notes

- Develop partnerships to recruit skilled workers
- Train the trainers
- Allow for breaks and split shifts
- Remove political appointments
- CPS role is critical and should be further developed
- Start recruitment before the writ and begin training early
- A more rigorous recruitment process needs to be implemented

Geography and Electoral Data

“Synchronization of ECHQ Geography tools and data, with collaboration of ROs.”

- Launch a post-event task to review polling divisions and advance poll districts
- RO training with Geography team
- Reduce elector count per advance poll
- ROs need better understanding of the impacts/dependencies of their Geography tasks and decisions

Additional Notes

- Assign one Geography expert to each RO (pre-event assignments)
- Merge Geography tools (OPDET/GeoExplore)
- Have live Geo data – next elections (poll key, revise, limits)
- Address Geo coding issues in rural areas
- E-Reg doesn't work well with rural addresses
- Trust the local knowledge!
- ROs want to be consulted (they know their ED better)
- Distribute printed polling division maps (8½ x 11)
- Review *Canada Elections Act* (allow changes to advance poll districts during election)
- Involve ROs when developing new tools
- Fix polling division/advance polling division issues now (from 42nd GE) before ROs forget
- Stop working in silo
- Provide GeoExplore training for ROs, AROs and automation coordinators

By-Election Pilot Projects

“Bring it on!”

- Live lists
- “First come, first served” model at polling stations