ELECTIONS BC

A non-partisan Office of the Legislature

Annual Report

2007 - 2008

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data
Elections British Columbia.
Annual report. -- 1997
Annual.
Title from cover.
ISBN 1480-3100 = Annual report - Elections British Columbia

1. Elections BC - Periodicals. 2. Elections British Columbia - Periodicals.
I. Title. II. Title: Elections BC ... annual report.

JL438.E43 353.4'8 C97-960306-4

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November 28, 2008

The Honourable Bill Barisoff
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Province of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
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Honourable Speaker:

I have the pleasure to submit Elections BC's Annual Report for the 2007/2008 fiscal year. This document reports on the activities Elections BC has undertaken between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008 in support of Elections BC's 2007/08 – 2009/10 Service Plan. This report is filed in accordance with section 13 (1) (a) of the *Election Act*.

Sincerely,

Harry Neufeld
Chief Electoral Officer

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Harry Neufeld

Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

In 2007/08, Elections BC embarked on a detailed and complex program of activities in support of its mandate to administer the provincial electoral process in British Columbia. This report compares the actual results of these activities against the expected results documented in Elections BC's 2007/08 – 2009/10 Service Plan.

The period covered in this report marked the start of escalating preparations for the 2009 enumeration of British Columbians, the scheduled 39th General Election, the province's second Referendum on Electoral Reform and the redistribution of the province's electoral districts. At the same time, Elections BC provided geographic information system technology and data services to the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission – on which I served as a commissioner – under a memorandum of understanding.

An intensive and demanding time, 2007/08 was also a year of growth and progress. Elections BC staff welcomed the many benefits of a strong planning culture and took significant steps to refine the comprehensive planning framework now in place. As the year progressed, the emphasis on planning was evident in a wide variety of activities, including the work associated with the review of annual financial reports of political parties and constituency associations, the maintenance of the provincial voters list, and the establishment of service levels and workloads for activities.

These are exciting and difficult times for Elections BC. I am proud of the work of my staff and know that through their resourcefulness and expertise, my office will continue to be a leader in electoral administration in Canada.

Harry Neufeld
Chief Electoral Officer

Overview of Activities

While the British Columbia electoral cycle is typically four years in duration, Elections BC must be ready to respond to both scheduled and unscheduled electoral events. Under its new planning framework, Elections BC worked to itemize the activities and timelines needed to deliver all types of events. This process is facilitated by the fixed-date election model, which provides Elections BC with the opportunity to develop very detailed plans that identify specific tasks, the persons responsible for each task and the actual start and end dates for the task. For a major event such as a general election, there are hundreds of individual tasks – including recruiting, hiring and training an estimated 32,000 temporary staff, preparing information kits for prospective nominees and for candidates, manufacturing ballot boxes and printing ballots, shipping large containers of equipment and supplies to district electoral offices, and ensuring voters receive information on voter registration and voting opportunities.

During 2007/08, Elections BC took steps to enhance the inclusiveness and accessibility of the provincial electoral process. Consultations were held with provincial and national organizations and voters with disabilities. Using their guidance and input, Elections BC prepared a video outlining services that are available to persons with disabilities in voting places and enhanced the tools available in voting places to facilitate independent voting by voters with sight impairments.

In addition, Elections BC staff used information from the consultations to improve the online voter registration system to ensure screen readers used by visually impaired persons can detect the information on this important internet-based voter registration service.

Elections BC also embarked on a province-wide recruitment process for District and Deputy District Electoral Officers. Using a combination of advertising, public relations strategies and contact with local service clubs and agencies, Elections BC attracted 390 applications from British Columbians interested in supporting the administration of the provincial electoral process. Through an open, competitive, merit-based recruitment approach, the Chief Electoral Officer appointed 176 non-partisan district electoral officials.

Elections BC developed and implemented an orientation program for new staff and developed and delivered a corporate staff training program to provide new employees with an informative look at the role and activities of Elections BC. Staff were also supported by an improved performance management framework that assists managers and employees to map out activities that support corporate goals and objectives. The organization developed and implemented new management practices and policies which provide employees with a rewarding and fulfilling work environment that encourages a strong work-life balance.

Being a source of innovation and best practices is core to Elections BC's philosophy. Staff attend workshops and conferences each year to share best practices and small delegations of staff observe elections in other jurisdictions. In 2007, staff observed the single transferable vote elections in Scotland in May and the Ontario general election in October. These observation activities help Elections BC to evaluate alternate methods of voting administration and to explore new technologies and innovations.

Elections BC also played host to 250 international delegates at a four-day conference of the Council on Government Ethics Laws (COGEL). This annual international conference brings together international leaders in the areas of government transparency, elections, lobbying, campaign finance and information and privacy. The Right Honourable Joe Clark, former Prime Minister, was a keynote speaker at the 2007 conference in Victoria, which earned extremely favourable reviews from all attendees.

Looking ahead, voters are expected to increasingly push for alternative voting options including the use of computers and personal communications devices. In addition, some electoral agencies are considering automated options for voter verification, ballot processing and counting to enhance accuracy and efficiency. In response to these trends, Elections BC's Information Technology program area began planning for a comprehensive review of the organization's IT infrastructure. During 2008/09, staff will define the scope of this multi-year renewal program and take steps towards implementing a renewed IT framework to meet the organization's and public's changing needs.

2007/08 was also marked by declining voter turnout across Canada. The 2007 Ontario provincial election marked the lowest voter turnout in that province's history – 52.5% of 8.4 million registered voters. In the March 2008 election, Alberta also experienced its lowest voter turnout in provincial history as just 41.3% of more than two million registered voters participated in the election. It is a pattern that is troubling. Elections BC is committed to working with electoral agencies across the country and in other jurisdictions to identify strategies that will motivate citizens to participate fully in the electoral process.

Elections BC's mission to serve democracy in B.C. was well-served through the work accomplished in 2007/08, and the organization continues to provide efficient and effective service to British Columbians.

Organizational Overview

THE ORGANIZATION

Elections BC is an independent, non-partisan Office of the Legislature responsible for conducting provincial general elections, by-elections, referendums, initiative petitions and recall campaigns as detailed in provincial legislation.

Mandate

To administer the provincial electoral process in British Columbia in accordance with the *Election Act*, *Recall and Initiative Act* and *Constitutional Amendment Approval Act.*

Vision

To be leaders in electoral administration

Mission

To serve democracy in British Columbia through the fair and impartial administration of the provincial electoral process.

CORE PROGRAM AREAS

For operational purposes, Elections BC is divided into five program areas.

Executive

The Executive program area provides organizational leadership and is responsible for legislation, Orders and Regulations, compliance, enforcement and investigations, inter-jurisdictional liaison, reporting to the Legislative Assembly, partnerships, communications and voter outreach and public education programs regarding voter registration and the electoral process.

Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration

The Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration program area is responsible for political party and constituency association registration, campaign finance reporting, advertising sponsor registration and financial disclosure as well as conducting financial compliance reviews of the political parties, constituency associations, candidates, advertising sponsors, leadership contestants and recall and initiative participants.

The program area is also responsible for corporate administration and human resource services for Elections BC's core group of 44 public service employees and more than 32,000 temporary staff and election officials during major electoral events.

Corporate Planning and Event Management

The Corporate Planning and Event Management program area is responsible for the effective and efficient planning and administration of provincial electoral events including general elections, by-elections, referendums, and recall petitions.

Corporate Planning and Event Management also manages Elections BC's District Electoral Officers and Deputies, coordinates event support activities across other program areas and leads post-event reporting, evaluation, and assessment.

Corporate Planning and Event Management is responsible for the organization's strategic planning, risk management and performance measurement and develops and maintains Elections BC's planning framework.

Voter Registration and Boundaries

Voter Registration and Boundaries is responsible for voter registration, maintenance of the provincial voters list, maintenance of electoral district boundaries and establishment of voting area boundaries. The program area is also responsible for the production of high-quality electoral data, including reports and maps.

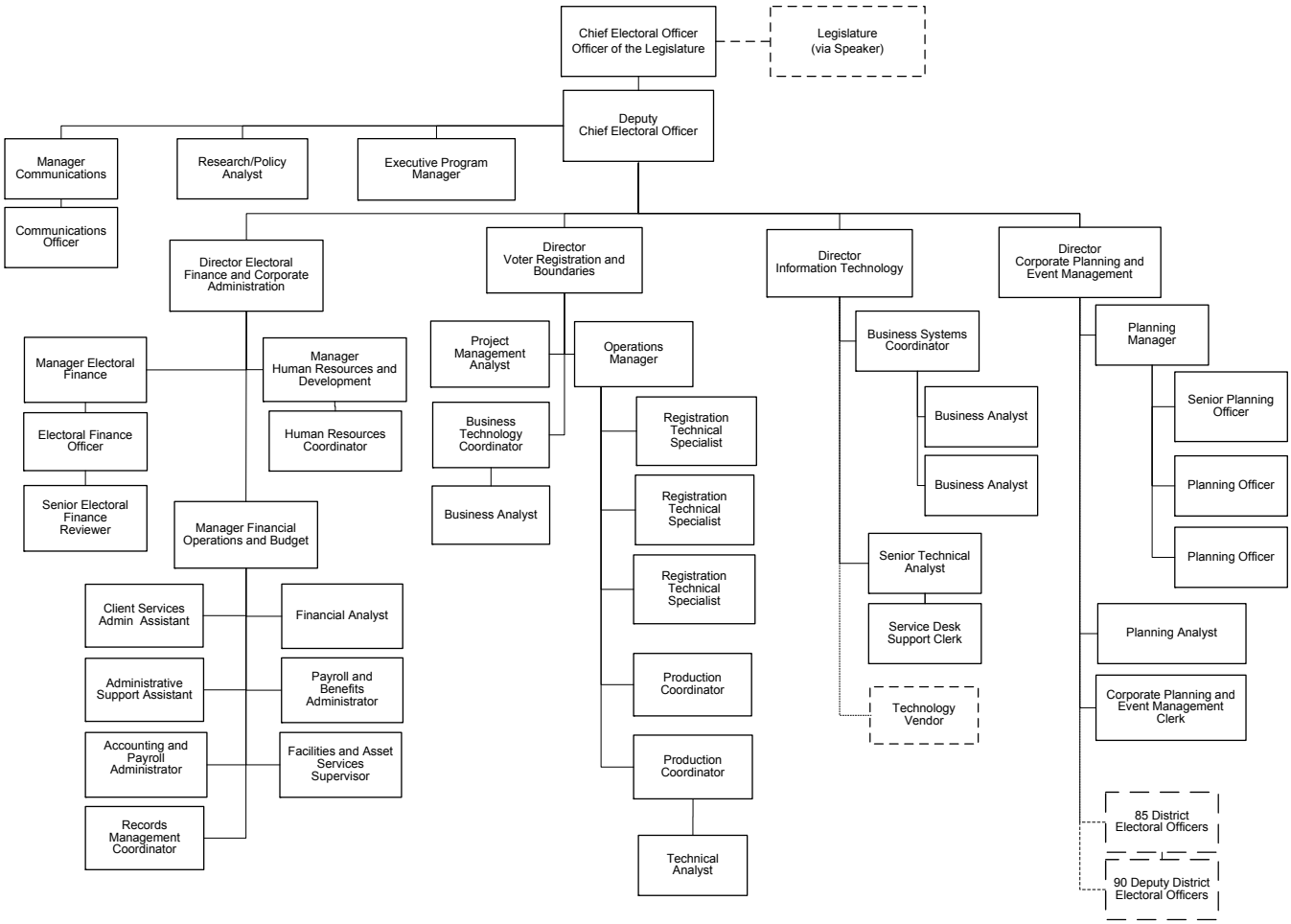
The Voter Registration and Boundaries program area provides accessible voter registration and voter record updating opportunities as well as a variety of products necessary for the administration of electoral events, including the provincial voters list, address register, electoral maps, street indexes and the Location Index.

Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) program area is responsible for information management systems, computer infrastructure, and technical services at Elections BC. The program area leads IT planning and develops and implements IT policies, procedures and standards.

The IT program area is responsible for the implementation of corporate IT initiatives and performs systems operations, administration, security and maintenance. It also leads or coordinates all information systems projects and approves their associated schedules, budgets and expenditures.

Organization Chart



Report on Performance

In 2007/08, Elections BC used the four goals it developed in its 2005/06 strategic plan to establish performance measures and priorities to prepare the organization for the province's 2009 General Election and Referendum on Electoral Reform as well as any unscheduled electoral events.

The four goals are:

1. Ensure ongoing support and enhancement of the electoral process.
2. Ensure effective and efficient administration of electoral events.
3. Provide an inclusive and accessible electoral process.
4. Be a learning organization that develops and shares best practices.

These goals, which are strategically aligned with the organization's vision, mission and mandate, serve as the basis upon which Elections BC measures its performance.

Goals, Priorities, Activities and Performance Measures

GOAL 1: ENSURE ONGOING SUPPORT AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

To achieve Goal 1, Elections BC's strategies included the following priorities and activities:

Priority: Produce quality and timely electoral information.

Activities: Maintain and improve voters list and address register through:

- development and implementation of data quality standards
- integration of external data sources
- review and analysis of batch processing applications
- review and improvement of batch data processes
- voter contact and mailings

Priority: Develop and maintain policy and legislative frameworks that permit innovation and facilitate compliance.

Activities:

- work proactively and collaboratively with legislative counsel and policy analysts to shape the development of necessary legislation
- develop legislation and policies that simplify processes, resolve clarity issues, and improve services to voters and clients
- document legislative interpretation and maintain in an accessible format
- monitor compliance and evaluate legislation and policy changes to address issues

Priority: Maintain a sound infrastructure that meets our organizational needs.

Activities:

- Develop and implement a corporate risk management program.
- Build electoral administration capacity through investment of new core staff positions, including:
  - electoral finance
  - information technology
  - event planning

Key performance measure for Goal 1 - Elections BC will maintain a high-quality voters list measured through coverage, currency and net currency[1].						
	Past performance		**2007/08**		**Future targets**	
	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Actual	2007/08 Target	2007/08 Actual	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target
Coverage	90%	86%	84%	89.7%	87%	90%
Currency	75%	77%	76%	74.8%	78%	80%
Net currency	68%	66%	64%	67.1%	68%	72%

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2007/08

Having an up-to-date and accurate voters list is fundamental to the effective administration of electoral events. The Voter Registration and Boundaries program area (renamed from Geographic and Voter Data Services) supported this goal by maintaining and improving the voters list and address register through:

- a review of the transfer of voter records provided by Elections Canada, as well as the information received from the Insurance Corporation of B.C., the Vital Statistics agency and other information providers
- development of new tools to review and process duplicate voter records and records that require additional clarification
- development of an updated version of the popular online voter registration system offered on the Elections BC website
- a direct mail survey to sample voters regarding voters list currency

[1] Coverage is defined as the percentage of voters on the list compared against the number of eligible voters in the province. Currency is defined as the percentage of voters on the list at the right address. Net currency is defined as the percentage of eligible voters on the list at the right address, and calculated by multiplying coverage times currency.

The Information Technology program served as a partner in the enhancement of the voters list and data processing activities through development and implementation of data quality standards, enhancing the integration of the external data provided by Elections Canada, the Insurance Corporation of B.C. and others as well as a review and improvement of the batch updating process that examines and inputs voter registration updates, confirmations and new registrations.

As a result of these activities, Elections BC exceeded its coverage target by 5.7%. The currency of the voters list, however, was measured at 1.2% below the 2007/08 target. This modest shortfall reflects the currency challenges facing Elections BC, in large part a result of B.C.'s high intra-provincial migration rate. According to BC Stats, between 2001 and 2006 more than 13% of the population over 5 years of age migrated intra-provincially. In 2006, 200,000 of the 1.7 million households in B.C. advised Canada Post of a change of address. Maintaining accurate and current address records of these highly mobile voters represents an ongoing challenge for Elections BC.

Additionally, updated voter registration information from Elections Canada arrived after the sample of the Elections BC voters list was taken for the quality survey. Federal voters list information is a significant source for updating voter data and affects overall voters list currency. It is expected that inclusion of this updated information would have resulted in meeting the quality target.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Following the introduction of federal legislation requiring voters to produce identification in order to receive a ballot for a federal election, Elections BC representatives observed implementation of the voter identification rules during the March 11, 2008 Vancouver-Quadra federal by-election. Observation of the by-election activities helped Elections BC staff see first-hand the challenges regarding the implementation of the new legislation.

Elections BC staff also worked with officials in the Ministry of Labour and Citizens Services on an amendment to the Employment Standards Regulation to exempt short-term election workers from hours-of-work and overtime provisions of the *Employment Standards Act*. This will facilitate effective staffing of voting places and efficient processing of election officials' pay.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

During 2007/08, the Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration program area met the Goal 1 priority of producing quality and timely electoral information by:

- receiving, reviewing and publishing the 2006 financial reports of 204 registered political parties and constituency associations as well as financing reports filed on behalf of political party leadership contestants for four leadership contests
- registering three political parties and constituency associations and deregistering three political parties and constituency associations
- providing a financial agent training session for a political party to assist that party in complying with legislated financial requirements

By providing training and informational support to registered political organizations, Elections BC ensures a very high level of compliance with *Election Act* financial reporting requirements.

RISK REGISTER

Examining the organization's environment for risks and threats is key to ensuring appropriate mitigation strategies and a responsive approach to a changing environment.

During 2007/08, Elections BC developed a comprehensive risk register following an extensive review of potential risks and threats to the organization and electoral activities. Almost 70 potential risks were identified, and include everything from electoral events being interrupted by a major weather event, natural disaster or power failure to a technology assault, inability to recruit enough temporary staff to deliver the electoral event or the inappropriate use of the Elections BC logo.

Senior staff worked diligently to identify specific mitigation and response strategies to ensure the organization is well-equipped to respond quickly to identified risks should they occur.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Maintaining a strong organizational structure and infrastructure to meet risks and organizational goals is paramount to the successful planning and delivery of electoral events.

During 2007/08, the Strategic Planning and Partnerships unit was merged with Event Planning and Management to create the Corporate Planning and Event Management program area. A new organizational structure was also created within the program area to refocus activities on the organization's growing planning culture and event delivery focus.

Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration conducted an organizational review of the electoral finance group, and through that process redefined some responsibilities and created a position of Manager, Electoral Finance.

In addition, the name of the Geographic and Voter Data Services program area was changed to Voter Registration and Boundaries to better reflect the focus and activities of the program area.

During this time, the Information Technology program area began to lay the groundwork for a significant refresh of the organization's information management systems. These systems include complex databases that contain:

- the provincial voters list with its three million plus records
- the boundaries and map base information for each of the province's electoral districts and information about district electoral offices and staff supporting electoral activity in each district
- a register of residential, commercial and institutional addresses in the province
- advance voting and General Voting Day voting place locations
- the lists of candidates and their political party affiliation for each electoral district during an election
- voting results within each electoral district
- extensive statistical information to support electoral administration

Through regular re-examination of organizational goals, activities and structure, Elections BC strives to ensure its infrastructure encourages maximum staff contribution and organizational performance.

GOAL 2: ENSURE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTORAL EVENTS

To achieve Goal 2, Elections BC's strategies included the following priorities and activities:

Priority: Maintain an appropriate level of readiness to administer all electoral events.

Activities:

- develop event plans to administer:
  - the referendum on BC-STV
  - the provincial general election
  - the enumeration
  - voting area and electoral district boundary redistribution
- establish and conduct quarterly event readiness reviews to confirm by-election, recall and initiative petition readiness
- complete an STV ballot counting research project to identify potential legislative and implementation issues
- review and improve voting processes
- redesign voter application forms to improve data quality
- develop and finalize District Electoral Officer training program
- recruit and appoint District Electoral Officers and Deputy District Electoral Officers

Priority: Administer electoral events within approved event plans.

Activities:

- implement event plans from point of readiness to completion
- monitor and communicate status of events according to plans

Key performance measure for Goal 2 - Elections BC will establish and meet event-readiness targets						
	Past performance		**2007/08**		**Future targets**	
	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Actual	2007/08 Target	2007/08 Actual	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target
Targets established	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Targets achieved	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2007/08

Elections BC's mandate is to administer the electoral process in British Columbia. Being in position to do that quickly for unscheduled events or in a more paced environment for scheduled events requires considerable planning.

Over the past few years, Elections BC has embraced a rigorous planning culture to guide event preparations in a more deliberate and staged approach versus the just-in-time event planning and delivery of major electoral activities employed in the past.

The Corporate Planning and Event Management program area led a number of activities to support the development and delivery of the event readiness targets in the Goal 2 performance measure. Activities included the preparation of comprehensive plans to administer a by-election, recall petition, general election, enumeration, redistribution and referendum on electoral reform.

All of Elections BC's program areas are involved in providing input to event-readiness preparations and conducting the program activities called for in the specific event plans.

To this end, during 2007/08:

- voter registration forms were redesigned to improve the capture of information
- information systems were upgraded to support pending electoral boundary changes
- staff in several program areas developed and implemented a province-wide public campaign to recruit and hire 176 District Electoral Officers and Deputy District Electoral Officers using a merit-based hiring process

Elections BC staff also developed a detailed program of resource materials and training conferences to prepare District Electoral Officers and Deputy District Electoral Officers for the 2009 General Election and Referendum on Electoral Reform.

GOAL 3: PROVIDE AN INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE ELECTORAL PROCESS

To achieve Goal 3, Elections BC's strategies included the following priorities and activities:

Priorities: Provide high-quality services to clients in a manner that is responsive to their needs.

Activities:

- consult with voters and other clients to identify ways to improve their experience with the electoral process
- investigate options for electronic filing for candidates
- investigate potential for electronic voting

Priorities: Provide the public with easy-to-understand information and engaging education materials about the electoral process.

Activities:

- develop and implement long-term public education strategies to engage voters and improve democratic participation
- hold structured annual meetings with all registered political parties to reinforce roles, provide information and gather feedback
- implement the Political Contribution System to improve public accessibility of financial reports

Key performance measure for Goal 3 - Elections BC will provide high-quality services to clients in a manner that is responsive to their needs. Elections BC will annually survey selected client groups to evaluate how well services provided respond to client needs.

	Past performance		2007/08		Future targets	
	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Actual	2007/08 Target	2007/08 Actual	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target
Average annual satisfaction score	100%	80%	80%	95.6%	80%	80%

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2007/08

Ensuring the electoral process is accessible and meets the needs of British Columbians can help strengthen participation in the electoral process and boost voter turnout.

In support of this objective, Elections BC consulted with key stakeholders supporting persons with disabilities to prepare a web-based video that demonstrates curb-side voting, voting place assistance that can be provided to persons who are visually or hearing impaired and other assistance that can be provided to a voter who needs help to mark a ballot. Copies of the video will be distributed to agencies supporting persons with disabilities. A longer version will be used by Elections BC for training election staff.

The online voter registration system (OVR) proved very popular with users registering or confirming their voter registration before and after the 2005 election. During 2007/08, the Information Technology program area worked with Voter Registration and Boundaries staff to improve the application, particularly for visually impaired voters. Following consultations with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Elections BC modified the wording on the registration screens to make the information easier to understand. Modifications were made to accommodate screen-readers and the overall operation of OVR was reviewed to ensure complete accessibility for a wide variety of users.

Every registered political party and registered constituency association must file an annual calendar year financial report with Elections BC by March 31 of the following year. The reports disclose information regarding assets and liabilities of the entities as well as sources of revenue and the nature of expenditures. In 2007/08, the Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration program area received 204 of these annual financial reports which they reviewed to ensure compliance and then placed on the Elections BC website for online viewing.

The organization also embarked on the development and roll-out of the Political Contribution System to ensure open and transparent reporting of contributions to political parties, constituency associations, candidates and leadership contestants.

The Political Contributions System is a searchable online database that includes the names of all contributors who have made contributions that total more than $250 in value to a registered political party, registered constituency association, candidate or leadership contestant during a reporting period since 2005.

GOAL 4 – BE A LEARNING ORGANIZATION THAT DEVELOPS AND SHARES BEST PRACTICES

To achieve Goal 4, Elections BC's strategies included the following priorities and activities:

Priority: Participate in, encourage and support partnerships and inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

Activities:

- initiate partnerships with key stakeholders, municipalities and other electoral jurisdictions
- participate in inter-jurisdictional conferences

Priority: Encourage and support staff in professional development.

Activities:

- refine and maintain Employee Planning and Development Program (EPDP)

Priority: Establish a culture of learning that fosters innovation.

Activities:

- observe electoral events in other jurisdictions
- develop staff training to include:
  - new staff orientation program
  - program area specific training
- develop staff knowledge and exchange opportunities
- investigate opportunities to pilot technology in voting places

Key performance measure - Elections BC will encourage staff participation in a variety of educational activities to ensure they maintain a high level of knowledge and skill in the performance of their duties.						
	Past performance		**2007/08**		**Future targets**	
	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Actual	2007/08 Target	2007/08 Actual	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target
Percentage calculated learning index[2] score for EBC's permanent staff	N/A (New measure)	82%	80%	81.6%	80%	80%

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2007/08

Having a well-educated, knowledgeable and skilled workforce is critical to the success of the organization. Elections BC places a high value on learning and supporting staff to add to their skills and expertise.

During 2007/08, Elections BC developed and implemented a comprehensive employee orientation program to assist new staff to quickly build their knowledge of the organization, its mission, mandate, programs, activities, policies and procedures. This program includes a 62-slide online orientation which employees can work through at their own pace and find detailed information that will help provide a smooth introduction to the work environment.

During the year, various Elections BC staff add to the knowledge base of new staff through a one-and-one-half-day corporate staff training program: a classroom-style course that provides in-depth learning on electoral history and legislation, voting, voter registration, the organization's planning and learning framework, financial practices as well as public education and communications activities. This orientation session was developed during 2007/08 and has received positive feedback from participants.

[2] The learning index is an aggregate measure of Elections BC staff participation in workshops, conferences, the Electoral Technology Accord, partnership agreements, inter-jurisdictional sharing and employee training.

Once an employee is underway on projects and activities, they work with their supervisors to map out an employee performance and development plan (EPDP) to help link the employee's work activities to the corporate goals, key priorities and activities. During 2007/08, the EPDP process was revised and streamlined to more closely link work activities to planned projects, priorities and objectives while at the same time identifying a path of learning to ensure each employee continues to grow and develop.

Being a learning organization includes learning from other organizations. During 2007/08, Elections BC staff traveled to Scotland and Ontario to observe elections in those jurisdictions.

The May 2007 Scottish elections were of particular interest as the Scottish council elections (local government) used a single transferable vote system very similar to the system recommended by the B.C. Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. Automated counting of the paper ballots was used for the elections and proved to be a very valuable observation point for the B.C. delegation, particularly the scanning technology that may be the foundation of future vote-counting systems in B.C.

The observations also helped inform a single transferable vote simulation conducted by Elections BC staff to assess the issues associated with a manual count of STV ballots.

Elections BC staff visited Ontario in October, 2007 for a provincial general election and a referendum on electoral reform. The referendum, which failed to meet the thresholds established by the Ontario Legislature, was on a mixed-member proportionality electoral system recommended by the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

With British Columbians having voted on a B.C. version of the single transferable vote system in 2005 and slated to again vote on the issue in 2009, the opportunity to observe the Ontario experience at several levels provided a valuable lessons-learned experience.

Elections BC staff also assisted Ontario with the administration of the 2007 election. Electoral finance and warehouse staff worked at the Elections Ontario office. Additionally, Elections BC finance staff observed the financial reporting process at Elections Manitoba. These mutual-assistance and visitor program arrangements extend between electoral agencies across the country both during elections and at other key times during the electoral cycle.

By embracing best practices of other organizations and showcasing its own best practices, Elections BC's will continue to be a strong national leader and partner in electoral administration.

Financial Report

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services has the responsibility for considering and making recommendations on the budgets of Elections BC.

The Committee meets with all Officers of the Legislature to review their budget requirements. The CEO, DCEO and Director, Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration provided the Committee with a comprehensive review of Election BC's budget requirements for ongoing operations and preparations for upcoming electoral events. The Committee recommended to the Legislative Assembly that Elections BC receive funding based on the organization's proposals.

Operating Budget

	2007/08 Budget $	2007/08 Actual $	Variance $
Funding			
Estimates	8,961,000	8,961,000	-
Total Funding	8,961,000	8,961,000	-
Expenses (Note 1)			
Salaries of permanent and temporary employees	3,380,000	3,066,300	313,700
Employee benefits	726,000	878,469	(152,469)
	4,106,000	3,944,769	161,231
Travel	112,000	82,299	29,701
Centralized management support services	849,000	822,660	26,340
Professional services	442,000	160,346	281,654
Information systems	2,067,000	1,981,027	85,973
Office and business expenses	391,000	454,022	(63,022)
Advertising and publications	37,000	74,465	(37,465)
Utilities, materials and supplies	9,000	3,422	5,578
Amortization	945,000	733,468	211,532
Building occupancy - Non-ARES	-	60	(60)
Transfer-Grants	-	-	-
Other expenses	3,000	1,585	1,415
Total expenses	8,961,000	8,258,123	702,877
Funding returned	-	702,877	

Note 1 - The 2007/08 budget is the Estimates budget based upon anticipated activities at the beginning of the year and does not include reallocations of budget made during the fiscal year.

Appendices

Appendix A: Political party registrations and deregistrations

Appendix B: Constituency association registrations and deregistrations

Appendix C: Orders of the Chief Electoral Officer

Appendix D: Minutes of the Election Advisory Committee

Appendix A - Political party registrations and deregistrations

The following political party registrations and deregistrations occurred between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008. As of March 31, 2008, there were 40 political parties registered in B.C.

Political Party Registrations

- Nation Alliance Party, effective April 16, 2007
- The Herb Party, effective February 21, 2008

Political Party De-Registrations

- British Columbia Citizens Alliance Now, voluntarily deregistered effective December 28, 2007
- The People of British Columbia Millionaires Party, voluntarily deregistered effective March 18, 2008

Appendix B - Constituency association registrations and deregistrations

The following constituency association registrations and deregistrations occurred between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008. As of March 31, 2008, there were 164 constituency associations registered in B.C.

Constituency Association Registrations

- Okanagan-Vernon Constituency Association British Columbia Conservative Party, registered effective March 18, 2008

Constituency Association Deregistrations

- Okanagan-Vernon Constituency Association British Columbia Conservative Party, deregistered effective March 27, 2008

Appendix C - Orders of the Chief Electoral Officer

Section 280 of the *Election Act* establishes the authority of the Chief Electoral Officer to make specific or general Orders under certain circumstances. Between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008, no Orders were made by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Appendix D - Election Advisory Committee Minutes

June 13, 2007

10:00 – 12:00
Office of the Representative for Children and Youth
#901-808 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, British Columbia

Attending:

Committee members (in alphabetical order by political party name)

BC Liberal Party: Hector Mackay-Dunn, Kelly Reichert
British Columbia Marijuana Party: Michelle Rainey
Green Party: Sven Biggs
New Democratic Party of B.C.: Nikki Hill, Laura Nichols

Elections BC

Harry Neufeld, Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)
Linda Johnson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer
Linda Shout, Executive Coordinator (minutes)

1. Introductions and Administrative Matters

   Harry Neufeld welcomed members, noting this is the 20th meeting of the Committee. The first meeting was held in the summer of 1995, following the enactment of the *Election Act*.

   Harry Neufeld reviewed the history, legislative mandate and structure of the Committee for the benefit of new members.

2. Single Transferable Vote (STV) Election Administration – Research Update

   Linda Johnson noted that EBC has a small budget to continue research on STV from a legislative and administrative procedures perspective. This early research will ensure Elections BC can immediately provide input into required STV legislation should voters choose to adopt the BC-STV electoral system in the 2009 referendum.

Scotland, October 2006 and May 2007: In October 2006, Jill Lawrance (Director, Event Planning and Management) and Linda Johnson attended a conference of election administrators in Scotland, where preparations were underway for the introduction of an STV model for local government elections. The model is almost identical to the one proposed for provincial elections in BC. Elections for both local councils and the Scottish Parliament (which uses a closed list mixed-member proportional system) were scheduled to be held at the same time on May 3, 2007.

An electronic counting system was also being introduced in the 2007 elections. Like BC-STV, Scotland's STV model uses the full Weighted Inclusive Gregory (WIG) method for surplus transfers – considered the most fair of all STV models, but more complex from a counting perspective.

Linda Johnson noted that key public policy decisions and legislation for the elections were not finalized until February 2007.

In May 2007, Harry Neufeld, Linda Johnson, Jill Lawrance and Bob Jasperse (Director of IT) were granted official observer status for the Scottish elections. Observers from Elections Canada, Elections Ontario, and the Canadian and Australian parliaments also attended. There was a great deal of interest in the implementation of STV, but also in the electronic counting system, which was designed to read and interpret hand-written numbers on paper ballots.

The media reported significant problems with the elections. In fact, the counting system itself, as well as voting and counting for the local government (STV) elections, went well. However, the design of the Scottish parliament ballot and lack of adequate instructions on marking the ballot resulted in high numbers of parliamentary ballots being rejected. The lateness of legislation and public policy decisions likely contributed to these problems.

Where there were problems with the electronic counting system, they were due to ballots being folded and the high number of rejected ballots for the parliamentary vote, which had not been anticipated.

Ron Gould, former Deputy Chief Electoral Officer at Elections Canada, has been appointed to head an inquiry into the elections.

Linda Johnson noted that the electronic counting system is effective but expensive. The ballot scanning machines, which can read about 1.5 ballots per second, cost $80,000 each. Standalone computer networks, including many ballot scanners per network, were deployed in the 31 counting centres around the country.

Problems with scanning and adjudicating ballots slowed the delivery of election results in Scotland. However, if a similar system were used in B.C. it is likely that results would be available later on election night in smaller urban areas. Rural areas may take longer, as all ballots must be returned to a central voting place before counting can begin. A range of options, including networking some of the rural voting places and counting centres, will be considered.

BC-STV Manual Count Simulation: Elections BC staff recently conducted a manual count simulation using 1,500 machine-generate and hand-marked ballots. The count was fully manual, using WIG and a fully randomized ballot. The count was successful, indicating that a manual count of BC-STV ballots is possible, although it does take time.

Harry Neufeld noted that, should the referendum require implementation of BC-STV, the Committee's advice will be sought immediately following the vote in order to make recommendations on needed legislative change and public policy decisions. If needed, legislation will need to be passed well in advance in order to allow enough time to prepare for the first BC-STV election in 2013.

3. BC Electoral Boundaries Commission Update

BC-EBC Update: Harry Neufeld reported that the Commission's preliminary report will be publicly released on August 15th. Public hearings around the province, as required by the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*, will start in early September and conclude in mid-November. The final report must be submitted by February 15th, 2008. Legislators will decide whether to adopt the report or amend the boundaries proposed by the Commissioners.

The Act requires the Commissioners to meet with MLAs last, before submitting their final report. Two meetings will be held in November for MLAs to provide their input.

Impact on Political Parties: Linda Johnson noted that until the Legislative Assembly has amended the *Electoral Districts Act* and Royal Assent has been granted, Elections BC cannot implement the new boundaries. That may leave only 11 months to implement the boundaries before they come into effect at the Dissolution of the House. Elections BC will also be redistributing voting areas based on the new district boundaries and address and population changes.

Key dates and information regarding redistribution will be communicated to parties this fall. Elections BC hopes to have new street index and electoral district maps available to parties by late 2008.

Linda Johnson reminded Committee members that those parties with registered constituency associations must deregister and then re-register their associations under the new electoral district boundaries. Electoral Finance staff will provide advice and support to political parties to help them through this process.

Harry Neufeld noted that GIS shape files for both the preliminary and final district boundaries will be made available to the parties at no charge.

4. Future Focus of EAC Meetings

Harry Neufeld reviewed the section 16 of the *Election Act* regarding the role of the Election Advisory Committee. The Committee was intended to advise the Chief Electoral Officer on the functioning of the Act, particularly regarding the electoral finance provisions, and to facilitate adoption by the House of recommended legislative changes.

The Committee has not been functioning as contemplated. Currently, financial agents are providing frequent and useful feedback to Elections BC staff on the functioning of the electoral finance provisions of the Act. The Committee has been very effective in reviewing recommended legislative changes. However, most meetings consist of Elections BC staff providing information to Committee members about planned changes in administrative arrangements. Some members commented that because they were not provided briefing material in advance they were unable to provide useful advice.

Committee members agreed that future meetings should focus on Committee members advising the Chief Electoral Officer on the functioning of the *Election*

Act. One meeting per year is sufficient for this purpose, and will take place after the House rises each spring. Committee members and Elections BC will suggest agenda topics.

Committee members discussed the Act's requirements for the Chief Electoral Officer to consult with the Committee on certain matters, such as the implementation of changes to the *Election Act*. Members noted that some consultation has taken place by email in the past, and that does not allow for a full, active and effective consultation.

Committee members agreed that any future consultation not conducted in person would take place by teleconference rather than email. The Chief Electoral Officer committed to providing briefing materials in advance whenever possible to ensure full and informed discussion.

5. Political Party Information Sessions

The Deputy Chief Electoral Officer noted that, in fairness, all parties should have equal access to the election administration information previously provided only to Committee members. Elections BC proposes to host a yearly political party information session in addition to the Election Advisory Committee meeting. All political parties will be invited to send up to three representatives to the meeting.

At the meeting, senior Elections BC staff will provide information to parties relevant to the electoral business cycle. This fall, for example, topics would include an overview of Elections BC, the role of the Election Advisory Committee, electoral district and voting area redistribution, and Elections BC products and services. In 2008, the meeting would focus on key pre-election information, such as the nomination process, access to the voters list, and campaign finance rules.

Elections BC is considering locating the meeting in Richmond to facilitate transportation for participants attending from outside the Lower Mainland. The meeting will run from 10 – 3, and lunch will be provided. Elections BC will not pay travel costs, but there will be no registration fee.

Parties will have the opportunity to provide confidential feedback. Notes and presentations from the session will be posted to the Elections BC website, and a

newsletter will be sent following the meeting to all parties, so those who cannot attend the meeting may still have the benefit of all the information.

A survey will be sent to all political parties by the end of June asking whether they will send representatives and what topics they suggest for the agenda.

Committee members agreed that the yearly political party session is a good way to impart information fairly and ensure parties have equal access to key process issues and instructions.

6. Other Business

No other business was raised.

7. Next Meeting

In accordance with the decision at this meeting, the next meeting of the Election Advisory Committee will take place in Spring 2008 unless otherwise required by section 16 of the *Election Act*.

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