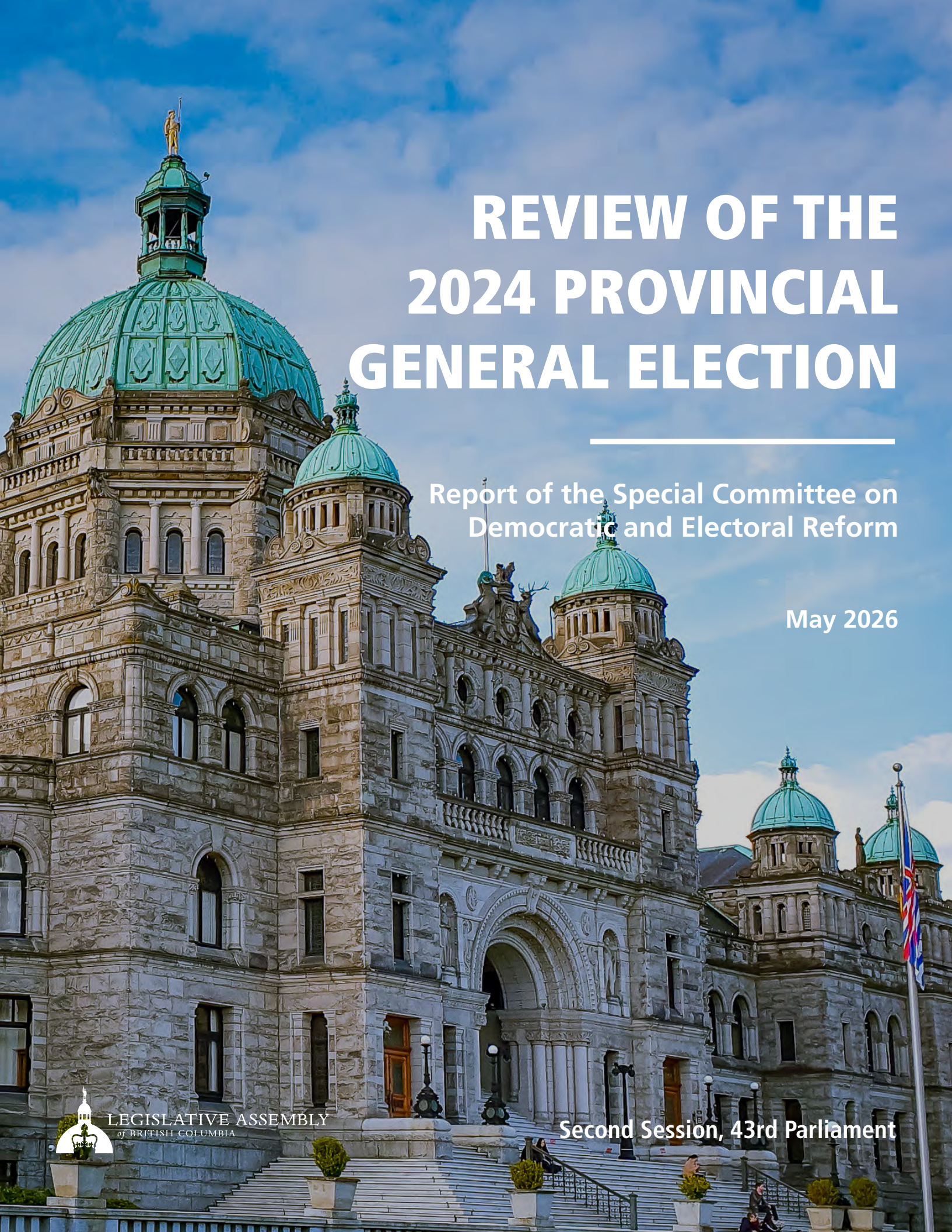




REVIEW OF THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION

Report of the Special Committee on
Democratic and Electoral Reform

May 2026



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Second Session, 43rd Parliament



May 14, 2026

To the Honourable the
Legislative Assembly of the
Province of British Columbia

Honourable Members:

I have the honour to present herewith the report of the Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform for the Second Session of the 43rd Parliament regarding its review of the 43rd provincial general election as approved by the Committee.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Jennifer Blatherwick, MLA
Chair

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COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

43rd Parliament, 1st Session

Jennifer Blatherwick, MLA, [Chair](#) (*Member from September 12, 2025; Chair from September 15, 2025*)

Coquitlam-Maillardville

Ward Stamer, MLA, [Deputy Chair](#)

Kamloops-North Thompson

George Anderson, MLA

Nanaimo-Lantzville

Rohini Arora, MLA (*from September 12, 2025*)

Burnaby East

Rob Botterell, MLA

Saanich North and the Islands

Dallas Brodie, MLA (*from September 12, 2025*)

Vancouver-Quilchena

Sheldon Clare, MLA

Prince George-North Cariboo

Amna Shah, MLA (*Chair July 18-September 15, 2025*)

Surrey City Centre

Hon. Jessie Sunner, MLA (*Chair to July 18; Member to September 12, 2025*)

Surrey-Newton

Qwulti'stunaat / Debra Toporowski, MLA

Cowichan Valley

43rd Parliament, 2nd Session

Jennifer Blatherwick, MLA, [Chair](#)

Coquitlam-Maillardville

Ward Stamer, MLA, [Deputy Chair](#)

Kamloops-North Thompson

Rob Botterell, MLA

Saanich North and the Islands

Sheldon Clare, MLA

Prince George-North Cariboo

Sunita Dhir, MLA

Vancouver-Langara

Dana Lajeunesse, MLA

Juan de Fuca-Malahat

Harwinder Sandhu, MLA

Vernon-Lumby

COMMITTEE STAFF

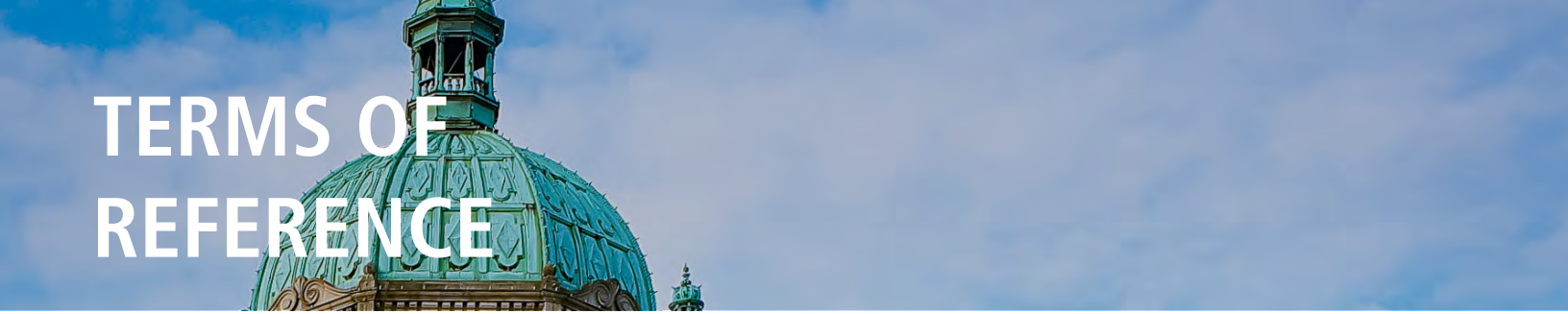
Karan Riarh, Committee Clerk

Mary Heeg, Committee Research Analyst

Danielle Migeon, Committee Researcher

Alexa Neufeld, Parliamentary Committees Officer

Emily Andrews, Committees Coordinator



TERMS OF REFERENCE

On February 19, 2026, the Legislative Assembly agreed that a Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform be appointed to review the administration of the 43rd provincial general election, including consideration of the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the 43rd provincial general election, and make recommendations for improvements for future elections.

That the Special Committee have the powers of a Select Standing Committee and in addition be empowered to:

- a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Special Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;
- b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
- c. conduct consultations by any means the Special Committee considers appropriate;
- d. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and,
- e. retain personnel as required to assist the Special Committee.

That any information and materials previously under consideration by the Special Committee appointed by order of the Legislative Assembly on April 9, 2025, for the same purpose be referred to the Special Committee.

That the Special Committee report to the House by May 14, 2026; and that during a period of adjournment, the Special Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.



FOREWORD

The Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform was tasked with reviewing the administration of the 2024 provincial general election amid concerns about some of the challenges and errors that occurred during that election.

Our Committee has complete confidence in the integrity of BC's elections. Throughout our work, we confirmed that the 2024 provincial general election was administered fairly, accurately, and transparently. As a neutral, non-partisan body, Elections BC is independent from government but subject to oversight by the Legislative Assembly. We appreciated the transparency of the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the election and the clear explanation of some of the challenges encountered during the election, as well as Elections BC's cooperation and engagement with our Committee to clarify various election administration processes. We are also grateful to everyone who took the time to share their experiences with the 2024 election and their ideas for improving future elections.

While some mistakes occurred during the 2024 election, they were due to human error, which is challenging to eliminate in an operation as complex as a provincial general election. Elections occur every few years and involve large numbers of temporary staff, and the most recent election also involved significant changes to election administration such as the use of technology. The election, including some of these challenges, was also subject to a high level of public scrutiny due to the close election night results. Our Committee appreciates Elections BC's efforts to continuously improve and reduce the likelihood of human error, and reflects that many of our recommendations are intended to support ongoing improvements to the administration of BC's elections.

As elected officials, Committee Members have observed election processes firsthand as candidates. This includes observing the testing and quality assurance of election technology, including tabulators. Our Committee is confident that all aspects of BC's election administration, including modernized voting and counting procedures that use

technology, are reliable and trustworthy. We note that British Columbians' views of election administration, including the use of technology, may be influenced by challenges experienced in other countries.

While our Committee affirms the legitimacy of and our trust in BC's elections, we recognize it is important that British Columbians feel the same. The vast majority of British Columbians have faith in the integrity of BC's electoral processes and in Elections BC, as evidenced by various surveys. However, a rise in misinformation and disinformation, as well as a fractured information environment, pose an increasing threat to public education, understanding, and confidence in BC's democracy. A number of our recommendations aim to strengthen education, enhance public awareness, and combat misinformation and disinformation about election administration but this work is not Elections BC's alone. We all have a collective responsibility to engage in this work to support a vibrant democracy.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Legislative Assembly empowered the Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform (the “Committee”) to review the administration of the 43rd provincial general election and make recommendations for improvements for future elections. To inform its work, the Committee reviewed the three volumes of the Chief Electoral Officer’s report on the election and gathered input through a public consultation. Committee Members thank all those who took the time to share their experiences with the 2024 election and their ideas for improving future elections. In conducting its review, the Committee agreed that the administration of the 2024 provincial general election was largely effective and Members express their confidence in the work of Elections BC and the integrity of BC’s elections.

The Committee makes 48 recommendations to counter misinformation and disinformation, streamline processes for political campaigns and Elections BC, and improve consistency, transparency, and accountability. The report begins with an overview of the Committee’s work and its consideration of the Chief Electoral Officer’s report on the election, followed by thematic chapters summarizing consultation input, and concludes with the Committee’s deliberations and recommendations.

Members emphasize the vital role of the Legislative Assembly and its committees in promoting transparency, exercising legislative oversight, and supporting public trust in democracy. To uphold public confidence and ensure ongoing oversight, the Committee recommends appointing a parliamentary committee after every provincial general election to review election administration and make recommendations for future improvements.

The Committee considered Elections BC’s mandate and the Chief Electoral Officer’s responsibilities under the *Election Act*. To provide additional flexibility to Elections BC while ensuring staff remain subject to oversight and accountability, the Committee recommends that the Chief Electoral Officer be allowed to delegate statutory authority to any individual

necessary to exercise assigned powers or perform assigned duties. With respect to protecting election officials from legal action, Members recommend providing immunity to election officials acting in good faith in alignment with best practices in other Canadian jurisdictions. The Committee also makes recommendations to ensure that Elections BC has proportionate enforcement powers available.

Committee Members discussed the need to promote voter accessibility and engagement while upholding electoral integrity. In terms of voter registration and eligibility, Members make recommendations to enable more efficient updating of the Provincial List of Voters, including by authorizing the Chief Electoral Officer to collect information about citizenship status for the purposes of the *Election Act*. With respect to voting, the Committee recommends amending the Act to require access to health facilities for voting when other voting opportunities are unavailable, noting that this would provide consistency across the province and ensure that individuals in these facilities can exercise their right to vote. Members further recommend increasing accessibility by permitting remote translators to assist voters at in-person voting opportunities and by streamlining vote-by-mail administration.

Committee Members identify several opportunities to enhance the consistency, efficiency, and transparency of processes and requirements affecting political parties and campaigns. Reflecting on their own experiences as candidates, Members recommend that Elections BC review the design of the candidate nomination form to improve usability and reduce nominator disqualifications. With respect to party mergers, Members agreed on the need to proactively implement rules in this area to reduce confusion and strengthen transparency. To further streamline election administration, the Committee recommends adding three days to the campaign period by calling by-elections and fixed-date elections on a Wednesday and increasing election expense limits proportionally. In light of changes in the information environment and election advertising as well as changing voting patterns, the Committee recommends allowing advertising on final

voting day to support fairness and consistency between all types of voting opportunities. Other recommendations in this area include enabling the publication of certain nomination information, streamlining the administration of nominations for Elections BC, and ensuring consistent requirements for advertising sponsors.

The Committee also considered how to promote transparency and efficiency in election financing. Members note that Elections BC's existing financial reporting requirements are very complex and agree that the process could be simplified for both Elections BC and political campaigns. The Committee recommends that Elections BC review its internal processes and procedures relating to financial reporting with a view to increasing efficiency and improving accessibility for all election participants. To enhance accountability and reduce the risk of over contributions, the Committee recommends requiring all filers who share a contribution limit to assign and report a unique contributor ID for each individual contributor. Additionally, Committee Members support establishing a minimum age for making political contributions to strike a balance between promoting youth engagement in the democratic process and ensuring contributions are made with an individual's own money, property, or services. Turning to auditing, the Committee recognizes the importance of the practice in promoting transparency and accountability in election financing and recommends raising the audit threshold to increase fairness for independent candidates and smaller parties. Furthermore, Members recommended enhancing enforcement, increasing reporting, and creating a clear process for disbursing surplus leadership contest funds.

In terms of ballot counting, the Committee makes recommendations aimed at increasing efficiency and ensuring consistency with other recent amendments to the Act. Committee Members carefully considered BC's recount processes and agree that existing automatic provisions for close-margin District Electoral Officer recounts should be maintained. Members also reflected on considerations around the eligibility to attend judicial recounts where ballots from multiple electoral districts are being considered in a single recount. The Committee recommends that designated representatives from political parties be added to the list of individuals eligible to be present, but supports retaining the rights of individual candidates and their representatives to attend.

The Committee heard varied perspectives on the use of tabulators and other technology in BC's elections. Committee Members reflected on their own experiences observing the quality assurance processes for tabulators and emphasize that they are a reliable and trustworthy element of election administration. Given the concerns raised in the Committee's consultation, Members recommend that Elections BC provide adequate public information and education about technology use in voting to reinforce public confidence in the administration of future elections.

Finally, the Committee expresses concerns about the effects of misinformation and disinformation on electoral processes. Members emphasize the importance of public education and broad access to credible sources of information. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that Elections BC proactively address misinformation and disinformation, including by developing a network of trusted partners to reinforce the reliability and integrity of electoral processes. The Committee also notes emerging challenges posed by artificial intelligence and recommends action by both the provincial government and Elections BC. To strengthen enforcement, Members recommend authorizing the Chief Electoral Officer to issue administrative production orders and require corrective action for communications violating the Act's misinformation and disinformation provisions.



THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

On April 9, 2025, the Legislative Assembly appointed the Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform to review the administration of the 43rd provincial general election and make recommendations for improvements for future elections, as well as to examine and make recommendations related to democratic engagement, voter participation, and electoral reform. On February 19, 2026, the Committee was reappointed to complete its review of the election (its examination of democratic engagement, voter participation, and electoral reform was completed in November 2025).

COMMITTEE PROCESS

To begin its work, the Committee reviewed the three volumes of the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the election. On June 5, 2025, the Committee considered *Volume I: Administration* and on November 7, 2025, it considered *Volume II: Financing and Expenses* and *Volume III: Recommendations for Legislative Change*.

The Committee accepted written submissions from November 13 to December 18, 2025, and received 26 submissions. Additionally, Members agreed to consider input on the 2024 election received from 11 participants during the Committee's earlier consultation on democratic engagement, voter participation, and electoral reform. In reviewing these submissions and considering its next steps, the Committee invited Elections BC to appear again to discuss matters raised in the submissions as well as to respond to questions from the Committee; the Committee also invited select participants to present. A public hearing with Elections BC and select participants was held on March 13, 2026. A list of the individuals and organizations that participated in the Committee's consultation is available in the Appendix. During its deliberations, the Committee requested several pieces of follow-up information from Elections BC and received correspondence in response. The Committee carefully considered all input received to inform its recommendations.

MEETING SCHEDULE

1st Session, 43rd Parliament

April 16, 2025	Election of Chair and Deputy Chair, Planning
May 7, 2025	Planning
June 5, 2025	Consideration of Chief Electoral Officer's report <i>Volume I: Administration</i>
November 7, 2025	Consideration of Chief Electoral Officer's reports <i>Volume II: Financing and Expenses</i> and <i>Volume III: Recommendations for Legislative Change</i>
January 26, 2026	Planning

2nd Session, 43rd Parliament

February 25, 2026	Election of Chair and Deputy Chair, Planning
March 13, 2026	Public Hearing
April 15, 2026	Deliberations
April 17, 2026	Deliberations
April 24, 2026	Deliberations
May 1, 2026	Deliberations
May 6, 2026	Deliberations, Adoption of Report



CONSIDERATION OF CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER'S REPORT ON THE ELECTION

As part of its mandate to review the administration of the 2024 provincial general election, the Committee was tasked with considering the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the 43rd provincial general election. The Committee considered the three volumes of the Chief Electoral Officer's report at two separate meetings. On June 5, 2025, the Committee considered *Volume I: Administration*. On November 7, 2025, the Committee considered *Volume II: Financing and Expenses* and *Volume III: Recommendations for Legislative Change*. The reports were presented by then-Chief Electoral Officer Anton Boegman, who was joined by several staff from Elections BC.

VOLUME I: ADMINISTRATION

PRESENTATION

The Chief Electoral Officer began by noting that the first volume of the report addresses Elections BC's administration of the election, including voter registration, enumeration activities, candidate nominations, voting opportunities, and ballot counting.

The Chief Electoral Officer highlighted that the 2024 election was the first provincial general election in BC to use a modernized voting process, following legislative changes made in 2019 and 2023. Elections BC used electronic voting books to look up voters and strike them off the provincial list, using a secure and encrypted cellular network. Electronic voting books allowed Elections BC to serve voters on a first-come, first-served basis. For vote counting, Elections BC used electronic tabulators to count paper ballots. The Chief Electoral Officer emphasized that tabulators are never connected to the internet and count paper ballots accurately, securely, and quickly. Additionally, Elections BC was able to print ordinary ballots on demand for out-of-district voters. The Chief Electoral Officer emphasized that BC's unique-in-Canada vote-anywhere electoral model—where people can cast their ballot at any voting place in any electoral district—was further strengthened by electoral system modernization. The use of electronic voting books, ballot printers, and tabulators

streamlined the counting process and enabled more ballots to be included in the initial count than in previous elections since they could now be counted where they were cast.

The Chief Electoral Officer indicated that the modernized voting model was a key success of the 2024 election. Other successes included strategic partnerships with technology companies, other elections agencies, and research organizations to support the delivery, oversight, and monitoring of the election. The Chief Electoral Officer also highlighted improvements to voting accessibility, achieved through the wide availability of voting opportunities, physical accessibility of voting places, assistive technology and other resources for voters, and targeted outreach in communities that have traditionally faced barriers to voting. Finally, election integrity was identified as a success, reflecting the work of the Electoral Integrity Working Group, robust quality assurance processes, efforts to counter misinformation and disinformation, and public education initiatives.

Regarding challenges, the Chief Electoral Officer highlighted the withdrawal of BC United, the atmospheric river on final voting day, a challenging information environment and public scrutiny due to a close election, and administrative challenges with respect to vote counting. Specifically, the Chief Electoral Officer noted that during preparations for two judicial recounts, Elections BC discovered a ballot box secured in the Prince George-Mackenzie district office that had not been counted. During the same preparations, Elections BC found that five electoral districts had failed to fully report the out-of-district votes recorded on 11 tabulator tapes, which impacted 69 districts, mostly by only a few votes. He noted that the errors did not affect the results in any of the ridings and were corrected.

After providing an overview of successes and challenges, the Chief Electoral Officer described how Elections BC prepared for the election. He highlighted that preparing for the election required implementing the legislative changes modernizing the voting processes and providing tools to address

misinformation and disinformation, passed in 2019 and 2023, respectively. Elections BC was also required to implement the new electoral district boundaries proposed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission and formalized by the *Electoral Districts Act*. With respect to enumeration, the Chief Electoral Officer stated that Elections BC updated the voters list by accessing data from other provincial and federal data sources, removing out-of-date or inaccurate information, mailing voter registration notices, conducting a public awareness campaign and registration drives, and visiting locations where eligible voters are less likely to be registered.

Next, the Chief Electoral Officer provided an overview of Elections BC's activities during the 28-day official campaign period. Elections BC ran an extensive public information campaign about how to vote, using digital media, advertising, and letter mail. The Chief Electoral Officer highlighted that Elections BC's post-election survey found that over 90 percent of respondents said it was very or somewhat easy to find information about where, when, and how to vote. People could vote at district electoral offices starting from the day the election was called, at advance voting locations for six days, on final voting day, and by mail. Special voting opportunities were provided for individuals at medical or correctional facilities, and assisted telephone voting was available to individuals who met certain criteria. The Chief Electoral Officer indicated that the proportion of voters who cast their ballot during advance voting increased from 2020, and the proportion of mail-in ballots decreased substantially.

The Chief Electoral Officer indicated that following the close of voting on final voting day, election officials conduct the initial count, which yields the preliminary election results. In 2024, Elections BC counted 97 percent of ballots at initial count, up from 90 percent under the previous model. Initial count included ballots cast during advance or final voting at voting places using electronic voting books to strike voters off a province-wide list, ballots cast at district offices using the province-wide strike-off system, and mail-in and assisted telephone votes received by October 15 that passed the necessary integrity checks. The Chief Electoral Officer highlighted how the new model enabled faster reporting, with Elections BC reporting 85 percent of preliminary results by 9:00 p.m., compared to only 14 percent by that time in 2017.

Following initial count, District Electoral Officer recounts were held in two electoral districts: Juan de Fuca-Malahat and Surrey City Centre. The Chief Electoral Officer noted that these

recounts take place automatically at the beginning of final count if the difference between the top two candidates in an electoral district is 100 votes or less. He added that a partial recount took place in Kelowna Centre to address a discrepancy of one vote between a ballot account and a tabulator results tape. In each recount, the District Electoral Officer recount confirmed the outcome of the initial count.

Final count, where all remaining ballots are counted, started six days after final voting day. The Chief Electoral Officer noted that prior to the recent legislative changes, final count began 13 days after final voting day. He stated that at the end of final count, candidates are declared elected, subject to any judicial recounts. If the difference between the top two candidates in any electoral district is within 1/500th of the total votes cast, a judicial recount is automatically held. In 2024, this occurred in Surrey-Guildford and Kelowna Centre. The Chief Electoral Officer also applied for a partial judicial recount in Prince George-Mackenzie due to the identification of an uncounted ballot box and issued an order to correct some of the results reported at final count. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that the circumstances leading up to these errors were thoroughly reviewed and were confirmed to have taken place due to election official error. He added that Elections BC is taking several steps to prevent these kind of errors in future elections, such as automating the uploading of tabulator voting results data through an encrypted network, using automated data checks to compare voter participation numbers and votes recorded, providing more time for quality assurance between initial and final count, and improving election official training. The Chief Electoral Officer emphasized that despite these mistakes, the new voting model enhanced services for voters while retaining critical integrity checks.

Additionally, the Chief Electoral Officer discussed how the information ecosystem before and during the election was different from previous provincial elections. He noted that 2023 legislative changes addressed misinformation and false statements, and Elections BC took additional steps to identify and mitigate the impact of misinformation and disinformation. The Chief Electoral Officer indicated that false narratives seemingly designed to cast doubt on election administration emerged both during and after final voting day, many of which he noted originated outside of BC. Specific false narratives observed include allegations of widespread non-citizen voting or multiple voting, that vote-by-mail is not secure, that anyone could vote by phone without integrity checks, that ballot

boxes were not securely stored, and that Elections BC added extra ballots prior to final count. The Chief Electoral Officer emphasized that BC has well-established processes that keep elections secure.

COMMITTEE INQUIRY

Members sought clarification on why advance and mail-in ballots are counted on election night, not before. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that BC has two counts (initial and final count) to enable the model where voters can vote from any polling station. The Chief Electoral Officer highlighted how technology use enabled more votes to be counted on election night in 2024, but since the technology could not be used at every polling station some votes still had to be counted at final count.

Committee Members inquired about the meaning of misinformation and disinformation, as well as Elections BC's powers to address these issues. The Chief Electoral Officer indicated that the distinction between the terms is that misinformation is spread by people who believe it to be true, whereas disinformation is spread deliberately by someone who knows it is false. He added that both are spread by a variety of actors, from groups outside of BC to well-respected organizations within the province. As part of its prevention efforts, Elections BC found 15 possible contraventions, including one post that the Office determined should be taken down. In that case, the platform voluntarily removed the post, but the Chief Electoral Officer noted that some platforms, including TikTok, Reddit, X (formerly Twitter), and Meta, were challenging to reach and did not provide contact information. He added that one lesson learned was that Elections BC should be more proactive throughout the campaign period in speaking about the election process. With respect to consequences for those who post misinformation or disinformation, the Chief Electoral Officer highlighted the possible role of federal-provincial partnerships in addressing these challenges and emphasized that Elections BC's mandate regarding false statements is limited to specific time periods.

Regarding the role of the Electoral Integrity Working Group, the Chief Electoral Officer noted that it is a partnership of multiple agencies intended to address concerns about election integrity. He added that at the federal level there is a formalized task force whereas BC's Working Group is informal and needs to be careful speaking about campaigns and candidates.

In response to a Committee question about Indigenous community liaisons, the Director, Voter Services indicated that 50 communities expressed interest in the program, with 23 moving forward with a liaison who was chosen by that community. Additionally, communities determined their own channels of communication to raise awareness about the program.

With respect to Elections BC's enforcement approach regarding non-compliant sign placements and election advertising, the Chief Electoral Officer indicated that Elections BC both monitors proactively and responds to complaints. He added that some of the areas where the Office is particularly proactive are monitoring for any advertising or campaigning within 100 metres of a voting place, conducting outreach to third-party sponsors, and providing training sessions for all political participants. The Chief Electoral Officer further noted that regulation of election advertising only begins in the pre-campaign period for third-party advertisers and the campaign period for candidates and parties, and that he has recommended lengthening these timeframes to improve transparency.

Committee Members inquired about statutory requirements to retain, and then destroy, certain election materials. The Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that while the *Election Act* requires that certain materials, such as sealed ballots and certification envelopes, be destroyed one year following the election, no documents had been destroyed to date. The Chief Electoral Officer added that none of the documentation related to the electoral district of Surrey-Guildford, which was subject to an application for invalid election, would be destroyed until the conclusion of the proceedings. The Chief Electoral Officer also highlighted that while there is no requirement under the Act to destroy other materials, they are destroyed as part of Elections BC's ongoing records management.

Finally, the Committee requested an update on the invalid election petition for the electoral district of Surrey-Guildford. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that the process was in the hands of the court.

VOLUME II: FINANCING AND EXPENSES

PRESENTATION

The Chief Electoral Officer indicated that the second volume of the report includes information about campaign financing, reviews and audits of participants' election financing reports,

and the costs of administering the election. He stated that campaign financing and reporting requirements under the *Election Act* enhance transparency, accountability, and fairness in provincial elections by ensuring that voters are aware of the amount of money spent on campaigning and who is spending it. The Chief Electoral Officer also noted that Elections BC undertook a significant amount of work prior to the election to ensure that candidates, parties, and third-party advertising sponsors were aware of their obligations under the Act.

The Chief Electoral Officer discussed the enhanced processes for compliance reviews of reports filed by political participants. He noted that the new model is based on the risk-based compliance program piloted after the 2022 general local elections. Under this model, each file is reviewed for common errors or non-compliance and assigned a risk score, allowing higher risk files to be prioritized. If a review identifies non-compliance, participants must submit a supplementary report within 30 days. If non-compliance is found once the review is complete, the file is forwarded to the investigations team for further review and any necessary enforcement action. The Chief Electoral Officer noted that this process improved efficiency by greatly reducing the time necessary to review reports compared to the 2020 election.

Next, the Chief Electoral Officer indicated that the 2024 provincial general election was the first in which Elections BC conducted audits of selected participant finance reports. He noted that auditees were required to provide documentation supporting the information reported and were interviewed on the matter and their campaign accounting practices. Files were selected based on their risk score as well as at random to provide a broader sample. The Chief Electoral Officer highlighted that the audits identified the need to ensure that participants better understand and follow requirements regarding prohibited contributions, documenting contributor eligibility, and ensuring there are no discrepancies between information reported and supporting documentation.

Regarding investigations and enforcement, the Chief Electoral Officer reiterated that when a compliance review or audit finds evidence of non-compliance, the file is forwarded to the investigations team for further evaluation. In addition to this work, Elections BC receives complaints from the public and other stakeholders and can initiate investigations when relevant information comes to its attention. Depending on the nature of the non-compliance and the specific facts of the case, an investigation that identifies non-compliance

may conclude by sending a warning letter to the subject, applying an administrative monetary penalty, or referring the matter to the Crown prosecution service to consider charges. At the time of the presentation, Elections BC had opened 330 investigations in relation to the 2024 provincial general election. Of these investigations, 131 were closed as claims were unsubstantiated, while 64 generated warning letters and 13 resulted in administrative monetary penalties. At the time of the presentation, 122 investigations were ongoing.

Regarding Elections BC expenses, the Chief Electoral Officer stated that during the four fiscal years prior to the 43rd provincial general election, Elections BC had a \$94.33 million budget for election delivery and infrastructure. He indicated that the Office had identified a total of \$4.51 million in savings during this period. The Chief Electoral Officer noted that following the passing of the *Electoral Districts Act* in 2023, Elections BC implemented new boundaries and new voting areas in all data systems and communicated those changes to voters at a cost of \$1.29 million. The Office found savings of \$2.55 million in postage and printing costs by moving to region-based householders instead of sending direct mail to each voter. Enumeration and voter registration activities prior to the election cost \$4.12 million, which reflects savings from a reduced postal rate for the enumeration mailout. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that accumulated cost savings allowed Elections BC to return to the consolidated revenue fund a total of \$9.33 million in overall costs related to the 43rd provincial general election. Elections BC highlighted its commitment to identifying operational efficiencies while emphasizing the need to fulfill its responsibility to deliver secure and accessible elections.

The Chief Electoral Officer noted that the budget for election readiness and delivery was \$84.3 million, with an actual cost of \$82.42 million, resulting in a cost of \$22.84 per registered voter. He indicated that the key cost drivers were amendments modernizing the *Election Act* in 2019 and 2023 as well as the addition of six new electoral districts in 2023.

Finally, the Chief Electoral Officer noted that during the four-year business cycle preceding the 2024 provincial general election, Elections BC spent \$7.39 million on election infrastructure, equipment necessary to support the Office's event delivery mandate but anticipated to have a lifespan of a decade.

COMMITTEE INQUIRY

Regarding investigations and enforcement, Members questioned Elections BC about the efficacy of the risk assessment model. The Executive Director, Electoral Finance, noted that Elections BC adopted an iterative approach, reviewing the standards to ensure that non-compliance is identified in the files selected. Elections BC added that all reports submitted by elected MLAs or individuals eligible for election expense reimbursement were reviewed for compliance and public money was spent in accordance with the *Election Act*. Under the new model, Elections BC aims to increase efficiency by ensuring that lower-risk files are not reviewed at the same level of scrutiny as higher-risk files.

In response to a Committee question about Elections BC's key performance indicators for the new system, the Executive Director, Electoral Finance, indicated that the Office is working towards ensuring that 90 percent of reviews are substantially complete within one year of the election to provide timely compliance. Committee Members also inquired about the timeline to complete ongoing investigations related to the 2024 election. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that it depends on the scope and scale of each investigation but that completing them is a priority for Elections BC.

Regarding political campaign contributions, the Committee inquired whether contributors were required to declare that the funds being donated are their own. The Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that while there is no legislative requirement for a signed declaration, Elections BC recommends it as a best practice to enable political participants to confirm contributor eligibility.

With respect to administrative monetary penalties, the Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that whenever Elections BC issues these penalties, the Office posts information on its website and in the *BC Gazette*, as well as shares a news release on its social media platforms.

The Committee also requested an update on the review of BC United's annual financial report. The Executive Director, Electoral Finance, stated that at the time of the presentation, Elections BC was still conducting compliance reviews of 2024 annual financial reports. The Office added that while several reports were outstanding, all deadlines were being met and there was no non-compliance to report.

Concerning the Office's budget, Members appreciated the work of Elections BC to find cost savings and asked for

additional context. The Chief Electoral Officer explained that Elections BC presents its budget to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for approval. He added that for scheduled events, such as elections, budget requests are typically provided one year in advance. He further noted that Elections BC forecasts conservatively, providing the Office with more opportunities for cost savings when it comes to implementation and delivery.

VOLUME III: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

PRESENTATION

The Chief Electoral Officer shared that the third and final volume of the report includes recommendations for legislative change and public policy considerations that legislators may wish to examine further. To develop the recommendations, Elections BC conducted a comprehensive review of lessons learned following the election, a process which included consultations with stakeholders and the public. As required by section 16 (2) of the *Election Act*, Elections BC also formally consulted the Election Advisory Committee, which is composed of representatives from registered political parties as outlined under section 14.

The Chief Electoral Officer stated that the report highlights six priority recommendations under three topics. The first topic relates to optimizing the election calendar. Elections BC recommended extending the election calendar for fixed-date elections by adding three days to the campaign period to call elections on a Wednesday. The Office noted that this would address challenges with having candidate nominations close on a Saturday as well as the tight timeline to produce ballots. The second way that Elections BC recommended optimizing the election calendar was to consolidate standing and ordinary nominations into a single period administered by the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer noted that this would streamline the process and free District Electoral Officers to focus on other critical election duties at the beginning of the campaign period.

The second priority area identified by the Chief Electoral Officer was improving compliance and enforcement. Elections BC recommended establishing administrative monetary penalties for campaigning activity that occurs within 100 metres of a voting place and for some voting violations. The Chief Electoral Officer explained that, currently, the only

enforcement tool for these violations is to forward files to the Crown for prosecution. Elections BC noted that given that most violations are inadvertent, criminal prosecution is not a reasonable enforcement tool, adding that administrative monetary penalties would provide more efficient and proportionate enforcement in most instances while retaining the option to pursue prosecution for more serious cases. This change would also align provincial rules with the *Canada Elections Act*. The second recommendation in this area is to expand the Chief Electoral Officer's authority to issue administrative production orders for communications that violate the Election Act's misinformation and disinformation provisions. Currently, the Act limits Elections BC's administrative production order authority to requiring advertisers to produce information related to advertising contraventions. Expanding the Chief Electoral Officer's authority to include misinformation and disinformation provisions would strengthen investigation and enforcement powers and enhance electoral transparency and integrity.

The Chief Electoral Officer indicated that the final priority area was enhancing election integrity. To increase compliance with contribution rules and provide for better oversight by Elections BC, the Office recommended requiring a unique contributor ID for political contributions. Since political contribution recipients are currently only required to record each contributor's name and address, it can be challenging to effectively track and monitor contribution limits. Requiring political parties and other participants that accept contributions to use a unique contributor ID would support greater transparency and accuracy in financial reporting.

Elections BC's final recommendation in relation to election integrity was to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to enter into information-sharing agreements with the federal minister responsible for the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. Currently, Elections BC has an information-sharing agreement with Elections Canada to receive a BC extract of the national register of electors which includes information about non-citizens provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The proposal would allow Elections BC to gain direct access to authoritative information on the citizenship or permanent residency status of British Columbians, reducing the risk of non-citizen voting or registering and improving the accuracy and coverage of the list of voters.

The Chief Electoral Officer shared that the report also included additional technical recommendations identifying areas under

the current provisions of the *Election Act* that cause recurring administrative challenges. He noted that these technical recommendations fall under three categories: administration, enforcement, and financial reporting requirements.

Regarding the public policy considerations section of the report, the Chief Electoral Officer emphasized that Elections BC seeks to identify gaps or emerging issues in the current legislative framework and offer context, examples from other jurisdictions, and provincial approaches that could be explored. The public policy considerations look at setting a minimum age for making political contributions, allowing advertising on final voting day, changing the automatic provision for District Electoral Officer recounts, clarifying who can attend judicial recounts, and considering rules to address political party mergers.

COMMITTEE INQUIRY

Members sought clarification about who would assign the contributor ID recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer. The Executive Director, Electoral Finance, indicated that each political party would assign a unique contributor ID to individuals for use by its candidates and registered constituency associations. This would establish stronger internal controls to track individuals' contributions and confirm that they have not exceeded the annual limit. Elections BC further noted that since annual contribution limits are based on political party affiliation, internal tracking is the most logical solution.

Regarding political contributions, the Committee inquired about whether Elections BC had contemplated recommending increased contribution limits. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that this was not an area that Elections BC had focused on for the report, but noted that contribution limits are adjusted based on the consumer price index. The Chief Electoral Officer added that Elections BC's recommendation to extend the length of the campaign period includes a component to increase spending limits proportionally.



ELECTIONS BC MANDATE AND POWERS

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

BC's *Election Act* was significantly amended in both 2019 and 2023. The amendments in 2019 enabled the adoption of a modernized voting process, particularly the use of electronic voting books, ballot printers, and vote-counting equipment. It also established the list of future voters, increased Elections BC's access to data to update the voters list, and expanded the provisions that allow an individual to vote at a voting station outside of their electoral district. These amendments were largely based on recommendations for legislative change made by the Chief Electoral Officer in 2018.

Amendments to the *Election Act* in 2023 provided Elections BC with tools to respond to misinformation about elections. These include allowing Elections BC to compel removal of false, unauthorized, or misrepresented election advertising. These amendments also streamlined the vote-by-mail process. The amendments were based on the Chief Electoral Officer's reports *Digital Communications, Disinformation and Democracy* (2020) and *Recommendations for Legislative Change* (2022). Some participants suggested that changes to the *Election Act* prior to the 2024 election increased likelihood of fraud and were not made in good faith. One individual recommended reversing all changes.

A few participants also provided input regarding the Chief Electoral Officer's most recent set of recommendations for legislative change, included in *Volume III* of the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the election. The Chief Electoral Officer is empowered to make recommendations for legislative change as provided in section 12 (2) (a) of the *Election Act*. The BC General Employees' Union stated that ensuring fair, transparent, and accessible elections is essential to protecting workers' rights and upholding democracy, adding that the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations offer practical steps to modernize election administration and improve the voting experience. Three individuals were of the view that the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations would reduce accountability, transparency, and independent oversight. One

individual recommended disregarding the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations, while two others suggested undertaking a constitutional analysis.

OVERSIGHT

The Chief Electoral Officer is an officer of the Legislature appointed pursuant to provisions in the *Election Act*. As a non-partisan officer of the Legislature, the Chief Electoral Officer is independent from the executive branch of government, and reports to and is accountable to the Legislative Assembly through both the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and any designated parliamentary committees. The Legislative Assembly has delegated general oversight of statutory officers and their respective offices to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. Section 13 (1) of the *Election Act* requires that the Chief Electoral Officer report annually to the Legislative Assembly through the Speaker on the work of Elections BC. The Chief Electoral Officer has further reporting requirements through section 13 and section 153 of the *Election Act*, as well as the *Recall and Initiative Act*.

Prior to the 2024 election, 80 percent of British Columbians surveyed said they trusted election integrity and 92 percent thought Elections BC would conduct the election fairly. As noted by the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, surveys suggested that after the election, British Columbians' trust in Elections BC and the voting process remained generally high but declined about three percent. Dr. Stewart Prest of the University of British Columbia indicated that many things went well with the election, including having a clear result, but some could have gone better. He stated that BC has broad trust in its democratic processes and that he is confident in the work of Elections BC, but acknowledged that the Office is operating in a challenging information environment. One individual suggested that media attention, alleged voter fraud, and a legal challenge reduced voter confidence.

With respect to oversight of Elections BC, one individual suggested that a citizen oversight commission could provide

proactive oversight through audits, monitoring, data publication, and adjudicating complaints. Others made similar recommendations, including creating an oversight board for Elections BC and conducting audits.

ENFORCEMENT POWERS

The Committee also heard about Elections BC's powers to enforce election law. There are a range of penalties available under the *Election Act* for instances of non-compliance. Administrative monetary penalties are a type of fine enabled by the Act for certain cases of non-compliance. There are also more serious penalties, like bigger fines or imprisonment, both of which require prosecution to be applied. Less serious penalties, like warning letters, are also available. Penalties may be applied for non-compliance as specified in the *Election Act*, meaning that not every penalty is available for every violation.

Elections BC raised two requirements of the Act which the Office indicated should have a wider range of penalties available. Section 234 of the Act prohibits campaigning activities within 100 metres of a voting place or district electoral office during the campaign period. If an individual contravenes this provision, they have committed an offence and are liable to a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment up to one year. Section 257 identifies the forms of ineligible voting that are considered an offence under the Act, including voting when not entitled to do so and voting more than once. The possible penalties for those offences include a fine of up to \$20,000, imprisonment up to two years, and a prohibition on voting or holding office in provincial elections for up to seven years.

Elections BC noted that while the Chief Electoral Officer may recommend prosecution for these offences, criminal prosecutions are impractical for most violations but administrative monetary penalties are not permitted. Elections BC shared that in 2024, there were 39 investigations related to the 100-metre rule, but since warning letters are the only reasonable enforcement tool available, the Office's ability to enforce these provisions is constrained. Regarding voting offences, Elections BC indicated that most instances of multiple voting or voting when ineligible are not deliberate, such as a permanent resident being allowed to donate to a political party and thinking they are also allowed to vote. Elections BC stated that prosecution is not recommended for inadvertent offences. The Chief Electoral Officer noted that in the 2024 election, out of 2.1 million votes cast, there

were seven cases of multiple voting and four cases of non-citizen voting. Elections BC recommended allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to impose administrative monetary penalties for campaigning activity within 100 metres of voting places and for some voting violations, suggesting this would be more efficient and proportionate and would align with federal rules. The BC General Employees' Union and the BC NDP expressed their support for this recommendation. Three individuals stated that the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation would allow the Chief Electoral Officer to levy fines without judicial oversight, with one participant suggesting any penalty regime should have adjudication by an independent tribunal.

Elections BC also raised that certain provisions in the *Election Act* impose obligations on political entities, such as political parties and advertising sponsors, but lack corresponding penalties for non-compliance. The specific sections referenced include: section 59.01, which requires parties to provide nomination contest information to the Chief Electoral Officer within 14 days; section 240, which requires prospective third-party sponsors to file an application with the Chief Electoral Officer; and section 243.01, which requires third-party sponsors funding advertising worth more than \$10,000 to file a disclosure report with the Chief Electoral Officer. Elections BC stated that the current lack of penalties limits the Chief Electoral Officer's ability to ensure compliance, and suggested that establishing penalties would align these provisions with other requirements. Specifically, Elections BC recommended that sections 59.01 and 243.01 be amended to include a late filing period and fee, modeled on section 220 (5) of the Act. Additionally, the Office supported amending section 240 to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to automatically deregister third-party sponsors who fail to respond to requests for updated registration information.

Another enforcement issue raised by Elections BC is the requirement for the Chief Electoral Officer to publish information about monetary penalties on both the Elections BC website and in the *BC Gazette*. Elections BC noted that this only applies to monetary penalties under the *Election Act*, not other types of penalties or those issued under local election legislation. Elections BC recommended removing the requirement to publish in the *Gazette*, given the administrative effort, cost, limited reach of the *Gazette*, and requirement to publish this information online.

DELEGATION

Section 12 (2) (e) provides that the Chief Electoral Officer has the power “to delegate in writing to an individual appointed under section 10 (1), 18 (1) or (1.1) or 22 (1) the authority to exercise any power and perform any duty assigned to the chief electoral officer by this Act, other than the power to make regulations, subject to any limits or conditions imposed by the chief electoral officer.” The Chief Electoral Officer noted that the delegation of power provisions do not include temporary employees or individuals not covered by the *Public Service Act*. Elections BC stated that this limits flexibility, particularly when legal counsel or other specialized personnel must act on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer but cannot formally be delegated statutory authority. The Office noted that other statutory offices are not subject to this limitation. Elections BC recommended allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to delegate statutory authority to any individual necessary to exercise assigned powers or perform assigned duties, regardless of employment status under the *Public Service Act*.

Some participants expressed concern that the recommendation would allow any staff to exercise electoral powers without oversight. One individual recommended ensuring delegation is restricted to permanent officials, requiring public disclosure of delegation, excluding core Chief Electoral Officer powers, and establishing personal liability for delegates who abuse authority.

IMMUNITY

Elections BC stated that election administration has become increasingly litigious in recent years. The Office noted that the *Election Act* provides numerous specific opportunities for judicial rulings or court relief, but added that in other jurisdictions individuals have sometimes used the judicial system to harass or intimidate election officials, rather than address wrongdoing. Election officials are provided indemnity coverage, but are not protected under the Act from legal action being initiated. Other statutory officers in BC, as well as election officials in other provinces, are protected from legal action if they act honestly and in good faith under the law. Elections BC recommended providing election officials acting in good faith with immunity from legal action. The Chief Electoral Officer emphasized that statutory immunity is a limited legal protection that ensures election officials can make important decisions related to their official duties without the threat of litigation. The Chief Electoral Officer

added that it is typically provided in recognition of the fact that an officer of the Legislature may be called on to undertake activities that are in the public interest but could expose them to personal liability. Elections BC noted that the recommendation does not remove existing opportunities for judicial rulings or court relief and would not apply if election officials were found to be engaged in subversion.

Three participants claimed that this would shield election officials from civil lawsuits even for negligence or misconduct, and recommended not providing immunity. One individual proposed other ideas including independent judicial determination of good faith and establishing a fund for voters harmed by election official errors.



REGISTRATION AND ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBILITY

Per section 29 of the *Election Act*, individuals can vote in BC elections if they are Canadian citizens, at least 18 years old, and residents of British Columbia for at least six months immediately before final voting day. Before an individual can register to vote, they are required to declare that they are a Canadian citizen. Prior to voting, voters must make a declaration that they meet the eligibility requirements to vote and have not already voted in that election.

Elections BC stated that it currently relies on a limited information-sharing agreement with Elections Canada for information on the citizenship status of British Columbians. Elections BC recommended authorizing the Chief Electoral Officer to enter into information-sharing agreements with the Government of Canada to collect information about non-citizens for the purposes of the *Election Act*, and to update the list of voters. Elections BC stated that this authorization would enable the Office to better enforce citizenship and permanent residency requirements as well as provide opportunities to improve the accuracy and coverage of the list of voters. The BC General Employees' Union and the BC NDP supported the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation. Some individuals suggested that the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation provides additional authority to Elections BC without clear privacy safeguards and one individual suggested limiting data access, requiring record access notifications, and establishing independent auditing.

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

To vote, Elections BC requires voters to prove their identity. British Columbians have two options to provide identification under section 41 of the Act. First, they may provide government-issued photo ID that includes their address, such as a BC driver's licence, a BC Identification Card, a BC Services Card (with photo), or a Certificate of Indian Status. Second, they may show any two pieces of identification or documents that show their name as long as at least one also includes

their current address. For individuals without identification, section 41.1 of the Act allows another individual to vouch for their identity and address. Vouchers must be either a registered voter residing in the voter's electoral district, or a close family member or a person with the authority to make personal care decisions for the voter. Vouchers must provide acceptable identification. The voter and the voucher must each make a solemn declaration confirming the voter's identity and residential address.

The Committee heard from several individuals who expressed concerns about the vouching process. One participant who used the vouching system during the 2024 provincial general election shared that they found the process challenging. Another individual recommended eliminating vouching, asserting that it is a significant loophole and suggested that providing free identification services at polling stations would ensure accessibility while reducing the risk of fraudulent voting. Other recommendations received by the Committee included requiring new voters to register in-person, mandating voters produce government-issued identification proving Canadian citizenship, and providing every Canadian with a single-use unique voting number.

ENUMERATION

The Provincial List of Voters contains the name and address of each registered voter. At any point in the election cycle eligible British Columbians can register to vote in-person at Elections BC's office, or by mail, phone, email, or online. While not required by the Act, prior to every scheduled provincial general election, the list of voters is typically updated through a province-wide registration event, known as an enumeration.

To facilitate this work, the *Election Amendment Act, 2019* granted Elections BC access to more data sources to update voter information. A 2021 information-sharing agreement with ICBC provided Elections BC with updated names and addresses for every registered voter having either a BC driver's

licence, BC Identification Card, or BC Services Card. This data was first integrated into the list of voters in May 2023.

In 2024, Elections BC employed several additional enumeration strategies including voter registration notices, registration drives at community hubs, and visits to locations where eligible voters are less likely to be registered such as facilities that serve voters experiencing homelessness, post-secondary institutions, and First Nations. Enumeration efforts conducted in 2024 increased the percentage of eligible voters on the list of voters and the proportion of those voters registered at their current address.

Elections BC emphasized the importance of a high-quality and accurate voters list for inclusive and accessible elections, highlighting that it makes voting faster and easier and helps the Office provide voters with information about when and where to vote. Elections BC added that improving the list is essential since voters who are not registered at their current home address have historically faced greater administrative barriers to voting.

If an enumeration is cancelled due to an election call, section 43 (3) of the Act voids all voter registration applications submitted after the start of the enumeration. Elections BC noted that this section of the Act was created to preserve fairness related to manual processing time and argued that it was incompatible with the improved processing speed and accuracy provided by the modernized registration system. To ensure voters are not disenfranchised without cause, Elections BC recommended allowing voter registration changes to remain valid if the related enumeration is cancelled.

REGISTRATION

In Canada, citizens can vote in elections for three different levels of government: federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal. The *Canada Elections Act* regulates the country's federal elections, the *BC Election Act* regulates BC's provincial elections, and the *Local Government Act* and *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* regulate BC's municipal elections.

Voter turnout, measured as a percentage of registered voters, has consistently been lower in BC's provincial elections than at the federal level. For the most recent elections, voter turnout was 58.45 percent at the provincial level compared to 69 percent at the federal level. Over the past four provincial and federal elections, voter turnout has been an average of 9.08 percent higher at the federal level.

The Committee heard from multiple individuals who expressed concerns about differences in the number of registered voters federally and provincially and questioned the accuracy of the Provincial List of Voters by claiming that large numbers of federally registered voters had been omitted. One participant suggested that the lower voter turnout in the 2024 provincial election compared to the 2025 federal election indicated a subversion of voters and recommended ensuring independent oversight of the list of voters and voter counts.



CAMPAIGNING AND PARTIES

CANDIDATE NOMINATIONS

To be a candidate in a provincial election, section 52 of the *Election Act* requires that an individual be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age or older on final voting day, and a resident of BC for at least six months. Candidates do not need to live in the electoral district they run in; however, they cannot run in two districts at once. Candidates must file a nomination application including the signatures of 75 nominators, a \$250 deposit, and a statement of disclosure form. They must also appoint an auditor and a financial agent.

Additionally, section 54 of the Act requires nominators to provide their name, address, and a signed declaration which must be verified by Elections BC. Elections BC indicated that nominators often submit information that is handwritten, unclear, or incomplete, and that the Chief Electoral Officer lacks the ability to collect additional information that would enable authentication and auditing. Elections BC recommended requiring nominators to provide a telephone number or email address, noting that enhanced information requirements would improve verification, reduce delays, and support the integrity of the nomination process. The BC NDP expressed concerns about the recommendation, noting that gathering personal information from individuals is difficult, and requiring nominators to provide additional contact information may create a greater barrier to candidate participation. Three individuals suggested that requiring candidate nominators to provide phone numbers and email addresses would create targetable political support lists. One of these individuals recommended that collecting nominator contact information be optional, subject to explicit consent requirements, and not retained after nomination verification.

A nominee officially becomes a candidate once Elections BC accepts their nomination application and issues their certificate of candidacy. There are two ways to file a candidate nomination application for a provincial election. Candidates can file a standing nomination with the Chief Electoral Officer under section 57 or an ordinary nomination with the

District Electoral Officer under section 56. Candidates can file a standing nomination at any time, but since candidacy is specific to an election, certificates of candidacy cannot be issued until an election is called. Candidates can file ordinary nominations for a period of seven days beginning on the first day of the campaign period and certificates of candidacy are issued by District Electoral Officers once applications are received and accepted.

Elections BC stated that separate nomination provisions are no longer required due to technological changes and the modernization of the electoral process. Elections BC recommended consolidating standing and ordinary nominations into a single period under the administration of the Chief Electoral Officer and authorizing them to declare candidates under section 61 (1), emphasizing that this would streamline the process, improve efficiency, and allow District Electoral Officers to focus on other key duties. Elections BC also noted that the proposed changes would not impact the overall length of the nomination period, alter the required nomination documents, or prevent District Electoral Officers from receiving nomination applications. Elections BC highlighted that District Electoral Officers have expressed support for the change. The BC General Employees' Union and the BC NDP also endorsed the recommendation to amalgamate nominations into a single period.

Nomination contestants are individuals who seek to be nominated as candidates representing a registered political party. Any individual seeking to represent a political party is considered a nomination contestant, whether or not any other individual seeks that nomination, including individuals who are acclaimed or directly appointed by a political party. Section 59.01 of the Act requires registered political parties to notify the Chief Electoral Officer of a successful nomination contestant within 14 days of the contest, but candidates are only considered endorsed once a written endorsement is filed under section 60. Such endorsements must be received by the close of ordinary nominations. Elections BC remarked that it is unclear whether the successful contestant identified

per section 59.01 is an endorsed candidate for election financing purposes prior to the written notice. Elections BC recommended that the Act be amended so that a successful nomination contestant is considered an endorsed candidate as soon as the party files notice under section 59.01.

Sections 59.01 and 211.01 of the Act require parties and nomination contestants to submit details about nomination contests and related financing reports. Section 162 requires Elections BC to make documents filed by parties available for public inspection at the Chief Electoral Officer's office, but there is no obligation to publish them or authority to make financial reports filed by nomination contestants public. Elections BC recommended allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to actively publish nomination contest information and nomination contest financing reports. Elections BC added that it had previously recommended expanding publication requirements to include nomination contest documents and related financing reports with appropriate redaction. Elections BC suggested that contest details could be posted to the Elections BC website and financing reports made available through the Financial Reports and Political Contributions system. Three individuals expressed concerns about this recommendation, suggesting that publishing nomination information would expose individuals to harassment or employment consequences, with one recommending that only aggregate statistics be published for a limited time with explicit consent from participants.

POLITICAL PARTIES

With respect to political parties under the Act, section 155 (1) defines a political party as an organization primarily established to field candidates for election to the Legislative Assembly. Under the Act, "organization" includes both incorporated and unincorporated organizations. Elections BC noted that the definition of "political party" in the Act does not include organizations primarily controlled by a political party such as constituency associations, even though these entities are explicitly referenced in the Act's financial reporting provisions. Elections BC identified that these entities may not be subject to key provisions such as political contribution limits or loan restrictions, creating potential compliance gaps and inconsistencies in enforcement. To address this issue, Elections BC recommended amending the definition of political party to include organizations primarily controlled by a political party.

The Committee also heard about political party mergers. Part 9 of the *Election Act* includes provisions for the registration, suspension, and deregistration of political parties, and restrictions on what names parties can register or use on the ballot. Elections BC stated that the Act does not provide any clear rules or procedures on how two or more parties may merge into a single registered political party. Elections BC also identified two barriers to party mergers within the Act: a party is prohibited from deregistering and allowing its name to be used by a merged political party, and a party may also not transfer its monetary or tangible assets to a merged political party as political contributions must be made by individuals within restricted contribution limits. The Office added that the Act does reference merged political parties in section 283 (2), which allows the Chief Electoral Officer to set rules for annual allowances paid to merged political parties and define a merged political party for the purpose of the annual allowance. Elections BC highlighted that annual allowances for merged political parties do not reconcile with existing legislation. In terms of annual allowances for merged political parties, Elections BC raised considerations around eligibility criteria such as determining whether valid votes received in the previous election by candidates of the merging parties are a factor, reviewing valid vote thresholds, dollar-per-vote value, and reporting requirements. Elections BC also noted that legislation in other jurisdictions, such as the *Canada Elections Act* and the *Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act* in Alberta, sets out clear procedures for political party mergers. Elections BC suggested that legislators may wish to consider amending the Act to address party merger related matters including party names and registration procedures, financial transfers, contribution limits, and reporting requirements.

LENGTH OF THE ELECTION PERIOD

In 2001, the Legislative Assembly passed the *Constitution (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2001* to enable the province to have a fixed election date every four years. The first such provincial general election was held in 2005. Per the Westminster tradition, an election may also be called before the fixed election date if the Premier requests that the Lieutenant Governor dissolve the Legislative Assembly to begin a new general election, including if the government loses a vote of confidence in the Legislative Assembly.

Under section 1 (1) of the *Election Act*, the election period is defined as the period between when the writ for the election is issued and the date set for the return of that writ. For

scheduled elections, section 23 (2) of the BC *Constitution Act* requires final voting day to occur on the third Saturday in October in the fourth calendar year following the final voting day for the most recently held general election. For such elections, section 27 (1) (a) of the *Election Act* states that final voting day must occur 28 days after the date on which the election is called. Under section 56, for scheduled elections, nominations close on the seventh day after the election is called.

Elections BC stated that the legislated requirement for final voting day to occur on a Saturday provides accessibility for voters, facilitates the hiring of election workers, and enables the use of schools as voting places. Elections BC also noted that it poses administrative challenges by ensuring that writ day and the close of nominations occur on Saturdays. Elections BC indicated that it relies on staff and services that are not typically available on weekends, resulting in increased costs, logistical challenges, and tight timelines for nomination verification and the beginning of ballot printing, issues which are exacerbated by having two statutory holidays during the campaign period. Elections BC recommended adding three days to the campaign period by calling by-elections and fixed-date elections on a Wednesday. Elections BC stated that the proposed changes would provide more time at the beginning of the election calendar by shifting writ day three days earlier, moving both writ day and the close of nominations to Wednesdays, addressing current administrative difficulties. Elections BC highlighted that political parties on the Election Advisory Committee expressed support for the proposed timeline change. The BC NDP affirmed its support for the recommendation and the BC General Employees' Union also advocated in favour. Finally, Elections BC recognized that election expense limits should be increased proportionally to account for the three-day extension of the campaign period.

ELECTION ADVERTISING

The *Election Amendment Act, 2017* made changes to the rules for election advertising, canvassing, and campaigning, including creating the 60-day pre-campaign period and establishing that communications transmitted to the public over the internet are election advertising. As a result, election advertising rules now apply differently during two periods: the pre-campaign period and the campaign period. The pre-campaign period begins 60 days before the election is called. During this period, advertising restrictions only apply to advertising sponsored by third-party sponsors which

directly promotes or opposes a registered political party or a candidate. The campaign period starts the day the election is called and ends at the close of final voting for the election. During this period, advertising restrictions are broader, applying to all advertising that promotes or opposes, directly or indirectly, a registered political party or a candidate, including advertising that takes a position on an issue with which a party or candidate is associated.

When advertising during the 60-day pre-campaign period, third-party sponsors are required by section 231 of the Act to include information, such as the name of the sponsor, contact information, registration information, and authorization. There is no equivalent requirement for parties or candidates, even if their advertising would qualify as election advertising during the campaign period. Elections BC noted that the lack of requirement for parties and candidates to include sponsorship information when advertising during the 60-day pre-campaign period could enable political parties to engage in anonymous political messaging in the lead-up to an election, such as distributing flyers claiming to be from a grassroots movement and criticizing an opponent. Elections BC emphasized that this form of misrepresentation is prohibited for other election participants, such as third-party sponsors, and should not be permitted for registered political parties. As such, Elections BC recommended amending the *Election Act* to require political parties and candidates to include sponsorship information when advertising during the pre-campaign period. The BC NDP suggested that while pre-campaign period advertising restrictions in the *Election Act* previously applied to both political parties and third-party sponsors, the amendments that changed this were considered and deliberate. The BC NDP opposed Elections BC's recommendation, stating that partially applying the concept of the pre-campaign period to political parties goes beyond a technical recommendation and emphasizing that it is the wrong approach to resolve concerns about anonymous, nefarious, or misrepresentative political materials.

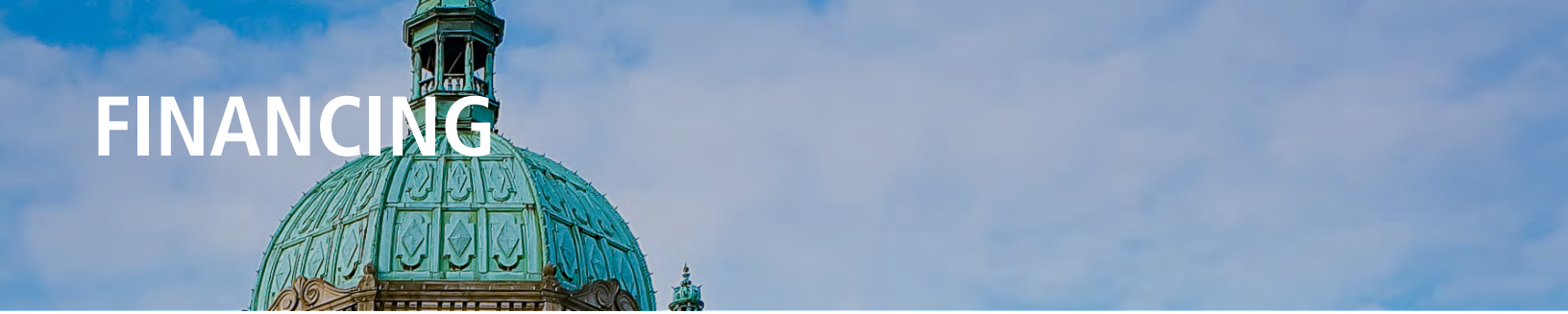
Under section 239, any individual or organization sponsoring election advertising during a campaign must register as a third-party sponsor, regardless of the amount spent. Elections BC acknowledged that third-party sponsor registration requirements can result in low-cost or limited-reach advertising being subject to the same requirements as large-scale campaigns, discouraging small-scale participation and requiring resources to be spent on investigating minor advertising efforts. Elections BC recommended establishing

a minimum spending threshold, such as \$500, for third-party election advertising sponsors before requiring them to register. The Office noted that this would improve clarity and reduce unnecessary oversight.

ADVERTISING ON FINAL VOTING DAY

Elections BC also raised the issue of advertising on final voting day. Section 233 (1) of the Act prohibits advertising on final voting day and an individual or organization who contravenes this provision is liable to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for a term not longer than one year, or both.

Elections BC stated that the original goal of the advertising ban on final voting day was to stop last-minute efforts to unfairly influence voters just before they voted; however, the number of people voting on final voting day has declined, with less than half of voters voting on final voting day in 2024. Elections BC noted that media and information sources have increasingly moved online and recognized that enforcing a one-day advertising ban across channels such as social media is unrealistic. Elections BC also indicated that the Chief Electoral Officer cannot issue fines for election day advertising and may only recommend prosecution, which is rarely practical. Elections BC highlighted that since most voters now cast their ballots before final voting day, the prohibition on advertising is less effective at reducing unfair influence and indicated that final voting day advertising may in fact encourage voter turnout. Elections BC suggested that, given trends in voting habits and enforcement challenges, legislators may wish to consider whether banning advertising on final voting day still serves the public interest.



FINANCING

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

A political contribution, as defined by section 180 of the *Election Act*, is an amount of money or the value of any property or services, provided without compensation to a political party, constituency association, candidate, leadership contestant, or nomination contestant. Political contributions can include fees paid for political party and leadership conventions, membership fees for political parties or constituency associations, and money provided by an individual for their own campaign or contest. Exemptions are outlined in section 186.02.

Only residents of BC who are either Canadian citizens or permanent residents can make political contributions. Unlike other parts of the Act, such as rules for voting or running for office, there is no age requirement for making contributions. Eligible individuals are subject to contribution limits as outlined in section 186.01. For the 2024 calendar year, the total of all political contributions to a political party and its constituency associations, candidates, and nomination contestants could not exceed \$1,450.82. Financial agents are required to record the value of each contribution, the date it was received, and the full name and address of the contributor. Elections BC makes information about donations totalling more than \$250 available through the Financial Reports and Political Contributions System, a searchable online database.

During the 2024 provincial general election, Elections BC reported having investigated 84 contributors who listed similar names and addresses. Through this process, Elections BC determined that in 20 of these cases, there were prohibited contributions as the donations came from one individual who had exceeded their contribution limit. Elections BC indicated that the limited reporting requirements under section 190 (1) make it difficult to enforce contribution limits and ensure accurate reporting when contributors have similar names, use name variations, or change their address. Elections BC stated that introducing a unique contributor identifier would improve transparency, streamline enforcement, and support more

consistent financial oversight of political participants. Elections BC recommended that each party assign a unique identifier to each of its contributors, noting that this identifier should be consistent among filers that share a contribution limit. This identifier would only be used within a political party and its constituency associations or by its candidates and nomination contestants. The BC NDP and the BC General Employees' Union both supported this recommendation. The Committee heard from three individuals who suggested that Elections BC is recommending all donors to be assigned a unique identifier tracked across all contributions, not one that would be unique to each party. One individual also recommended ensuring the contributor identification system is decentralized, includes mandatory deletion after statutory retention periods, and establishes criminal penalties for unauthorized access or disclosure.

Elections BC stated that while financial contributions made to political parties or candidates are generally seen as a means of expressing political views, protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, courts have determined it is reasonable to set limits on how people can participate in elections. Elections BC reported seeing cases where very young children had made political contributions. The Office raised concerns about whether they are truly able to donate or if others might be using their names to circumvent contribution limits, contravening the restrictions set out in section 186 (1) (d). Elections BC highlighted that these situations are hard to investigate because the Office does not collect or report a contributor's age. The Office added that while the Act has penalties for indirect contributions, confirming whether a child has the capacity to contribute is challenging and subjective. Elections BC indicated that to ensure fairness and transparency, legislators could consider setting a minimum age for political contributions.

Regarding an appropriate age, Elections BC noted that a minimum age of 18 would match the age for voting and running for office in BC, while a minimum age of 16 would align with the *Employment Standards Act*. Elections BC noted

that a minimum age could still allow young people to be involved in politics, pointing to the example of Québec where contributors must be 18, but party membership fees under a certain amount are not considered political contributions. Elections BC indicated that BC could adopt a similar approach to support youth participation while keeping donation rules fair and enforceable. The BC NDP recommended implementing a minimum age for making political contributions tied to the lowest age of employment in the *Employment Standards Act*.

PUBLIC FUNDING

Another topic highlighted by consultation participants was public funding for political parties and candidates. Annual allowances to political parties were first introduced by the *Election Amendment Act, 2017* to support political parties' transition to new election financing rules which banned corporate and union donations and reduced individual contribution limits. These provisions were initially set to expire in 2022. In 2021, the Special Committee to Review Provisions of the Election Act recommended making the annual allowance for political parties permanent and tying it to the consumer price index (CPI) for the previous year. These recommendations were enacted in the *Election Amendment Act, 2021*.

Section 215.02 (1) of the *Election Act* sets out the annual allowances to political parties whose candidates have received two percent of the votes cast in all electoral districts or five percent of the votes cast in the electoral districts in which the party endorsed candidates. That section also establishes how allowances are calculated. The Chief Electoral Officer must pay allowances in two equal installments on January 15 and July 15 in each applicable year. The Committee heard from one individual who recommended removing annual allowances to political parties, stating that this funding institutionalizes division, reduces competition, and decreases party accountability. They also suggested that removing public funding could force parties to more heavily rely on grassroots support, decreasing partisanship.

Reimbursement of election expenses is outlined in section 215.04. Eligible parties and candidates can be reimbursed for up to 50 percent of their eligible expenses, up to a maximum of 50 percent of the election expense limit, as specified in sections 198 and 199 respectively. No submission deadline is specified in section 215.04. Elections BC noted that since there is no deadline for submitting claims, they may be submitted

or revised long after the election, making reimbursement calculations and payment dates uncertain. Additionally, participants who file late or exceed expense limits are eligible for reimbursement but must then be investigated by the Chief Electoral Officer for potential monetary penalties. Elections BC indicated that establishing a clear deadline, such as one year after the election call, and disqualifying non-compliant participants from receiving reimbursement would improve efficiency, transparency, and enforcement.

Section 204 of the Act requires the Chief Electoral Officer to adjust financial thresholds—such as contribution limits, expense limits, and annual allowances—based on changes in the CPI. Elections BC stated that applying the calculation method in this section of the Act often results in uneven or non-rounded figures, increasing the likelihood of minor errors and potential penalties. The Office recommended allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to round CPI-adjusted amounts, noting that it would simplify compliance, reduce administrative burden, and improve clarity for participants.

FINANCIAL REPORTING AND ENFORCEMENT

In terms of reporting, registered political parties, constituency associations, and candidates are required to file election financing reports 90 days after final voting day. Leadership contestants and nomination contestants are also required to submit financing reports. Parties and constituency associations must file annual financial reports by March 31 of each year. Parties eligible for annual allowances must also file interim financial reports.

Regarding annual financial reports, section 207 (4) of the Act requires political parties to report all contributions accepted by the party, its registered constituency associations, and its candidates, but excludes nomination contestants. Elections BC argued these requirements should extend to contributions accepted by nomination contestants, as these contributions also count towards the contribution limit for individuals and their exclusion reduces transparency and creates inconsistencies in financial reporting. As such, Elections BC recommended requiring the inclusion of contributions accepted by nomination contestants in the annual financial reports filed by political parties.

The Committee also heard about other reporting requirements under the Act, namely those relating to specified fundraising functions and third-party sponsors. Section 185.02 of the Act outlines reporting requirements for organizers of specified

fundraising functions, while section 243.01 allows regulations to define the content of third-party advertising disclosure reports but does not extend to initial and subsequent disclosure reports from third parties. Elections BC indicated that the information prescribed under sections 185.02 and 243.01 is limited and may not be sufficient to assess compliance, recommending that these sections be amended to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to prescribe additional information by regulation. Some participants were of the view that the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation would provide the Chief Electoral Officer open-ended authority to prescribe additional donor information without legislative oversight, with one recommending limiting the information that can be prescribed, requiring privacy assessments and consultation, and including a sunset clause.

Under section 176 (1) of the *Election Act*, individuals who fail to file required reports under the *Election Act* or the *Recall and Initiative Act* are disqualified from acting as financing agents or auditors. Elections BC identified that the disqualification from acting as financial agents or auditors does not extend to individuals who fail to file reports under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*, despite the comparable nature of the reporting obligations. Elections BC added that this gap may allow individuals with a history of non-compliance in local elections to serve in key financial roles in provincial elections, potentially undermining accountability and public trust. As a potential solution, Elections BC recommended disqualifying individuals who have failed to file a report under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* from acting as financial agents or auditors under the *Election Act*.

While section 211.02 of the Act outlines how a nomination contestant's surplus funds must be handled after campaign expenses are paid, Elections BC identified a gap in financial oversight by noting that there is no equivalent provision for surplus funds for leadership contestants. Elections BC indicated that this may lead to uncertainty or inconsistent practices in the treatment of surplus funds from leadership campaigns and recommended establishing a clear process for disbursing such funds.

With respect to enforcement, the Act includes significant penalties for non-compliance with financing rules or for committing offences related to election financing. Penalties include monetary fees, disqualification from being a candidate, loss of a seat as an MLA, and the suspension or deregistration of a political party or constituency association. The Act also

establishes offences and an individual or organization who commits an election financing or election advertising offence is liable to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for a term not longer than one year, or both. Section 185.02 of the Act requires organizers of certain fundraising functions to provide information to the Chief Electoral Officer and to the benefiting person or entity within specified timelines. Elections BC noted that most contraventions of this section involve late filings, which are relatively minor but are currently subject to administrative monetary penalties under section 220.03. The Office noted that potential contraventions require investigation and administrative effort, making it a disproportionate enforcement tool and different from other reporting obligations under Part 10. Elections BC recommended amending the Act to replace administrative monetary penalties for late filing of specified fundraising functions with a late filing period and late filing fee, noting that the late filing provisions in section 220 could be used as a model.

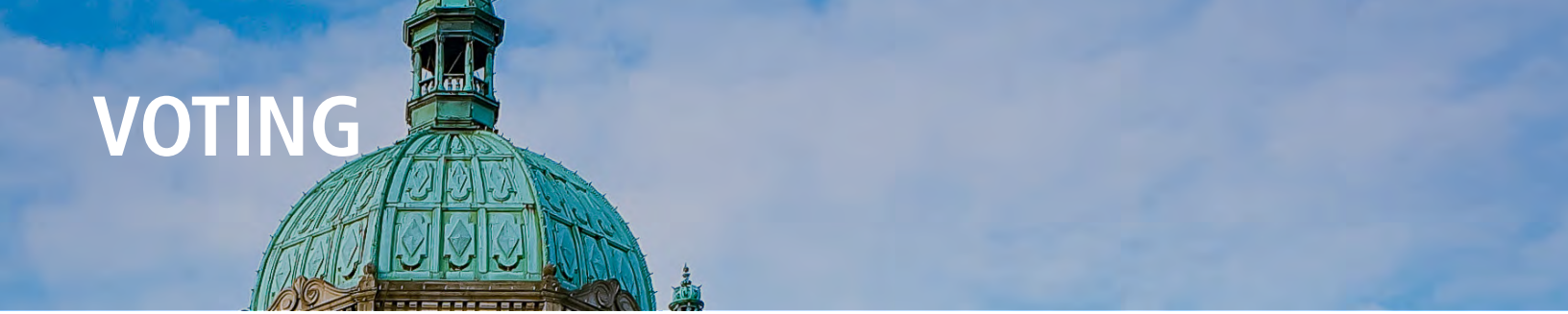
AUDITING

In relation to auditing, section 213 (1) (b) stipulates that reports must be audited if the value of the political contributions, election expenses, or contestant expenses to be reported is equal to or greater than \$10,000. All individuals are required to appoint an auditor prior to becoming a candidate in accordance with section 54 (3) (f), regardless of whether their campaign will meet the audit threshold. Election campaigns are responsible for the costs of any required audits as well as ensuring that they allow sufficient time for the auditor to complete their work prior to the financial reporting filing deadline. While costs must be paid up front, up to 50 percent of audit expenses are reimbursed for candidates or parties that meet a threshold of votes received.

Elections BC recognized that election participants are concerned that the audit threshold creates a barrier for candidates who find it difficult to find a qualified auditor, especially when they are not planning to spend or receive more than \$10,000. Elections BC highlighted that leadership and nomination contestants, as well as third-party sponsors, are only required to have reports audited if their financial activity exceeds the threshold. To recognize the importance of aligning candidate requirements with these roles, reduce unnecessary burdens, and improve consistency, Elections BC recommended allowing candidates to delay appointing

an auditor until reaching the audit threshold established in section 213 (1) (b).

The Christian Heritage Party of BC suggested that the audit threshold should be raised to \$25,000 and adjusted based on annual inflation. The Party noted that the \$10,000 audit threshold was originally set in 1996 and has not kept pace with inflation. The Christian Heritage Party argued that while major parties easily exceed the audit threshold, smaller parties are no longer able to run a campaign below it. The Party expressed concerns about smaller parties having to limit fundraising expenses to avoid onerous audit expenditures. The Christian Heritage Party also noted that smaller parties often have difficulty securing an auditor due to Elections BC's unfamiliar accounting procedures. When asked for clarification by the Committee, Elections BC stated that while the audit threshold in section 213 (1) (b) can be increased by regulation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the current amount is consistent with the audit threshold for third-party sponsors under section 245.01 (1) which cannot be increased by regulation. The Office emphasized that maintaining a consistent audit threshold keeps requirements fair for different election participants.



VOTING

BACKGROUND

In BC, there are several different ways for voters to cast their ballot. In-person voting opportunities include advance voting, voting at district electoral offices, special or mobile voting, and final voting day. Vote-by-mail and assisted telephone voting provide options for those unable to go to a polling station. Individual voting places are selected based on the *Election Act's* section 81 (1) requirements of convenience and accessibility as well as Elections BC operational standards which include review of historic voting places, the overall distance required to travel, geographic transportation barriers, cultural considerations, size requirements, and security standards.

While absentee voting provisions have existed in some form in BC since 1920 and have generally allowed people to vote at a voting station in any electoral district, amendments to the Act in 2019 simplified this process and enabled the expansion of the vote-anywhere model, including by enabling people to vote using an ordinary ballot, rather than a write-in ballot, when voting at a voting station outside of their electoral district. Subsequently, Elections BC developed, tested, and implemented procedural changes, system updates, new supporting materials, and new regulations required to make a fully modernized election work.

FINAL VOTING DAY

All eligible voters can participate on final voting day and can vote at any polling place. In 2024, final voting day occurred on Saturday, October 19 and voting places were open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Elections BC stated that in 2024, 44.04 percent of valid votes were cast at final voting day opportunities. While this marks an increase from the 2020 election, votes cast on final voting day have decreased compared to pre-pandemic elections.

The Committee received several recommendations from individuals concerned about BC's existing electoral process including eliminating the vote-anywhere model, providing

monetary incentives to voters, adding pictures of candidates to the ballot, and adding additional security precautions to prevent fraudulent voting.

ADVANCE VOTING

All eligible voters can participate in advance voting and can vote at any polling place. Advance voting has been used in BC since 1949 and has steadily increased in popularity. During the 2024 provincial general election, 47.5 percent of valid votes were cast at advance voting opportunities, making it the most popular voting option. Advance voting was available for six days in 2024, ending two days before final voting day.

During voting, election officials have care and custody of ballots. Elections BC stated that to prevent tampering, ballot accounts are completed by election officials at the voting place with scrutineers present. At the end of each day, ballot boxes are sealed and signed by scrutineers to ensure that any access to the box outside of voting would be identified and investigated. In urban ridings, and where voting places are close to district offices, sealed ballot boxes are returned to the office and securely stored. Elections BC acknowledged that it is not always possible to return ballot boxes to the district electoral office in rural areas. In these districts, voting place supervisors may store sealed ballot boxes at their home until they can deliver them to the district electoral office. Elections BC noted that this is a long-standing practice in Canadian elections to ensure that voters in rural areas have advance voting opportunities available to them. Elections BC emphasized that no cases of ballot box tampering have been observed, although the *Election Act* has provisions to protect against such a scenario.

Several individuals raised concerns about ballot custody during advance voting, suggesting that fraud was perpetrated when election officials took ballot boxes home overnight and recommended disallowing election officials from removing ballots and ballot boxes from voting locations during advance voting. To secure ballots and prevent tampering,

some participants also recommended increasing overnight security and monitoring at voting places or retaining ballots in one central, secure, and monitored site. The Committee also received recommendations to limit or eliminate advance voting.

SPECIAL AND MOBILE VOTING

Special and mobile voting is offered to voters who cannot reasonably travel to a voting place (e.g., voters in hospitals, long-term care facilities, or remote work camps). While these opportunities are intended for residents or attendees of these sites, anyone may vote there if it is more convenient. Special and mobile voting opportunities are available from the start of advance voting to the day before final voting day and are determined by each District Electoral Officer. In 2024, 1.56 percent of valid votes were cast in special voting opportunities. The Committee heard from one individual who shared that voting at their assisted living facility made participating in elections easier for them and recommended Elections BC continue to offer voting in assisted living facilities.

Elections BC noted that the Act does not require health facilities to grant access to Elections BC's mobile voting teams, which could result in access being denied. To ensure that eligible voters are not prevented from casting their ballot, Elections BC recommended amending the Act to require health facility administrators to facilitate access for voting when other voting opportunities are unavailable. Elections BC indicated that section 81 (3) of the Act, which compels school administrators to make schools available as voting places, could be used as a model. One participant shared concerns about the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation and was of the view that access requirements should be voluntary with reasonable limitations, include funding, and exclude facilities providing acute or intensive care.

In terms of assisting voters, section 109 (7) prohibits candidates and their representatives from assisting voters with marking ballots at in-person voting opportunities, but there is no equivalent provision for mail-in voting. To resolve this issue, Elections BC recommended amending section 109.01 of the Act to prohibit candidates and individuals representing them from assisting voters with marking mail-in ballots, except where the voter would otherwise be unable to vote, as well as establishing a corresponding penalty for non-compliance. The Office stated that this change would ensure consistency between in-person and mail-in voting, noting that

such support should only be permitted where the voter would otherwise be unable to vote and emphasizing that safeguards are needed to ensure that such support does not create undue influence.

Individuals needing assistance to read the ballot and the instructions for voting are entitled to receive the assistance of a translator. Translators assisting voters at in-person voting opportunities are required to make a solemn declaration under section 269 (4), which must be fulfilled in person. Elections BC stated that this requirement prevents remote translators from assisting deaf, blind, and deaf-blind individuals. The Office recommended amending the Act to permit the usage of remote translation services and suggested that this could be achieved by allowing oral declarations in place of solemn declarations or by exempting certified translators from declaration requirements.

VOTE-BY-MAIL

All eligible voters have been entitled to vote by mail since changes made under the *Election Amendment Act, 2019* were brought into force by regulation in 2022. The opportunity to request a vote-by-mail package opens 60 days before writ day and ballots must be received by 8 p.m. on final voting day. To vote by mail, voters must prove their identity and residential address. If a voter is registering to vote in conjunction with voting by mail, they must include copies of their identification in their return package or provide digital copies of their identification to Elections BC. Once vote-by-mail packages are returned, election officials verify each package against the struck-off voters on the list of voters to ensure that the voter has not voted at another voting opportunity. Any vote-by-mail packages that fail to meet screening requirements are set aside and not counted. In 2024, 3.72 percent of valid votes were cast by mail. While it represents a decrease compared to the 2020 election, where 31.4 percent of votes were cast by mail, it represents a significant increase over historic levels which averaged well under one percent in the previous five general elections.

BC elections feature two types of ballots: ordinary and write-in ballots. Ordinary ballots list candidate names and party affiliations allowing voters to place a mark next to their choice, while write-in ballots allow voters to write in the name of the candidate, political party, or party leader of their choice. Per section 283 (4) of the Act, the Chief Electoral Officer is required to make regulations prescribing the form of ordinary

and write-in ballots, while section 283 (5) allows the Chief Electoral Officer to prescribe different forms of write-in ballots for mail-in voting. However, the Chief Electoral Officer does not have the power to prescribe different forms of ordinary ballots for specific voting opportunities, such as mail-in voting. Elections BC noted that during preparations for the 2024 election, the Office encountered challenges monitoring the assembly of mail-in voting packages, highlighting that these could have been addressed with a tailored form of ordinary ballot. To improve ballot design and administration, Elections BC recommended amending sections 283 (4) and 283 (5) of the Act to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to prescribe additional forms of ordinary ballots for use in specified voting opportunities, including mail-in voting.

To vote by mail, voters must meet identification requirements between the time of request and the return of the package. If an error is discovered after the package is returned, there is no mechanism for officials to correct it or to accept corrected voter identification. Elections BC indicated that this limitation may result in otherwise valid votes being rejected due to correctable administrative errors, undermining voter enfranchisement. To resolve this issue, Elections BC recommended amending the Act to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to accept corrected voter identification for mail-in voting packages up to the close of voting.

Election officials are required by section 107 (3) of the Act to record the date and time of receipt directly on the certification envelope and in the voting book for mail-in voting packages received after the close of final voting. Elections BC stated that this requirement was put in place when vote-by-mail volumes were low and distributed across all electoral districts. Elections BC added that with greater volumes, the requirement has become inefficient and including a time of receipt is redundant for packages received after final voting day since the certification envelopes they contain are never opened and ballots are not accepted. To improve administrative efficiency without compromising the integrity of voting materials, Elections BC recommended allowing election officials to process vote-by-mail packages received after the close of voting “as soon as practicable”, and to record information prescribed by the Chief Electoral Officer.

The Committee also heard from individuals who opposed vote-by-mail and recommended eliminating the practice or limiting its availability. Other individuals claimed that vote-by-mail provides opportunities for fraud or manipulation. One

individual recommended publicly releasing additional data on ballots cast by mail, including ballots cast by voters outside of the country.

ASSISTED TELEPHONE VOTING

Assisted telephone voting was first introduced as a pilot project in 2017 and codified under the *Election Amendment Act, 2019*. Assisted telephone voting is available from the start of advance voting to final voting day. In 2024, 4,714 votes were cast using assisted telephone voting, compared with 3,463 in 2020 and 1,062 in 2017. Section 108.01 of the Act outlines provisions related to assisted telephone voting. Assisted telephone voting is available to voters who meet specific eligibility criteria including sight loss or a health condition or disability that prevents them from voting independently. Elections BC shared that assisted telephone voting can also be provided as an option for voters in emergency or exceptional circumstances who would otherwise be unable to vote. In 2024, the Chief Electoral Officer issued an order extending access to assisted telephone voting to voters in several electoral districts who were unable to vote in person due to extreme weather.

The process for assisted telephone voting is outlined in the Voting Options Regulation. A voter using assisted telephone voting must first register to vote and provide identification that proves their identity. The voter must also call Elections BC’s 1-800 number to confirm they are eligible to vote by phone. If eligible, an operator assigns the voter a unique telephone voting number and forwards the voter’s call to a separate two-person team unaware of the voter’s identity. The first telephone voting operator marks the voter’s ballot based on their instructions, while the second confirms that their vote was recorded correctly. Once the ballot is marked, it is placed in a secrecy envelope and then into a certification envelope. It is then inserted into a ballot box, and the voter is struck off the list of voters to record their participation.

Several individuals recommended eliminating assisted telephone voting, suggesting that it does not provide a way to verify a voter’s identity, eliminates ballot secrecy, and reduces the ability to verify that votes represent the voter’s true intention and are counted accurately. Another participant recommended suspending assisted telephone voting until a secure, identification-based system is developed.

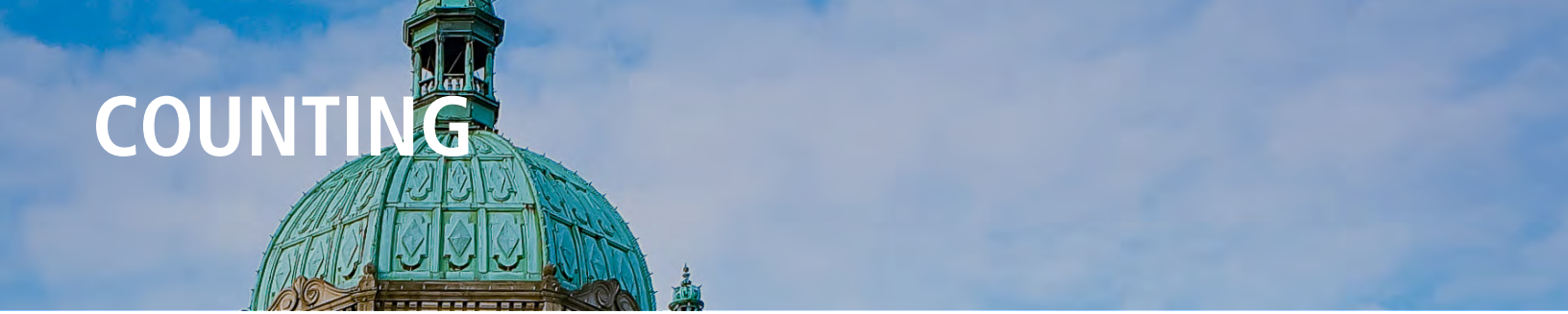
ELECTION OFFICIAL TRAINING

New voting procedures for the 2024 election meant significant revisions to election official roles, job descriptions, and training and voting materials. Elections BC designed and developed learning programs for election officials which combined face-to-face instruction with eLearning. The Office also conducted two largescale, multi-day simulated elections to test new processes and procedures.

Recruitment for regional field officers, District Electoral Officers, and deputy District Electoral Officers began closer to the mid-point of the four-year election cycle. Elections BC developed and delivered in-person training workshops and eLearning modules to prepare these management-level field staff for their roles, many of whom were also recruited to act as election officials for pending by-elections to familiarize them with the new voting model.

Elections BC noted that enhanced training and reference materials are being developed for District Electoral Officers and election officials at voting places based on lessons learned from the 2024 election. The Office shared that these materials will reinforce quality assurance steps for results reporting and ensure accountability for their completion. Elections BC also noted that these changes will be supported by a dedicated quality assurance position in district electoral offices, and consideration of whether an additional day may be required for quality assurance during preparations for final count.

The Committee heard from individuals who were concerned that election officials did not correctly follow procedure on final voting day and that human error led to delays in reporting election results. Recommendations received by the Committee in this area included improving training for election officials and installing surveillance in voting places with appropriate privacy safeguards.



COUNTING

BACKGROUND

In BC elections, votes are counted in two stages: initial count and final count. This is a long-running aspect of BC's electoral administration, first adopted in 1920 when absentee voting was introduced. Initial count takes place immediately after the close of voting on final voting day and includes most of the ballots cast in the election. Final count takes place at least four days after final voting day, as required by section 128 of the *Election Act*, and includes all ballots that could not be counted during initial count, such as absentee ballots contained in certification envelopes and mail-in ballots received too late to be counted during initial count.

In the 2024 provincial general election, initial count started immediately following the close of voting at 8:00 pm on final voting day, October 19, 2024. Final count took place from October 26 to 28. The amendments made to the *Election Act* in 2019 meant that the period between initial count and final count could be shortened from 13 days to six days. Previously, initial count included around 90 percent of the ballots cast in the election, whereas in 2024 it included 97 percent of all ballots cast.

VOTE-COUNTING ADMINISTRATION

British Columbians can vote at district electoral offices until four hours before the close of voting on final voting day, per section 104 (2) of the Act. Ballots cast at these offices require transcription before they can be counted. Transcription is the process of transcribing a voter's mark on a write-in ballot to an ordinary ballot or marking another ordinary ballot in specific circumstances such as if the initial one is damaged. Under the current rules, transcription cannot begin until after the close of final voting, which Elections BC noted can delay the initial count. Elections BC recommended allowing transcription of ballots cast at a district electoral office to begin when voting at the office closes. Elections BC indicated that allowing transcription to begin once the office closes, while still prohibiting early counting, would improve efficiency without compromising the integrity or secrecy of the vote.

Section 135 (2) (c) of the Act requires that ballots from certification envelopes be mixed before counting, once all of those ballots are placed in the ballot box. Elections BC indicated that this requirement was intended to preserve secrecy when counting was limited to a single electoral district. Now that ballots from multiple electoral districts are often processed together, Elections BC noted that the mixing requirement may delay the final count and complicate vote administration without enhancing voter privacy. Elections BC recommended eliminating the requirement to mix ballots from certification envelopes prior to counting. Three individuals expressed concern about this recommendation, with one recommending strengthening ballot mixing requirements.

DISTRICT ELECTORAL OFFICER RECOUNTS

There are two types of recounts conducted in BC elections: District Electoral Officer recounts and judicial recounts. Recounts conducted by District Electoral Officers are conducted during final count. A District Electoral Officer can initiate a recount in any circumstance, but is required to do so by section 136 of the Act if the margin between the top two candidates in an electoral district is 100 votes or fewer and a candidate or their agent requests a recount. Elections BC noted that BC is one of three Canadian jurisdictions that has a legislated administrative recount process, and in some of those cases the criteria are narrower.

Elections BC described how, in the 2024 election, District Electoral Officers approved recount requests in two electoral districts where the margin met the threshold: Juan de Fuca-Malahat and Surrey City Centre. However, before the recounts took place, the results of the mail-in and absentee ballots counted at final count increased the margin between the top two candidates beyond the 100-vote threshold. Elections BC indicated that the recounts were less relevant and did not affect the election outcome, with one candidate requesting to cancel the recount (though both were still conducted). Elections BC suggested that legislators may wish to consider whether the Act should continue to include automatic

provisions for close-margin District Electoral Officer recounts. Elections BC emphasized that it does not recommend changes to the requirements for judicial recounts or the ability of candidates to request either type of recount when issues have been found with ballot counting.

JUDICIAL RECOUNTS

Judicial recounts are conducted by a justice of the BC Supreme Court and take place after final count. A District Electoral Officer must request a judicial recount if the margin between the top two candidates is less than 1/500th of the total ballots considered. If votes were not correctly accepted or a ballot account does not accurately reflect the results of that election, the District Electoral Officer, a voter, or a candidate may request a judicial recount. Elections BC noted that these provisions have remained largely unchanged since the current version of the Act was enacted in 1995.

Section 141 (1) identifies who is entitled to be present at a judicial recount, specifically: the individual who applied for the recount; the District Electoral Officer and one other designated election official; the candidates in the election; one agent for each candidate who is present or two agents for each candidate who is not present; and the Chief Electoral Officer and an agent of the Chief Electoral Officer. Other individuals can attend only if allowed by the Court.

Elections BC affirmed that the provisions for a judicial recount based on a close result remain appropriate in the context of technology-enabled voting and counting. The original ballots for the electoral district subject to the recount are packaged and delivered to the Court, regardless of where they were cast. Candidates for the district are party to the process and entitled to be represented by legal counsel and scrutineers. Elections BC suggested that these procedures are less clear for cases when the recount results from an issue with a specific ballot account or voting opportunity. In BC's vote-anywhere model, a single ballot box may contain ballots from multiple districts, making it unclear which candidates are parties to the process and what representation they are entitled to.

Elections BC indicated that legislators may wish to consider how to strike the balance between the rights of candidates to be represented in judicial recount proceedings, with the need to limit the number of participants. The Office suggested that options could include designating representation for political parties rather than individual candidates and allowing for a court-appointed representative for independent candidates.

The BC NDP recommended implementing Elections BC's suggested option of allowing designated representatives from political parties to attend judicial recounts.

CONCERNS AND ALLEGATIONS REGARDING THE 2024 ELECTION

Vote counting in BC elections is subject to many safeguards and checks to ensure that the results are accurate. As mentioned, a recount may be requested based on the closeness of results or if an error is identified. Scrutineers, which are representatives of the candidates in the election, also observe registration, voting, and counting procedures, as well as the testing and quality assurance processes for tabulators. The tabulators used in counting undergo a five-step quality assurance process to ensure they count votes accurately.

One issue that was identified during the vote-counting process in 2024 was the failure to count one ballot box in Prince George-Mackenzie. On November 4, 2024, Elections BC announced it was applying for a partial judicial recount in Prince George-Mackenzie because election officials did not count one ballot box containing 861 votes on election night. According to Elections BC's report on the election, during advance voting, a ballot box had a ballot inserted in it without being tabulated. The Chief Electoral Officer issued an order to enable election officials to reset the tabulator and re-insert all of the ballots so that an accurate result could be produced. The order was not followed correctly and election officials did not include a ballot box when retabulating. The report includes steps on how Elections BC will prevent errors in future elections, including automated results reporting, improved quality assurance processes, and enhanced training and reference materials. Multiple consultation participants expressed concern about this event.

Additionally, some participants highlighted perceived issues with vote counting, including suggesting that the number of ballot boxes changed, describing alleged errors in counting the votes, and claiming that election results were announced too early or too late. Individuals also suggested that Elections BC's reports did not contain enough information about the Surrey-Guildford application for invalid election to the BC Supreme Court. Participants recommended ideas such as enhanced ballot tracking using digital technology and independent audits by neutral third parties.



TECHNOLOGY USE

BACKGROUND

The 2024 election was the first provincial general election administered using the modernized voting and counting provisions added to the *Election Act* in 2019. In the leadup to the election, the new procedures were used successfully in four provincial by-elections. The technology used in the voting place includes electronic voting books, wireless modems, tabulators, and printers. Electronic voting books are laptop computers that are used to search the list of voters, register voters, and strike people off the voters list when the vote. The wireless modems create a secure network within the voting place and synchronize strike-off data with a central server every five minutes during voting. Tabulators are machines that scan and count voter-marked paper ballots. They are never connected to the internet. Finally, printers are used to print ordinary ballots on-demand for people voting at a voting place outside of their electoral district.

During the election, 80 percent of all voting places used the full suite of technology described above. Another seven percent did not meet the connectivity standards required to share strike-off data with the central server throughout the day, so used the full suite of technology with that exception. A final 13 percent of voting places—specifically final voting places in small communities where it was difficult to transport technology or provide technical support—did not use technology.

To ensure that tabulators count votes accurately, Elections BC has a five-step quality assurance process. First, as part of a pre-use logic and accuracy test, a test set of ballots is fed through the tabulator to confirm that they are counted accurately. Some ballots are marked at the time of the test so the results are not known before it begins. This test confirms that the tabulator can count votes accurately for any electoral district and that the tabulator alerts the voter if their ballot is rejected or cannot be read. Before voting begins, an election official shows candidate representatives that no votes are stored in the tabulator, by printing a report that says no

votes have been tallied and by showing witnesses that the ballot box and auxiliary compartment are empty. After voting closes, the tabulator produces a results tape and election officials complete a reconciliation form. The reconciliation form confirms that all ballots are accounted for and that the total number of votes cast matches the total reported for that voting place. After initial count, election officials randomly select some tabulators and hand count the ballots counted by each tabulator. Candidate representatives observe these counts and can help select the tabulators. Elections BC noted that, in 2024, all hand counts across the province showed that tabulators counted votes accurately, and no requests for further recounts were made based on the results of those hand counts. Finally, a post-use logic and accuracy test is conducted on all tabulators used in the election following the same steps as the pre-use logic and accuracy test. In 2024, all tabulators passed this test.

For clarity, the tabulators used in BC elections are machines that count paper ballots that voters have marked themselves. The terminology used in the *Election Act* to refer to tabulators is “electronic vote-counting machines.” Many consultation participants referred to “electronic voting” or “electronic voting machines,” which in some contexts are used to refer to machines that allow people to vote directly using a machine, rather than marking a paper ballot. Per section 79.01 (2) of the Act, voting administration tools that allow voting using the internet or tools that enable a voter to record their choice through a method other than marking a paper ballot are specifically prohibited.

TECHNOLOGY USE

The Committee heard a range of perspectives regarding technology use. Some participants raised concerns about the transparency, trustworthiness, complexity, and accuracy of technology used in elections. One participant suggested that there has been confusion about technology use, and proposed that simple YouTube videos debunking election myths could address this. Another topic of interest to

consultation participants was privacy and security. Section 90 of the Act requires that voting must be by secret ballot and outlines requirements for preserving secrecy of the ballot. Tabulators were never connected to the internet or any other computer network, including electronic voting books. Multiple participants suggested that voting modernization threatens ballot secrecy, and another suggested that electronic poll books and tabulators record data that can be linked to voter identities. Some participants also suggested that tabulators have Wifi capability. Participants also raised concerns about security, with three individuals discussing how electronic devices can be hacked.

On final voting day in 2024, Elections BC reported 85 percent of preliminary results in an hour, up from 14 percent in 2017. Final count took place earlier than before, just six days after final voting day, instead of 13 or more as in previous elections. The *Election Act* requires final count to take place at least four days after the initial count. Elections BC noted that the election results were very close leading to an inconclusive election night result and intense public scrutiny. Multiple participants expressed that it took too long to finish counting ballots in 2024, with some noting that tabulators were promised to provide faster results. One individual shared that they had a positive experience with technology use in the election and that results on election night were returned very quickly.

Regarding the procurement of tabulators, Elections BC leased tabulators from Elections Ontario, as part of a program where Elections Ontario leases tabulators on a cost recovery basis when they are not required for an Ontario election. Previously they have leased tabulators to Elections New Brunswick and to municipalities across Canada. One participant objected to the fact that BC borrowed tabulators from Ontario. Finally, some participants suggested that modernized voting processes were deliberately used to rig the election.

In terms of recommendations, one participant recommended continuing technology use in voting and providing adequate information to the public. Multiple participants recommended ending technology use and returning to hand counting, with some citing specific examples of technologies they objected to such as electronic voting books and tabulators.

PROCESS OF VOTING MODERNIZATION

The changes to election administration in 2024 were required by amendments to the *Election Act* made in 2019.

These changes were largely based on Elections BC's 2018 *Recommendations for Legislative Change*. While Elections BC began preparing for these changes in November 2019, preparations were paused during the unscheduled 2020 election and resumed afterwards.

Dr. Stewart Prest of the University of British Columbia stated that during the 2024 election, Elections BC had three competing goals: enhancing voting accessibility, increasing the efficiency of vote counting, and maintaining the reliability of the vote. Dr. Prest noted that Elections BC enhanced accessibility through the vote-anywhere model and improved efficiency by adopting tabulators, but suggested that implementing several changes simultaneously increased the complexity of organizing the election and negatively affected perceptions of the reliability of the vote. As such, Dr. Prest recommended encouraging Elections BC to focus on honing the processes that were put in place recently, rather than continually trying new approaches, and ensuring incremental implementation of any future electoral modernization.

SCRUTINEERS

Scrutineers are candidate representatives that observe each step of the counting process, including initial count, final count, District Electoral Officer recounts, and judicial recounts. The Chief Electoral Officer noted that the use of technology has expanded the role of scrutineers. In addition to observing registration, voting, and counting procedures, they observe testing and quality assurance processes for tabulators. They can inspect voting books and sign ballot box seals and tabulator tapes as witnesses. They are also entitled to participation reports and a copy of the ballot account for their voting place.

Some individuals claimed that the scrutineer's role is now irrelevant and has been replaced by electronic tracking. Others suggested that only a fraction of ballots are visually scrutinized by scrutineers. One individual, who was the lead scrutineer for a candidate in 2024, expressed concern that an independent candidate was unable to scrutineer the votes counted outside of their electoral district, and was therefore unable to determine if ballots cast for that candidate were adjudicated properly. The individual suggested this concern also applies to parties that did not run candidates in every electoral district. They recommended that, where a ballot is rejected or not counted, an electronic copy be sent to the

candidate who will not receive that vote, so they can confirm or challenge the way the ballot has been adjudicated.

AUTOMATION

Some participants also shared their belief that future elections will be automated and expressed concern about this idea.

In its report on the election, Elections BC indicated that one way the Office intends to prevent errors in future elections is through automated results reporting for voting places using the full suite of technology. This would involve directly and securely uploading results data from tabulator memory cards using an encrypted network, eliminating the potential for results reporting transcription errors or omissions. Elections BC emphasized that memory card data would be uploaded using a separate laptop computer after voting closes, maintaining the principle that tabulators are never connected to the internet. Four participants expressed concern about this proposal, suggesting the laptop would be connected to the internet. Others expressed concern about automating elections generally, which has not been proposed.



AWARENESS AND INFORMATION

ELECTIONS BC ENFORCEMENT

Amendments to the *Election Act* in 2023 added sections 234.1 to 234.5 prohibiting misrepresentation and false statements regarding election results, processes, candidates, and officials. Elections BC conducts investigations to determine if non-compliance has occurred and may order the takedown of specific election advertising or content that does not conform with the Act. While the Act authorizes the Chief Electoral Officer to require advertisers to produce information related to advertising contraventions outlined in section 276.01 (2) (a), this power does not extend to communications that violate the misinformation and disinformation provisions.

Elections BC stated that current provisions can make it challenging to identify and investigate the authors of misleading or false communications and recommended that the Chief Electoral Officer be authorized to issue administrative production orders for contraventions under sections 234.1 to 234.5. Elections BC suggested that these amendments would improve timely investigations, strengthen enforcement, support electoral transparency and integrity, and enhance accountability in political advertising. The Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, the BC General Employees' Union, and the BC NDP all supported the recommendation. The Centre also recommended authorizing Elections BC to order action on corrections to misinformation and disinformation as needed.

Conversely, the Committee heard concerns from a small number of participants who suggested that Elections BC's recommendation to expand the Chief Electoral Officer's authority in this area would compel social media platforms to produce user data without judicial warrants. One individual recommended that production orders require judicial pre-authorization, have their scope limited to specific investigations, and include explicit user notification rights.

MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Participants raised concerns about misinformation, disinformation, and foreign interference in elections. Misinformation is false information shared by someone unaware that it is false, whereas disinformation is false information spread deliberately. The Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions reported that 43 percent of British Columbians were highly concerned about online misinformation when surveyed over the course of the 2024 provincial general election. The Centre noted that while the election campaign period unfolded without major controversy, online misinformation escalated on final voting day and directly targeted Elections BC and its staff. Electoral administration issues in Prince George-Mackenzie and Surrey-Guildford fueled speculation about electoral integrity. Dr. Stewart Prest of the University of British Columbia noted that people are increasingly discrediting BC's electoral integrity online and while it may seem like a small subset of the population, the threat needs to be taken seriously, emphasizing that misinformation and disinformation are only likely to increase in future.

At the national level, the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions pointed to a study conducted by the Media Ecosystem Observatory in 2025 which found that 43 percent of Canadians had encountered claims that vote counts were faked or otherwise illegally manipulated. The Centre noted that only eight percent of respondents believed these claims. The report identified around 100 accounts that were responsible for posting over two-thirds of these claims on the platform X (formerly known as Twitter). The Centre emphasized that this reflects a broader pattern, that a small but very vocal set of online voices promote and consume conspiratorial messages.

Through its research, the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions found increasing fragmentation in the online information environment, suggesting that the digital landscape may amplify information silos and hinder deliberative dialogue. The Centre noted that some actors

use elections to pursue fraud and impersonation, indicating that during the 2025 Canadian federal election, scammers impersonated news sites and politicians via social media posts and websites. The Centre also indicated that Elections BC may need to investigate if fraudulent social media posts and websites are coordinated, include prohibited content like impersonation of electoral officials, or violate campaign spending laws.

To address misinformation and disinformation, Dr. Prest stated that a two-pronged approach is required and must include acting before an election (pre-bunking) as well as during an election (debunking). Dr. Prest indicated that pre-bunking works best when done proactively by making accurate information easy to access online and dispelling common myths. He also noted that debunking must, in addition to exposing misinformation and disinformation, clearly explain why claims are wrong and identify sources of correct information. Dr. Prest recommended that Elections BC make information about electoral processes and election integrity readily available to the public and easier to verify to make dispelling misinformation and disinformation easier and more efficient. The Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions also made recommendations in this area, suggesting pre-emptively addressing anti-government conspiracies and fraudulent messages in strategic messaging plans and preventing data voids by providing accurate information through trusted channels.

The Committee also heard about how civil society could provide solutions. Dr. Prest discussed how individuals are more likely to believe and trust information coming from within their community or from their peers, encouraging Elections BC to develop a network of trusted partners across sectors including education, media, and politics to help reinforce the reliability and integrity of the electoral process and to ensure that accurate information about the election process is widely disseminated. The Centre recommended supporting capacity-building for organizations to investigate and understand BC's evolving information environment and its effects on democratic processes. The Centre additionally recommended ensuring that a future centre of excellence for democratic engagement, the establishment of which was recommended by the Committee in its first report, build strong connections with research centres and civil society organizations already focused on these issues and build capacity for comparable long-term monitoring across elections.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Participants also shared concerns about the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) and the potential threats it poses to democratic processes. The Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions described research it conducted with the Media Ecosystem Observatory during the 2024 provincial general election, which found that around 50 percent of Canadians surveyed expressed very or extreme concern about AI use in elections. The Centre stated that AI makes it easier to create fake news websites, scam posts, or deepfakes, and makes it harder for voters to find reliable information by creating a high volume of low-quality media. The Centre indicated that deepfakes particularly affect women, raising concerns about harassment and whether it might reduce the number of women willing to run for office. In terms of election information sources, the Centre highlighted that AI chatbots are increasingly becoming the main source of information for voters, adding that this creates new vulnerabilities for foreign interference where actors can exploit data voids, spaces with little or no high-quality information, to inject incorrect material that is then reproduced by chatbots. To address concerns related to AI, the Centre recommended assessing the accuracy of dominant AI chatbot models, and creating accessible and reliable election materials for chatbots to discover. The Centre also recommended providing government support for civil society to experiment with AI and chatbots to increase public understanding of complex policy issues and facilitate large-scale public engagement.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

In advance of the 2024 provincial general election, Elections BC took several steps to inform and engage voters. Firstly, Elections BC ran public education campaigns using both traditional and digital media to encourage British Columbians to vote during advance voting, inform voters about new voting processes and technologies, and provide information on how the Office would maintain electoral integrity. Elections BC also partnered with civil society organizations to deliver voting education programs. As well, Elections BC established an Indigenous community liaison program where liaisons worked with Elections BC to improve knowledge about voter registration and the voting process in Indigenous communities. In terms of recommendations, participants suggested improving Elections BC's website and promoting Elections BC reports through municipal newsletters and schools. One individual suggested that Elections BC work with

municipalities to help the public better identify local news agencies hosting debates in their area.

Elections BC highlighted that the Act requires the publication of several notices, including notices of election (per sections 28 and 62) and those for the closing period for general registration (per section 37 (3)). Section 270 requires these notices to be published on the internet and in one or more newspapers circulating in affected electoral districts. Elections BC noted that declining newspaper circulation and the administrative burden of publication criteria reduce the effectiveness of Election BC's current approach. To modernize communications and increase efficiency, Elections BC recommended providing the Chief Electoral Officer with discretion over the content and publication methods for statutory notices. The Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions supported Elections BC's recommendation, highlighting that BC's information environment is increasingly fragmented. The Centre noted that while news media remain important for sharing credible information, it has faced serious challenges, including the Meta news ban and, in some parts of the population, declining trust.



COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

In reviewing the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the election and the input received during the Committee's consultation, the Committee agreed that the administration of the 2024 provincial general election was largely effective. The Committee expressed its confidence in the work of Elections BC and the integrity of BC's elections, and suggested targeted improvements to further strengthen and streamline BC's election administration.

Committee Members reflected on input received regarding oversight of Elections BC, and agreed that Elections BC is already subject to significant non-partisan, multi-party oversight by the Legislative Assembly. Members also emphasized Elections BC's neutrality and independence. The Committee reflected on its own role in upholding accountability, promoting transparency, and exercising legislative oversight. The Committee recommended appointing a parliamentary committee after every provincial general election to review the administration of the election and make recommendations for improvements to future elections, noting that such a committee could uphold public confidence in BC elections and counteract misinformation and disinformation.

Regarding Elections BC's general enforcement powers, the Committee agreed that Elections BC requires enforcement powers proportionate to the severity of the non-compliance in question, and recommended that the Chief Electoral Officer be empowered to issue administrative monetary penalties for voting violations under section 257 and for repeat and deliberate campaigning activity within 100 metres of voting places. Members reflected on the important role of staff in enforcing the Act and indicated that enforcement powers should be accompanied with appropriate training. The Committee also supported amending the Act to establish penalties for repeated non-compliance with respect to political parties that file late or inaccurate nomination contest reports and third-party sponsors that do not file changes to registration information. Committee Members agreed on the importance of enforcement, but noted that political campaigns are generally run by volunteers, who may make honest

mistakes, and suggested that penalties should focus on repeat and flagrant violations. Regarding the requirement to publish a record of monetary penalties on both Elections BC's website and in the *BC Gazette*, Committee Members recommended that the requirement to publish monetary penalties in the *Gazette* be maintained. The Committee noted that the *Gazette* is an important official record and source of truth, regardless of its public reach.

The Committee reflected on input regarding the Chief Electoral Officer's delegation powers and the protection of election officials from legal action. The Committee noted that Elections BC indicated that allowing delegation of statutory authority to temporary employees would enhance Elections BC's flexibility with respect to delegating powers to legal counsel and other specialized personnel. Members concluded that allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to delegate statutory authority is appropriate, and emphasized that staff who have been delegated statutory authority are subject to oversight and accountability. As such, the Committee recommended that the Chief Electoral Officer be allowed to delegate statutory authority to any individual necessary to exercise assigned powers or perform assigned duties, regardless of employment status under the *Public Service Act*. Members also agreed that election officials acting in good faith should be protected from legal action, noting that this would not extend to officials acting in bad faith. Members observed that provision of statutory immunity would also be aligned with the protections given to other statutory officers in BC. The Committee therefore recommended providing election officials acting in good faith with immunity from legal action in a manner consistent with best practices in other Canadian jurisdictions.

The Committee heard varied perspectives on voter registration and eligibility. The Committee reasserted its confidence in the security of BC's voting system and indicated that authorizing the Chief Electoral Officer to collect information about citizenship status for the purposes of the *Election Act* would further enhance election integrity. The Committee recommended that the Chief Electoral Officer be authorized

to enter into information-sharing agreements with the Government of Canada to enable Elections BC to collect information about non-citizens for the purposes of the *Election Act*, and to update the list of voters based on information received through these agreements. The Committee expressed its strong support for measures that allow as many eligible voters as possible to exercise their right to vote. Committee Members emphasized that Elections BC has a responsibility to provide information to British Columbians in as many formats as possible to ensure they are aware of the eligibility criteria and how to vote. They further expressed their support for the vouching system, noting that many people, including seniors and people who are hospitalized, rely on this method of identification to vote. To support registering as many eligible voters as possible, the Committee recommended that section 43 (3) of the Act be repealed to allow voter registration changes during an enumeration to remain valid if the enumeration is cancelled.

Committee Members reflected on opportunities to enhance the consistency, efficiency, and transparency of provisions affecting political parties and campaigns. Regarding nomination contest information and financing reports, Committee Members observed that political parties are already required to submit certain information to Elections BC and that nomination contestants are subject to financial reporting requirements. The Committee determined that this information should be publicly available, and contemplated whether there should be a threshold to exempt smaller campaigns from scrutiny. The Committee recommended amending the Act to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to publish nomination contest information filed under section 59.01 and nomination contestant financing reports filed under section 211.01. While the Committee recognized that having the ability to collect contact information from nominators would benefit both Elections BC and candidates, Committee Members recommended that this be optional to protect nominators' privacy and limit barriers to participation. To further enhance efficiency, Committee Members recommended that standing and ordinary nominations be consolidated into a single period under Chief Electoral Officer administration and that the Chief Electoral Officer be authorized to declare candidates under section 61 (1). They also agreed that a successful nomination contestant should be considered an endorsed candidate for election financing as soon as the party files nomination contest information. Reflecting on their own experiences as candidates, Committee Members

recommended that Elections BC review the design of the candidate nomination form to improve its usability and to reduce nominator disqualifications.

The Committee noted that while there is no history of political party mergers in BC, party mergers have occurred elsewhere in Canada and Members agreed on the importance of proactively implementing rules in this area to avoid confusion and increase transparency. The Committee also emphasized that amendments to the Act must protect the personal information of party members and donors in the event of a merger. Committee Members reflected on Elections BC's recommendation that the definition of political party be amended to include organizations primarily controlled by a political party. The Committee appreciated the intent of this recommendation and agreed that consistency in election financing requirements is important, but indicated that more examination of this recommendation is required, including how it would be determined that an organization is "primarily controlled" by a political party.

To further streamline election administration, the Committee recommended adding three days to the campaign period by calling by-elections and fixed-date elections on a Wednesday and increasing election expense limits proportionally.

The Committee reflected on changes in the information environment and election advertising, and noted the increasing number of people voting during the advance voting period which is not subject to the same advertising rules as final voting day. The Committee recommended allowing advertising on final voting day, noting that doing so could potentially encourage voter turnout. Citing the importance of ensuring consistency between the pre-campaign period and the campaign period and between different types of election participants, Members recommended requiring political parties and candidates to include sponsorship information when advertising during the pre-campaign period. The Committee also noted that this change would increase accountability and transparency by reducing opportunities for anonymous political messaging during the pre-campaign period. With respect to other advertising requirements, the Committee recommended that existing registration requirements for third-party sponsors be maintained, suggesting that if a minimum threshold for registration were established, large campaigns could circumvent the rules to avoid oversight.

Committee Members considered in detail how to promote transparency and efficiency in BC's election financing rules.

The Committee noted that Elections BC's existing financial reporting requirements are very complex and difficult to navigate, and agreed that the process could be simplified for both Elections BC and political campaigns. The Committee recommended that Elections BC review its internal processes and procedures relating to financial reporting with a view to increasing efficiency and improving accessibility for all election participants.

Regarding political contributions, the Committee recommended that all filers listed under section 180 (1) be required to assign a unique contributor ID to each individual contributor and include it in financial reports. Members appreciated that Elections BC did not propose imposing a specific model noting that it would provide maximum flexibility while enhancing accountability and reducing the risk of over contributions. The Committee also supported establishing a minimum age for making political contributions. Committee Members emphasized the importance of ensuring that all contributions are made with an individual's own money, property, or services, but added that a minimum age should be chosen that does not prevent youth from engaging with political parties or campaigns. Members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of specific minimum ages for making political contributions including aligning it with the voting age, the age at which young people can be added to the list of future voters, the minimum age to obtain a driver's licence, and ages in the *Employment Standards Act*.

To support accountability, Members recommended amending section 215.04 of the *Election Act* to establish a deadline and ineligibility criteria for submitting election expense reimbursements, suggesting that two years could be an appropriate deadline. Also with strengthened enforcement in mind, Committee Members recommended amending the Act to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to prescribe additional information by regulation for specified fundraising function reports and additional information for third-party sponsor reports, and to disqualify individuals who have failed to file a report under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* from acting as financial agents or auditors. To ensure that enforcement is proportionate, the Committee recommended amending the Act to replace administrative monetary penalties for late filing of specific fundraising functions with a late filing period and a late filing fee. Additionally, the Committee discussed the issue of leadership contestant surplus funds and the need for clarity and guidance in this area, recommending the establishment of a clear process for disbursing leadership

contestant surplus funds. The Committee also supported amending the Act to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to round amounts calculated using the consumer price index adjustment ratio. With a view to transparency, Committee Members recommended amending the Act to include contributions accepted by nomination contestants in the annual financial reports filed by political parties.

The Committee discussed the importance of auditing in promoting transparency and accountability in election financing. Committee Members recommended increasing the audit threshold to \$17,500, with a provision to adjust based on the consumer price index, noting that the threshold has remained unchanged for several decades. The Committee emphasized that this change would increase fairness for independent candidates and smaller parties who may face greater challenges paying the high cost of audits. Regarding Elections BC's recommendation that candidates be allowed to delay the appointment of an auditor until the audit threshold is reached, the Committee recommended retaining the current requirement to appoint an auditor upon submission of nomination documents in accordance with section 54 of the Act. Members expressed that the current process is working well and the early appointment of an auditor reinforces fiscal responsibility and oversight.

Turning to voting, Committee Members reflected on how the range of voting opportunities available ensure that BC's elections are accessible while continuing to uphold election integrity. They strongly supported continuing to offer voting opportunities in assisted living facilities. Regarding access to voting in health facilities, the Committee recommended amending the Act to require access for voting when other voting opportunities are unavailable, provided that such access does not interfere with medical advice or pose a threat to public health. They noted that this would provide consistency across the province and ensure that individuals in these facilities can exercise their right to vote. Committee Members further recommended amending the Act to prohibit candidates and individuals representing them from assisting voters in marking mail-in ballots, except where the voter would be unable to vote, and establishing a corresponding penalty, noting that doing so would ensure consistency with existing requirements for in-person voting opportunities. Committee Members also agreed with Elections BC's recommendation to permit remote translators to assist voters at in-person voting opportunities, and highlighted the Office's suggested options of allowing oral declarations in place of

solemn declarations or exempting certified translators from declaration requirements.

Regarding vote-by-mail, the Committee expressed interest in amendments to the Act that support accessibility for as many eligible voters as possible. Committee Members supported amending the Act to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to prescribe additional forms of ordinary ballots for use in specific voting opportunities, including mail-in voting, noting that existing forms of regular ballots do not fit inside standard envelopes. The Committee further recommended amending the Act to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to accept corrected voter identification for mail-in voting packages up to the close of voting. Committee Members reflected on increased rates of mail-in voting and contemplated changes required to adjust to these volumes. Noting that vote-by-mail packages received after the close of final voting are not counted, the Committee recommended election officials be provided more flexibility to determine when these packages are processed and what information is recorded. Committee Members indicated that this change would be an administrative measure to enhance the efficiency of processing mail-in ballots.

The Committee discussed assisted telephone voting, and commended Elections BC's clear explanation of the assisted telephone voting process. Committee Members stated that this explanation reinforced their confidence in this voting opportunity. The Committee agreed that the availability of assisted telephone voting is key to ensure accessibility and to mitigate exceptional circumstances, guaranteeing that all eligible voters can exercise their right to vote. Additionally, Committee Members reflected on input received regarding the training of election officials. They discussed the challenges faced by Elections BC when hiring large numbers of temporary staff in a short timeframe and emphasized the need to further increase awareness about opportunities to work for the Office. The Committee reiterated its confidence in Elections BC, stating that the Office already offers comprehensive training to election officials, but noted that some human error is inevitable. Members highlighted steps that Elections BC is already undertaking to integrate lessons learned from the 2024 election including developing enhanced training and reference materials to reinforce quality assurance steps for results reporting and ensuring accountability for their completion.

Regarding vote-counting processes, the Committee reflected on input from individuals that expressed concern about the

integrity of the election and emphasized that BC's elections are subject to robust safeguards and are trustworthy and reliable. The Committee recognized that, while there was significant public attention paid to certain aspects of election administration, Elections BC is a neutral third party and can be trusted to independently administer BC's elections without any interference. Members appreciated Elections BC's clear explanation for why a ballot box in Prince George-Mackenzie was initially not counted, and recognized that human error is challenging to prevent. They agreed that process improvements can continue to decrease the likelihood of human error, but affirmed that BC's elections are secure and trustworthy. The Committee also discussed concerns raised by consultation participants about election officials taking ballot boxes home during advance voting in rural and remote ridings, and emphasized that this is a secure, reliable, and longstanding practice in Canadian elections given our large geography.

The Committee also considered opportunities to enhance the efficiency of BC's vote-counting processes, while continuing to uphold election integrity. The Committee recommended amending the Act to allow transcription of ballots cast at district electoral offices to begin when voting at the office closes, noting that currently, district electoral offices are required to wait until the close of final voting to begin transcription. Members identified that allowing early transcription, while still prohibiting any early counting, would increase efficiency. To further streamline counting processes, the Committee recommended repealing section 135 (2) (c) of the Act to eliminate the requirement to mix ballots from certification envelopes prior to counting.

Committee Members also carefully considered BC's recount processes. Regarding close-margin District Electoral Officer recounts, the Committee agreed that the existing automatic provisions for these recounts should be maintained. Committee Members also reflected on considerations around who is eligible to attend judicial recounts where ballots from multiple electoral districts are being considered in a single recount. The Committee recommended that designated representatives from political parties be added to the list of individuals eligible to be present, but supported retaining the rights of individual candidates and their representatives to attend.

The Committee heard varied perspectives on the use of tabulators and other technology in BC's elections. Committee

Members reflected on their own experiences observing the quality assurance processes for tabulators as candidates during the election, and emphasized that they are a trustworthy element of election administration. The Committee noted that voting processes in other countries, which may have different challenges, have impacted British Columbians' views of how BC elections work and how tabulators function. Given the concerns raised in the Committee's consultation regarding technology use, the Committee recommended that Elections BC provide adequate public information and education about technology use in voting.

Reflecting on input regarding the role of scrutineers, the Committee agreed that scrutineers are an essential part of ensuring the accuracy of and trust in BC's elections, and emphasized that their critical role has been maintained. With respect to the process of voting modernization, Committee Members recognized the scope of changes that Elections BC was required to implement in the lead up to the 2024 provincial general election, noting that many of them were required by legislation. Members also noted that while the changes may have felt sudden, some of the changes regarding the accessibility of voting were advocated for by seniors and people with disabilities for a long time. The Committee emphasized the importance of ensuring that BC's elections are accessible to everyone.

The Committee expressed concern about efforts to undermine or interfere with electoral processes by spreading misinformation and disinformation. Committee Members emphasized the importance of educating the public and making credible information broadly accessible to help prevent misinformation and disinformation. To this end, the Committee recommended that Elections BC pre-emptively address misinformation and disinformation by increasing public awareness and education efforts, ensuring accurate information about election processes and electoral integrity is readily available, and making verification easier and more efficient. Committee Members also suggested that Elections BC develop a network of trusted partners, including local authorities, to reinforce the reliability and integrity of electoral processes by ensuring that accurate information is widely disseminated. With respect to the challenges posed by artificial intelligence, the Committee recommended that the provincial government and Elections BC assess the accuracy of dominant chatbot models, disseminate accurate information, and support civil society experimentation with artificial intelligence to help citizens better understand election administration

and democratic processes. To strengthen Elections BC's enforcement powers in this area, Members recommended amending section 276.01 of the Act to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to issue administrative production orders for communications that violate misinformation and disinformation provisions. They further recommended authorizing Elections BC to order action on corrections as needed. Additionally, Committee Members noted that making a clear distinction between opinion and misinformation is important to protect individuals' rights to free speech.

Regarding general improvements to public information, Committee Members strongly encouraged Elections BC to make improvements to the Office's website to make it easier to find information. The Committee also recognized that it is becoming increasingly challenging and expensive to use traditional media for advertising, and recommended that the Chief Electoral Officer be provided discretion over information and publication methods for statutory notices.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

ELECTIONS BC MANDATE AND POWERS

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that:

1. A parliamentary committee be appointed after every provincial general election to review the administration of the election and make recommendations for improvements to future elections.
2. The *Election Act* be amended to provide the Chief Electoral Officer with an option to issue administrative monetary penalties for voting violations under section 257 and for repeat and deliberate campaigning activity within 100 metres of voting places under section 234.
3. The *Election Act* be amended to establish penalties for repeated non-compliance with respect to political parties that file late or inaccurate nomination contest reports and third-party sponsors that do not file changes to registration information.
4. The requirement to publish monetary penalties in the *BC Gazette* be maintained.
5. The Chief Electoral Officer be allowed to delegate statutory authority to any individual necessary to exercise assigned powers or perform assigned duties, regardless of employment status under the *Public Service Act*.
6. Election officials acting in good faith be provided with immunity from legal action in a manner consistent with best practices in other Canadian jurisdictions.

REGISTRATION AND ELIGIBILITY

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that:

7. The Chief Electoral Officer be authorized to enter into information-sharing agreements with the Government of Canada to enable Elections BC to collect information about non-citizens for the purposes of the *Election Act*, and to update the Provincial List of Voters based on information received through these agreements.

8. Section 43 (3) of the *Election Act* be repealed to allow voter registration changes during an enumeration to remain valid if the enumeration is cancelled.

CAMPAIGNING AND PARTIES

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that:

9. The *Election Act* be amended to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to publish nomination contest information filed under section 59.01 and nomination contestant financing reports filed under section 211.01
10. Standing and ordinary nominations be consolidated into a single period under Chief Electoral Officer administration and the Chief Electoral Officer be authorized to declare candidates under section 61 (1).
11. A successful nomination contestant be considered an endorsed candidate for election financing as soon as the party files nomination contest information.
12. Nominators have the option to provide a telephone number and/or email address.
13. Elections BC review the design of the candidate nomination form to improve its usability and to reduce nominator disqualifications.
14. The *Election Act* be amended to address party merger related matters including party names and registration procedures, financial transfers, contribution limits, reporting requirements, and membership and donor information.
15. Three days be added to the campaign period by calling by-elections and fixed-date elections on a Wednesday.
16. Election expense limits be increased proportionally with the extension of the campaign period.
17. Advertising on final voting day be allowed.
18. The *Election Act* be amended to require political parties and candidates to include sponsorship information when advertising during the pre-campaign period.

19. Existing registration requirements for third-party sponsors be maintained.

FINANCING

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that:

20. Section 190 of the *Election Act* be amended to require all filers listed under section 180 (1) to assign a unique contributor ID to each individual contributor and include it in financial reports.
21. A minimum age for making political contributions be established.
22. Elections BC review its internal processes and procedures relating to financial reporting with a view to increasing efficiency and improving accessibility for all election participants.
23. Section 215.04 of the *Election Act* be amended to establish a deadline and ineligibility criteria for submitting election expense reimbursements.
24. The *Election Act* be amended to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to round amounts calculated using the consumer price index adjustment ratio.
25. Section 207 (4) of the *Election Act* be amended to include contributions accepted by nomination contestants in the annual financial reports filed by political parties.
26. Section 185.02 of the *Election Act* be amended to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to prescribe additional information by regulation for specified fundraising function reports and that sections 243.01 (3) and 243.01 (5) of the Act be amended to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to prescribe additional information by regulation for third-party sponsor reports.
27. A clear process for disbursing leadership contestant surplus funds be established.
28. Section 176 (1) of the *Election Act* be amended to disqualify individuals who have failed to file a report under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* from acting as financial agents or auditors.
29. The *Election Act* be amended to replace administrative monetary penalties for late filing of specified fundraising functions under section 185.02 with a late filing period and late filing fee.

30. The audit threshold for election financing reports be raised to \$17,500 with a provision to adjust based on the consumer price index.
31. The current requirements for candidates to appoint an auditor be retained.

VOTING

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that:

32. The *Election Act* be amended to require health facility administrators to facilitate access for voting when other voting opportunities are unavailable provided that such access does not interfere with medical advice or pose a threat to public health.
33. Section 109.01 of the *Election Act* be amended to prohibit candidates and individuals representing them from assisting voters in marking mail-in ballots, except where the voter would otherwise be unable to vote, and that a corresponding penalty be established for non-compliance.
34. The *Election Act* be amended to permit remote translators to assist voters at in-person voting opportunities.
35. Sections 283 (4) and 283 (5) of the *Election Act* be amended to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to prescribe additional forms of ordinary ballots for use in specified voting opportunities, including mail-in voting.
36. The *Election Act* be amended to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to accept corrected voter identification for mail-in voting packages up to the close of voting.
37. Election officials be provided more flexibility with processing requirements for mail-in voting packages received after the close of voting (which are not counted).

COUNTING

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that:

38. The *Election Act* be amended to allow transcription of ballots cast at the district electoral office to begin when voting at the district electoral office closes.
39. Section 135 (2) (c) of the *Election Act* be repealed to eliminate the requirement to mix ballots from certification envelopes prior to counting.

40. The automatic provisions for close-margin District Electoral Officer recounts be maintained.
41. When ballots from multiple electoral districts are being considered in a single judicial recount, designated representatives from political parties be added to the list of individuals eligible to be present.

TECHNOLOGY USE

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that:

42. Elections BC provide adequate public information and education about technology use in voting.

AWARENESS AND INFORMATION

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that:

43. Section 276.01 of the *Election Act* be amended to authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to issue administrative production orders for communications that violate the misinformation and disinformation provisions.
44. Elections BC be authorized to order action on corrections as needed.
45. Elections BC pre-emptively address misinformation and disinformation by increasing public awareness and education efforts, ensuring accurate information about election processes and electoral integrity is readily available, and making verification easier and more efficient.
46. Elections BC develop a network of trusted partners, including local authorities, to reinforce the reliability and integrity of electoral processes by ensuring that accurate information is widely disseminated.
47. The provincial government and Elections BC respond to the challenges of artificial intelligence, including by assessing the accuracy of dominant chatbot models, disseminating accurate information, and supporting civil society experimentation with artificial intelligence to help citizens better understand election administration and democratic processes.
48. The Chief Electoral Officer be provided discretion over information and publication methods for statutory notices.



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