

Minutes
Election Advisory Committee
Consultation on recommended legislative changes

March 5, 2010

8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.
Fairmont Waterfront Hotel
900 Canada Place Way, Vancouver, British Columbia

Attending:

Committee Members

Hector MacKay-Dunn, BC Liberal Party (departed at 11:30 a.m.)
Kelly Reichert, BC Liberal Party
Leslie Kerr, BC NDP
Jan O'Brien, BC NDP (departed at 12:45 p.m.)
Murray Weisenberger, Green Party Political Association of British Columbia

Elections BC

Harry Neufeld, Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)
Linda Johnson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer
Nola Western, Executive Director, Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration
Anton Boegman, Executive Director, Corporate Planning and Event Management
Amie Foster, Executive Program Manager (minutes)
Kevin Atcheson, Researcher/Policy Analyst

1. Purpose of Meeting

Harry Neufeld advised that the purpose of this Election Advisory Committee meeting was to review in detail Elections BC's proposed recommendations for legislative amendments. Following this consultation and the Committee members' feedback, the recommendations will be made in a report to be tabled in the Legislature on April 12, 2010.

Harry Neufeld asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

Murray Wiesenberger stated that the Green party Political Association of British Columbia was happy to support all of the proposed recommendations. He also presented the Chief Electoral Officer with a letter proposing additional legislative changes regarding public policy matters.

Harry Neufeld reminded all EAC members that Elections BC makes recommendations on the 'plumbing' or technical side of electoral legislation only and that public policy issues are outside of the mandate of Elections BC. Public policy matters are best raised with the Ministry of the Attorney General or Members of the Legislative Assembly.

2. Review of Proposed Legislative Amendments to the *Election Act*

The responsibility for Elections BC's legislative matters rests with the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Linda Johnson, who led discussion on the proposed recommendations.

Recommendation, s. 1, 19, 82, 88, 92, 93, 109, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126, 273

The definition of "Voting Officer" should be removed from the definitions in section 1 of the Act. Remove the requirement that a voting officer and a second election official be appointed to each voting station. Establish that the District Electoral Officer must appoint sufficient election officials to conduct the election proceedings, without specifying tasks associated with a specific election official's role in a voting place. Replace all references to "Voting Officer" with "the election official responsible".

Discussion

Hector MacKay-Dunn of the BC Liberal Party asked a clarifying question regarding the possible impact on voters at the voting place.

Linda Johnson responded that it would simply allow for greater flexibility in staffing to address the changing flow of voters throughout General Voting Day. She also stated that the costs of running elections are primarily human costs and that this would allow for staffing flexibility which could be especially beneficial in urban areas.

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP asked if this change would mean that shrinking budgets could result in increased workloads for election workers.

Harry Neufeld assured EAC members that event budgets have not faced the same pressures as operational budgets and that the current model is a very inefficient use of human resources.

Hector MacKay-Dunn of the BC Liberal Party asked how this compares to the federal model.

Harry Neufeld stated that Elections Canada is facing the same recruitment challenges and is also considering changes.

Murray Weisenberger of the Green Party Political Association of British Columbia asked if the DEO and DDEO roles would remain the same.

Anton Boegman assured Murray Weisenberger that they would, and stated that the current model requires Elections BC to employ 37,000 people during a general election for positions that are increasingly complex. He stated that many of the people available for this type of work do not have the necessary skills and that these changes could reduce the number of staff needed while still providing excellent service to voters.

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 31(1), (2)

Amendments to the Act should not apply until six months after Royal Assent, unless a Gazette notice of readiness is published earlier.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 22

Permit the CEO to appoint District Registrars of Voters and Deputy District Registrars of Voters to future electoral districts when an enactment establishes electoral districts that are to take effect at a future time. This will also require an amendment to s.12(2)(e) regarding the CEO's duties and powers.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 29(e)

For certainty, amend section 29(e) to include a requirement for voters to be registered at their current residential address for the purpose of voting.

Discussion

Linda Johnson stated that this recommendation would explicitly state what is already in law to reduce confusion at the voting place.

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 31(1)

Amend s. 31 to permit individuals who will be fully qualified as of General Voting Day for a fixed-date election to register prior to meeting those qualifications, but no earlier than 60 days before the election is called.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 32(4)

Amend 32(4) to include the place of arrest or trial as residence options for incarcerated voters.

Discussion

Anton Boegman stated that the location of arrest is easily verifiable.

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP asked for the participation figures for incarcerated voters.

Anton Boegman stated that Elections BC does not keep statistics regarding incarcerated voters. However, in 2005 one individual was a candidate while incarcerated.

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 41(3)(b)

Either clarify that voters who present a Certificate of Indian Status are not required to provide proof of residential address, or remove reference to the Certificate of Indian Status as a form of identification that can be used to satisfy the requirements of the Act. The Chief Electoral Officer may establish the Certificate of Indian Status as a type of document that may be used for the purposes of satisfying the requirement to prove a voter's identity. An additional document of a type approved by the CEO may be used to prove the voter's residential address.

Discussion

Linda Johnson noted that it was unclear whether this was a drafting error. However, it appears to have been an unanticipated situation that some voters were not required to provide proof of residential address.

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP asked if this change could be a potential barrier to older voters.

Linda Johnson assured EAC members that it specifically applies to voters with Indian Status cards.

Kelly Reichert of the BC Liberal Party agreed that there was some confusion for scrutineers during the 2009 General Election regarding this issue.

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 41(3), 41.1

As an exception to sections 41(3) and 41.1, provide discretion to election officials administering voting in medical facilities, institutions and long-term care facilities to only require one document with the voter's name, and permit the voter to make a solemn declaration as to the voter's residential address.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 41.1

Permit a child, grandchild or sibling who is 18 years of age or older to vouch for a voter.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 41.2

Establish how an individual may satisfy a challenge to their right to register by making parallel provisions to those in s. 111.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 42.1, (new section)

Establish that in a residence-to-residence enumeration, an individual may provide the information necessary to register another member of their family, or an individual resident at the same address, or to update that individual's registration information.

Discussion

Leslie Kerr of the BC NDP asked a clarifying question about the current information needed to register a voter.

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, Part 5, Division 1

Require individuals who declare their intent to become a candidate and nominees selected by their registered political party and/or constituency association to be a candidate in the next election in an electoral district to file a notice with Elections BC within 15 days after their declaration or selection as the nominee. This notice of intent should include the

designation of a financial agent. This would allow Elections BC to communicate with the potential candidate and financial agent well in advance of the election period to ensure knowledge of and facilitate compliance with the election financing provisions. A notice of intent would not be available for public inspection, and would not form part of the individual's nomination documents.

Discussion

Linda Johnson stated that the goal of this recommendation is to facilitate compliance by communicating the rules and establishing a relationship with potential candidates as early as possible.

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP expressed concern regarding this recommendation due to the increased administrative burden on potential candidates and the effect of the requirement on political parties. She pointed out that some individuals declare their intent to be a candidate for a political party before the party has held a nomination contest.

Nola Western asked Jan O'Brien and other members of the EAC how this recommendation could be amended to their satisfaction.

The EAC agreed to the following revised wording:

“Require a notice to be filed with the Chief Electoral Officer within 15 days after an individual declares their intent to become a candidate or is selected by their registered political party and/or constituency association to be a candidate in the next election in an electoral district, whichever is later. This notice of intent should include the designation of a financial agent. This would allow Elections BC to communicate with the potential candidate and financial agent well in advance of the election period to ensure knowledge of and facilitate compliance with the election financing provisions. A notice of intent would not be available for public inspection, and would not form part of the individual's nomination documents.”

Recommendation, s. 54(3)(c)(d)(e), 54(4), 57(3)(b)

Replace the requirement for solemn declarations in the nomination process with a requirement for a signed declaration by the individual nominated.

Discussion

Hector MacKay-Dunn of the BC Liberal Party asked a clarifying question regarding how often this is an issue.

Linda stated that it is a common complaint and can be a barrier.

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, Part 5, Division 3

Add a section in the *Election Act* which guarantees access to rental properties covered by the *Residential Tenancy Act* by candidates or their representatives during a campaign period for the purpose of campaigning.

Discussion

Kelly Reichert of the BC Liberal Party agreed that there are frequent questions about this during elections and that it would be useful to have the information in the *Election Act*.

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 70(2)(b)

Include reference to voter registration in the type of proceedings for which a scrutineer may be appointed.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s.72

Include reference to voter registration in the types of proceedings for which a solemn declaration is required of a candidate representative.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 93

Establish that individuals who are vouching for a voter may be present at voting proceedings.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 96(2)(a.1)

Establish that voters who have proven their identity and place of residence when registering in conjunction with voting are not required to again prove their identity in order to receive a ballot.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 98(3)(c)

Replace reference to a special voting area with reference to a site-based voting area.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 103, 106, 107

For fixed-date elections, allow voting packages to be requested and issued up to 60 days in advance of the election being called. Establish that voters must not complete and submit their voting packages until after the election is called. Voting packages postmarked or received before the election is called will not be considered at final count.

Discussion

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP asked about the composition of the vote-by-mail package.

Hector MacKay-Dunn of the BC Liberal Party asked about the number of packages that were late versus the number not returned at all.

Anton Boegman provided some statistics regarding vote-by-mail.

Linda Johnson stated that Elections BC sees the low rate of return as a consequence of the current time constraints. Linda Johnson also stated that the current legislation is problematic for military personnel abroad who want to vote provincially.

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP asked if 60 days would be enough or if 90 days would be preferable.

Linda Johnson responded by saying that the length of time could be considered at the time of drafting.

No objections were raised.

Recommendation, s. 109(4)

Permit individuals to assist one or more voters in the individual's care.

Discussion

EAC members expressed concern about the difficulty in defining the term "in a person's care," and were uncomfortable with giving caregivers the opportunity to assist an unlimited number of individuals.

Recommendation, s. 155(3)(m), 157(3)(1)

Replace the requirement for a solemn declaration with a requirement for a signed declaration of the financial agent.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s.156(2)(c)

Allow a political party to be registered using a name of a political party that has been deregistered for at least four years if the party name was not used on a ballot during the previous 10 years.

Discussion

Hector MacKay-Dunn of the BC Liberal Party asked about party registration.

Nola Western confirmed that if this recommendation were drafted into law it would not affect any party that has had their name on a ballot in the previous 10 years.

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 156(3)

Repeal s.156 (3) as it is no longer required.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 176(1)

Amend s. 176(1) to include an individual who failed to file any report required under the *Election Act*.

Discussion

Linda Johnson stated that this recommendation is designed to protect candidates.

Murray Weisenberger of the Green Party Political Association of British Columbia asked about potential penalties.

Kelly Reichert of the BC Liberal Party suggested that a prohibition could be for a period of seven years which would mirror other prohibitions under the Act.

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP stated that seven years seemed to be a long time.

No further concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 183(3)

Amend s. 183(3) to include fundraising functions held during the 60 day pre-campaign period.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 189(4)

Amend s. 189(4) to refer to "obtain the copy of the tax receipt..." instead of "destroy the copy of the tax receipt..."

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 245

Replace references to "the form prescribed by regulation" to "the form specified by the CEO".

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 220(5)(a)

Amend s. 220(5)(a) to read "by June 30" rather than "before June 30."

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 221

Amend section 221(1) from "...the election financing report under section 209..." to "...an election financing report under Division 6 of this Part."

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 222

Amend section 222(1) from "...the contestant financing report under section 211..." to "...a contestant financing report under Division 6 of this Part."

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 239

Registration should only be required if the value of sponsored election advertising is \$500 or more. This is consistent with requirements of the *Canada Elections Act*.

Discussion

Kelly Reichert of the BC Liberal Party expressed concern with the \$500 figure stating that "a lot can be done with \$500."

Linda Johnson responded by noting that the \$500 figure was simply to harmonize the legislation with federal and Ontario rules. She then asked if there was a threshold that the BC Liberals would be comfortable with.

Kelly Reichert of the BC Liberal Party agreed that the line had to be drawn somewhere.

Murray Weisenberger of the Green Party Political Association of British Columbia stated that not much can be done for \$500.

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP stated that she liked the proposed consistency with the federal rules.

No further concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 239, 264(1)(h)

Establish an administrative penalty that may be imposed by the Chief Electoral Officer for conducting election advertising without being registered. To parallel other provisions in the Act regarding contraventions, the consequences of failure to comply with the requirement to register prior to conducting election advertising could also include publication of the name of the individual or organization in the *B.C. Gazette*. Provision could be made for the individual or organization to seek relief from the court for the penalty.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 240(3)(b)

Remove the requirement for election advertising sponsor applicants to make a solemn declaration and replace with a requirement for a signed declaration only.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 244(1)

Require all registered election advertising sponsors to file an advertising disclosure report, regardless of the value of advertising sponsored.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 252(2)

In order to permit thorough investigation and sufficient time to commence prosecution of offences, extend the time limit to two years from the time the CEO becomes aware of the facts.

Discussion

Jan O'Brien of the BC NDP asked about the frequency of investigations being withdrawn due to insufficient time.

Hector MacKay-Dunn of the BC Liberal Party stated that he was uncomfortable with extending the time period as outlined. He stated that the general trend of extending court proceedings in Canada is unfair to the accused, and that with appropriate resources Elections BC should have sufficient time to conduct their work.

Recommendation, s. 264

For clarity, amend 264(1)(d) to add reference to transmitting new poll results on General Voting Day.

Establish that contravening s. 235.1 by exceeding advertising limits by third party election advertising sponsors is an offence under s. 264.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 278(1)

Amend s. 278(1) to include reference to election advertising sponsors who are subject to a penalty under s. 235.2.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, Schedules, Form 1

Remove reference to 9 a.m. on the writ as established in Form 1 of the Schedule to the *Election Act* to clarify that ordinary nominations are to be accepted by a DEO after the election has been called, or amend s. 56(1). It should be noted that while the *Constitution Act* establishes when a fixed-date election will be held, the Lieutenant Governor's authority is not diminished and a writ may not be issued on the day contemplated by that Act.

Amend the form of the writ to include a signature line for the Attorney General to countersign the Great Seal.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, Schedules, Form 3

Remove reference to electoral district from the stub of the write-in ballot (Form 3) in the Schedules to the Act.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

3. Recommendations for amendments to the *Recall and Initiative Act*:

Recommendation, s. 4(3), 20(1)(b), 101(1), 148(1)

Establish authority for the Chief Electoral Officer to specify forms under the Act rather than requiring a Regulation.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 48(4)

Amend the base amount established in section 48(3) to reflect adjustments to the CPI between January 1, 1996 and the present.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

Recommendation, s. 50(4), 97(3)(b), 125(4), 144(3)(b)

Remove the requirement for financial agents and initiative and recall advertising sponsor applicants to make a solemn declaration and replace with a requirement for a signed declaration.

Discussion

No concerns were raised.

4. Other Issues

Linda Johnson reminded Committee members that public policy must be decided by the policy makers – it is not Elections BC’s role as an independent Office of the Legislature to recommend changes to public policy. Elections BC does, however, identify outcomes of public policy, track trends in other jurisdictions and monitor relevant court cases regarding electoral legislation. Relevant information is then put forward in the CEO’s report for consideration by legislators.

Public policy matters for consideration – Election Act**Provisional registration of 16 year olds**

Consider permitting the provisional registration of otherwise qualified individuals when they are 16 years of age or older.

Discussion

The discussion centered on the potential advantages of the early engagement of future voters.

Door-to-door enumeration

Consider amendment to s. 42 to provide greater flexibility to the CEO to determine the best process for conducting enumerations. While door-to-door enumeration may prove to be effective in some parts of the province, alternative approaches such as mail-based enumeration may be more effective in other locations and circumstances.

Discussion

The discussion focused on the comparative cost of a door-to-door enumeration (\$24 million) versus the cost of a multi-faceted approach as determined by the Chief Electoral

Officer (\$3 million). It also focused on the difficulties in reaching people in their homes and possible privacy concerns.

Harry Neufeld stated that very few jurisdictions continue to conduct door-to-door enumerations (Manitoba and Yukon), and they do not see gains in participation or better list quality over other jurisdictions. Harry Neufeld reminded EAC members that the flexible approach employed in the 2009 Enumeration resulted in the highest quality list in B.C.'s history and encouraged EAC members to review the 2009 Enumeration report.

The BC Liberal Party and the BC NDP expressed support for door-to-door enumeration. Kelly Reichert of the BC Liberal Party stated that the law was changed in the last year to require a door-to-door enumeration and that the party continues to support this method of enumeration. Leslie Kerr of the BC NDP indicated that they support a door-to-door enumeration and that they were interested in a consistent approach across the province. Murray Weisenberger of the Green Party Political Association of British Columbia supported providing flexibility to the CEO in this regard.

Nomination Deposits

Consider eliminating the nomination deposit or amending the basis upon which it is refunded. This would be consistent with an October 2007 decision by the Ontario Superior Court, which found a similar model to that currently in effect in B.C. to be unconstitutional.

Discussion

Linda Johnson raised this vulnerability and stated that the trend in Canada is moving away from the return of nomination deposits based solely on electoral success. Instead, many jurisdictions return nomination deposits based on compliance with financing rules.

Volunteers

Consider amending the definition of a volunteer to exclude a person who is self-employed if the service they provide is one that is normally charged for by that person. This is consistent with provisions of the *Canada Elections Act*.

Discussion

The BC NDP asked a clarifying question, stating that "if a person's job is writing press releases, and they volunteer to do the same, they would be excluded?"

Linda Johnson stated that this is how the law works at the federal level.

Campaign Finance Rules

Consider review of campaign finance provisions in light of national trends and shifting public expectations and social attitudes.

Discussion

Linda Johnson stated that this is an area that may benefit from some review to ensure it remains aligned with society's expectations.

Strata properties

Consider preventing strata corporations from passing bylaws that prevent access to strata properties by candidates or their agents during a campaign period for the purpose of campaigning. Strata corporations could restrict such activity from common areas, but access to individual properties within a strata development could be determined by the property owners as is done in other residential properties.

Discussion

There was general agreement from all members of the EAC that access to eligible voters is important.

Disclosure – Registered charities

Legislators could consider exempting registered charities from the requirement to disclose the names of contributors who gave more than \$250. Alternatively, the disclosure period could be shortened from six months before the election is called to the period beginning 60 days before the start of the campaign period and ending at the end of the campaign period.

Discussion

No discussion.

Administrative penalties

Consider establishing administrative penalties and provide the CEO with authority to enter into compliance agreements and to make such agreements public.

Discussion

No discussion.

Public policy matters for consideration – *Constitution Act*

Move fixed-date general elections to the fall

Consider amending the *Constitution Act* to establish that general elections shall be held in the fall. It would be preferable that the date be selected with consideration giving to the timing of local government elections, fixed-date federal elections and statutory holidays. Due to weather concerns, concluding voting before the end of October would be preferred.

Discussion

Linda Johnson stated that like B.C., P.E.I. originally had their fixed-date general elections in the spring, however, to prevent conflict with the budget cycle it was later moved to the fall.

Move General Voting Day to Saturday

Consider changing General Voting Day to a Saturday for all provincial general elections and by-elections.

Discussion

Linda Johnson stated that this would make it easier for voting officials to get time away from their regular employment and may result in more applicants and better quality election officials.

Additionally, Elections BC continues to see a trend of voters switching to advance voting from general voting. The existing period between advance voting and general voting provides little time to mark the voting books for general voting to indicate those voters who voted at advance voting. General voting on Saturdays would allow extra time for this process.

Scheduling of by-elections

In light of the establishment of fixed-dates for general elections, and the considerable public concern expressed regarding the requirement for the October 2008 by-elections within 8 months of the scheduled 2009 General Election, legislators may wish to consider amending section 35(4) of the *Constitution Act* so a by-election is not required if a vacancy occurs within one year prior to a general election to be conducted in accordance with s. 23 of that Act.

Discussion

Harry Neufeld stated that this change was made in Ontario when they established fixed-date elections.

The BC NDP representatives expressed concern over the possibility of the constituents of an electoral district being left for one year without representation.

Linda Johnson responded by saying that six months or nine months may also be considered and that Elections BC had simply raised it as a point of discussion.

Public policy matters for consideration – *Electoral Boundary Commission Act*

Rural Representation

Following the preliminary report of the Cohen Commission there was considerable concern raised regarding the preservation of rural representation. With the increasing urbanization of the province and a growing population, there could potentially be a dramatic increase in the number of MLAs required to address the requirements of the Act regarding the key principle of representation by population. Before the next electoral boundaries commission is appointed, it is important that this matter be addressed so clear terms of reference may be established in law.

Discussion

Harry Neufeld noted that legislators may wish to address this before the formation of the next boundaries commission.

Saskatchewan has guaranteed northern seats, however their population is growing in those regions. Most other jurisdictions remain closer to electoral parity than British Columbia.

Public policy matters for consideration – *Recall and Initiative Act*

Regulations

Consider amendment to s. 171 of the Act to establish authority for the CEO to make Regulations in relation to the recall process.

Discussion

Linda Johnson stated that recall is an electoral process and for consistency it would make sense for the CEO to have regulatory authority over this process.

Issues identified in the 2003 Report of the CEO

Consider amendment of the *Recall and Initiative Act* to address the issues identified in the 2003 report of the CEO.

Discussion

Linda Johnson noted that there are several issues outlined in the report that have not yet been addressed. She also stated that separating the recall and initiative legislation into two separate Acts could potentially clarify their distinct purposes for all stakeholders.

Public policy matters for consideration – Referendum Act

Regulations

Consider amendment to s. 6 of the *Referendum Act* to establish authority for the CEO to make Regulations in relation to the conduct of a referendum.

Discussion

Harry Neufeld stated that the referendum Regulations in 2009 were very late which caused administrative challenges for Elections BC.

Murray Weisenberger of the Green Party Political Association of British Columbia asked how input from the Legislature would work if the CEO had the authority to make referendum Regulations.

Linda Johnson stated that another process for review may be appropriate such as the EAC or a committee. Practically speaking, in the current model the drafters look for information and support from Elections BC anyway.

5. Next meeting and closing comments:

Linda Johnson thanked each member of the EAC for their comments and reminded attendees that the recommendations for legislative change report would be limited to the recommendations discussed with the EAC today. The report is scheduled to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly on April 12, 2010.

Harry Neufeld noted that his preference would be to have all of the technical amendments in place by spring 2011 to ensure sufficient time for the orderly implementation of the changes in advance of the 2013 General Election. He reminded the EAC that Bill 42 came into effect less than one year before the 2009 General Election and Referendum on Electoral Reform and it put significant pressure on Elections BC and the parties.

Harry Neufeld also told the members of the EAC that Elections BC intends to develop a suite of recommendations for legislative change specifically related to the modernization of the voting process. These recommendations, expected to be presented to the EAC in the fall of 2010, will be designed to update an outdated voting process and will potentially reduce costs, improve efficiency, speed the voting process, allow scrutineers rapid information about who has voted and require fewer election workers.

Other jurisdictions in Canada including New Brunswick and Ontario are also experimenting with potential changes to the voting process, with New Brunswick establishing a business case for vote tabulation machines in the voting place.

Both of these jurisdictions will conduct a general election in the next year, and there will likely be opportunities to observe their new processes.

Harry Neufeld invited final comments from the members of the EAC:

Kelly Reichert of the BC Liberal Party expressed interest in the voting place modernization project, and in the possibility of observing voting place modernization procedures during the general elections in New Brunswick and Ontario. Harry Neufeld offered to provide the contact information for Elections New Brunswick and Elections Ontario.

Murray Weisenberger of the Green Party Political Association of British Columbia asked about the rationale behind the requirement for additional signatures on candidate nomination forms. Harry Neufeld responded by saying that the recommendation was not generated by Elections BC and that it serves no administrative purpose although in some jurisdictions it is intended to be a deterrent to frivolous candidates. Murray Weisenberger stated that the Green Party wants to see increased candidate participation and that in their view the signature requirement is a barrier. Harry Neufeld reminded Murray Weisenberger that this issue is one for the policy makers.

Leslie Kerr of the BC NDP stated that she was very interested in the voting place modernization project and that she felt voter turnout was in part the responsibility of the parties.

Finally, Harry Neufeld reminded the EAC of the Annual Political Party Information Session expected to take place in October or November. At that time all post-election reports will be complete and Elections BC will be focusing on the 2013 General Election.