

Election Expenses Reimbursement

During the last election, only financial agents (or individuals authorized in writing by the financial agent) were permitted to incur election expenses and all election expenses had to be paid from a campaign account maintained in a financial institution.

It was recognized that in day-to-day campaigning this is not always practical. As a result, the Act has been amended to allow campaign workers to directly pay for election expenses and be reimbursed by the candidate's financial agent.

An example is the purchase of campaign supplies where the vendor will only accept payment by credit card. In this situation, a campaign worker will be allowed to pay the vendor using their own credit card and then be reimbursed by submitting the receipt to the candidate's financial agent.

When reimbursing campaign workers, financial agents must ensure they have retained all original receipts and the expenses are reported in compliance with the *Election Act*. If a campaign worker pays for an election expense and chooses to not be reimbursed, the expense must still be reported and the value is deemed to be a political contribution from that individual.

Remember, a financial agent must authorize all expenses before they are incurred and must maintain a list of persons the agent has authorized to incur election expenses.

Transfers to Leadership Contestants

Political parties will be able to transfer money, goods and services to their leadership contestants and they can incur contestant expenses on behalf of leadership contestants. The financial agent for the political party must tell the contestant's financial agent the details of any such contestant expenses within 60 days after the leader is selected.

The political party must report the value of the expense as a transfer given to the leadership contestant. The leadership contestant must also report the expense as a leadership contestant expense and as a transfer received from the political party.



Nomination Requirement Changes

If you anticipate running as a candidate in an upcoming election, please note the signature and nomination deposit requirements have changed.

Under the *Election Amendment Act, 2008*, every candidate must file nomination documents which include the signatures of at least 75 eligible voters in the electoral district where the candidate is running for office, and a \$250 nomination deposit.

The threshold to qualify for nomination deposit refunds has not changed. Candidates who receive at least 15% of the total votes accepted and counted in their electoral district will be refunded their \$250 nomination deposit.

Appointing Deputy Financial Agents

A financial agent for a political party or constituency association may appoint, at any time, one or more deputy financial agents to assist with accepting political contributions and issuing income tax receipts. The required forms to appoint a deputy financial agent are available on our website.

The recent amendments to the *Election Act* also allow appointed deputy financial agents on record with Elections BC to file financial reports if the financial agent is absent or incapable of filing the report.

Registration Information Maintenance

Under the *Election Act*, all registered parties and constituency associations must maintain registration information with Elections BC. Changes to the Act have resulted in new information requirements and deadlines.

All registered parties and constituency associations must give Elections BC the following information:

- an individual's name to which communications can be addressed
- mailing addresses for all principal officers
- account numbers for all financial accounts (i.e. bank accounts)

Account numbers will not be available for the public to see but the addresses of the principal officers will. Separate bank accounts must be used for each organization and candidate. For example, if the same financial agent has been appointed for a political party, constituency association and a candidate, three separate accounts must be opened and used.

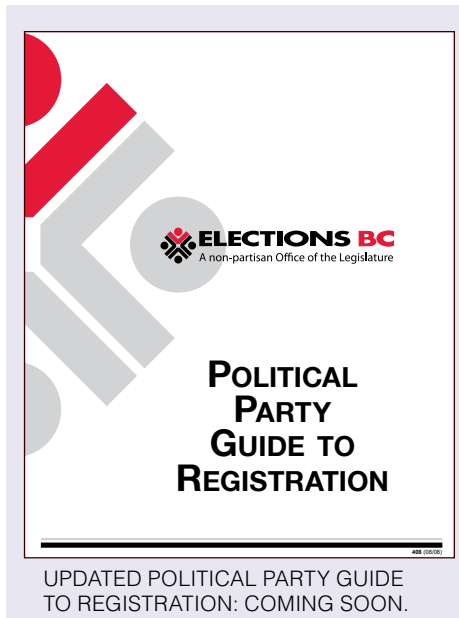
If any registration information changes, the organization must tell Elections BC in writing within 60 days after the change occurs.

If the appointment of a financial agent or auditor ends for any reason, you must appoint a new one and send the new appointment form to Elections BC within 60 days.

Remember, all registration updates must be signed by at least two principal officers of the organization. For constituency associations, registration updates must also be authorized by a principal officer of the political party.

It's now extremely important to file registration updates with Elections BC in a timely manner. The Chief Electoral Officer can suspend your registration if you don't file registration updates within 60 days. The suspension will continue until the required documents have been filed.

If a political party or constituency association is suspended, political parties cannot be identified on a ballot and both types of organizations are prohibited from issuing tax receipts or incurring election expenses. After the suspension has ended, the organization cannot issue tax receipts for political contributions received during the suspension period.



Audits for Deregistered Organizations

If a political party or constituency association is deregistered, either voluntarily or involuntarily, within six months of the deregistration the financial agent must:

- pay to the Chief Electoral Officer all surplus funds not required to pay outstanding debts
- file audited deregistration financial reports

Audits will no longer be automatically required for organizations that have \$5,000 or less in political contributions and \$5,000 or less in expenses during their final reporting period. There is no need for an audit if the constituency association is deregistered as a result of new electoral district boundaries.

Federal Party Contributions Ban

Financial agents can no longer accept political contributions from political parties or electoral district associations registered under the *Canada Elections Act*. All contributions, including goods and services, from these federal organizations are prohibited.

Loan Dates Required

In addition to the loan information already required under the *Election Act*, financial agents must also record and report the date the loan is due.

Other Changes

There are many more changes to the *Election Act*. Watch for updated guides and information on the Elections BC website at: www.elections.bc.ca.

Final Reminders

The electoral finance changes outlined in this newsletter come into effect on November 1, 2008. If there is a by-election before that time, the current rules will apply to the by-election.

If you need further assistance, or have specific questions regarding the changes to the *Election Act*, please contact our office. Our electoral finance staff members will be happy to assist you.

Election Expenses Period Changes

General election expenses limits now apply for two separate periods and with separate limits for each period:

1. The 60 day pre-campaign period (the 60 days immediately before a campaign period).
2. The campaign period (from the day the writ for the election is issued until the close of voting on General Voting Day).

The election expenses limits have also changed. Every candidate who participates in the 2009 General Election will have the same expenses limit —\$70,000 for the 60 day pre-campaign period and \$70,000 for the campaign period.

It is important to note that limits cannot be combined, so if a candidate doesn't spend all of the \$70,000 in the 60 day pre-campaign period, the unused portion cannot be carried over into the campaign period.

Political party expenses limits no longer depend on the number of candidates the party runs. All registered political parties who participate in the 2009 General Election will have the same expenses limit —\$1.1 million in the 60 day pre-campaign period and \$4.4 million during the campaign period. Again, these limits cannot be combined or carried over between the two periods.

These fixed expenses limits will be adjusted for changes in the consumer price index for elections called after January 1, 2010.

Contact Elections BC

Mailing Address: PO Box 9275 Stn Prov Govt,

Victoria BC V8W 9J6

Phone: 250-387-5305

Toll-free: 1-800-661-8683

Fax: 250-387-3578

Toll-free Fax: 1-866-466-0665

Email: electionsbc@elections.bc.ca

Website: www.elections.bc.ca

