

ELECTIONS BC

News Release

Date: May 21, 2004

Elections BC and Elections Canada will Amalgamate Voters Lists

Victoria – The provincial *Election Act* was amended yesterday to permit Elections BC to use the National Register of Electors for the purpose of maintaining the provincial voters list. The *Canada Elections Act* already allows Elections Canada to use the provincial list.

Using the federal voters list data will increase provincial registration by over 700,000 (2.11 million increased to an estimated 2.82 million of the approximately 3 million eligible voters) prior to the Spring 2005 provincial general election. For Elections Canada, which already has much higher coverage, a combined list will provide ways to improve the currency of British Columbia's registration information in the federal register.

Chief Electoral Officer Harry Neufeld stated, "Synchronizing voters list information creates significant improvements in coverage, provides anticipated cost savings of \$11.5 million over two fiscal years and reduces the response burden on citizens." In most cases, a voter who registers provincially will be registered automatically federally, and vice versa.

To register as a provincial voter, an individual must be 18 years of age or older, a Canadian citizen, and a resident of British Columbia for at least six months. Under the *Canada Elections Act*, the qualifications are the same except there is no time period associated with the residency requirement. As a result, Elections BC will not add federal voters to the provincial voters list until they meet the residency period required by the provincial *Election Act*.

This legislative change allows Elections BC to finalize plans for a targeted voter registration campaign which will immediately precede the May 2005 provincial election. It is anticipated that, with the incorporation of updates and new registrations from the federal list and a pre-election targeted registration campaign, the provincial voters list coverage will increase to 93% with address currency of 90% by May 17, 2005 (General Voting Day).

The *Election Act* is administered by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Elections BC is a non-partisan Office of the Legislature, and is responsible for the impartial administration of provincial elections and referendums, recalls and initiatives, voter registration, and voter education.

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For more information:

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