

ELECTIONS BC

News Release

Date: December 2, 2003

Elections BC Conducts Study of Voters List Quality

Victoria - Chief Electoral Officer Harry Neufeld today released a report on a study of the coverage and currency of provincial and federal voters lists in British Columbia.

Elections BC and Elections Canada undertook a scientifically based audit to measure the quality of B.C. provincial and federal voters lists in terms of coverage and currency. Chief Electoral Officer Harry Neufeld stated, "British Columbia has the second highest mobility of all provinces in Canada. It also has the lowest provincial participation rate in voter registration. New approaches are needed for both enabling voter registration and keeping registrations current".

Results of the audit indicated that, as of March 31, 2003, only 71% of eligible voters were registered provincially, with 74% of those registered listed at their current address. Merging the Elections BC and Elections Canada's voters list for the province into a combined list would increase coverage to 95% and currency to 77%. The process of creating a synchronized list would add 710,000 new voters to the provincial voters list.

Provincially, each registered voter must sign a registration form declaring that they meet citizenship, age and residency qualifications. Therefore, under the current *Election Act* rules, Elections BC is unable to add a name to the voters list without obtaining a signed registration card. However, if recommended legislative amendments are passed, Elections BC will be able to combine registration and list maintenance efforts with Elections Canada and explore new registration methods, including on-line voter registration.

Adopting a synchronized list would create significant savings in voter registration costs in relation to electoral events, and eliminate duplication of effort and between the federal and provincial jurisdictions.

A copy of the report is available on Elections BC's Web site at www.elections.bc.ca/rpt/qualityaudit.pdf.

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