

ELECTIONS BC

News Release

For Immediate Release

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May 2005 Provincial General Election Increased Voter Participation

VICTORIA – More voters voted in the May 2005 provincial general election than in any previous B.C. election:

- 1,774,269 voters, 58.19% of those eligible, turned out to vote at the May 17, 2005 provincial general election;
- 1,599,765 voters voted in the 2001 provincial general election; 1,739,999 voted in the 2004 federal general election.

To ensure eligible voters were aware of the importance of voting and available voting opportunities, Elections BC conducted an aggressive province-wide information campaign. Primary activities included a well-publicized introduction of online voter registration and advertising in movie theatres, television and newspapers, as well as an information flyer sent to every residence in the province. This was supplemented with targeted mailout letters and the enumeration of all shelters, social service agencies and long-term care facilities across the province. Six months before the election, Aboriginal, Chinese, Indo-Canadian and youth liaison officers were hired to work with their respective communities to remove administrative barriers to voting and raise awareness of citizens' democratic rights and the electoral process.

"We are pleased to see a reversal of the decline in voter participation that occurred in our province over the past two decades," said B.C.'s Chief Electoral Officer Harry Neufeld. In the 1983 election, 70% of eligible British Columbians voted. Participation dropped steadily in the '86, '91 and '96 provincial general elections. By 2001, turnout had dropped to 55%.

Youth participation rates also increased in the May 2005 provincial general election. Over 125,000 eligible voters – 35.27% – of those aged 18 to 24 turned out to vote. In the 2001 election, only 27% of eligible voters aged 18 to 24 voted. Elections BC paid particular attention to youth participation. In November 2004, Elections BC hired a youth liaison officer to connect directly with young people across the province and over 3,000 youth organizations were contacted.

The Statements of Votes for the 38th Provincial General Election and the Referendum on Electoral Reform were tabled in the Legislature today and are now available on Elections BC's website at www.elections.bc.ca. These publications provide a detailed report on voting results in every community in the province.

Elections BC is a non-partisan Office of the Legislature responsible for the impartial administration of provincial elections and referendums, voter registration and voter education.

- 30 -

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