

# Advisory Committee of Political Parties

## Meeting Summary

### Technical Meeting

November 20 and 21, 2017

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## Meeting Summary

The objectives of the Technical Meeting of November 20 and 21, 2017, were to update the Committee on the activities that Elections Canada (EC) has conducted since the last general meeting, to seek the Committee's input on enhancements to services to electors and on key policies, and to solicit the Committee's feedback on the impact of proposed changes on parties and candidates.

This summary follows the order of the agenda included in Appendix A. A list of the participants is included in Appendix B.

### Introductory Remarks by the Acting Chief Electoral Officer

Stéphane Perrault, Acting Chief Electoral Officer (A/CEO), welcomed members of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties (ACPP) to the November 2017 Technical Meeting. Mr. Perrault updated the Committee on the Agency's activities since the June 2017 Annual General Meeting (AGM), shared by-election updates, and went over some planning assumptions, expectations and timelines with regard to forthcoming legislation and the appointment of a new Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).

Mr. Perrault reminded the Committee of the three key objectives of EC's Electoral Services Modernization projects: addressing wait times at the polling stations, improving proximity to voting locations, and offering more voting options for those away from their riding. He also shared EC's Transformation Agenda from an asset renewal and cybersecurity perspective and explained that, while these initiatives primarily affect the internal administration of elections, rather than the elector or candidate experience, these projects are critical to ensuring the smooth delivery of the next election.

Mr. Perrault updated the Committee on the Political Entities Service Centre initiative, which was presented to them at the June 2017 AGM, and shared some highlights from the online questionnaire in September that yielded 851 complete responses from political entities. Overall, respondents were supportive of the proposal to provide products and services online through a centralized portal, and, from a list of potential online products and services, online filing of financial returns was ranked as the most useful among all respondents; this was especially the case for auditors, financial agents and official agents.

Mr. Perrault also gave the Committee an overview of EC's ballot redesign initiative and explained that it had become clear that it was time to update the ballot production model, as fewer suppliers and printers could deliver printed ballots in a timely way. This also presented an opportunity to improve the accessibility of the ballot, particularly its readability for electors with visual impairments.

In closing, Mr. Perrault informed participants that on October 25, 2017, in the case of *Szuchewycz v. Canada (Attorney General)*, an Alberta court declared that the \$1,000 deposit requirement to be a candidate under the *Canada Elections Act* is unconstitutional in that it violates the right to be a candidate under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Although this decision was rendered in Alberta, the *Canada Elections Act* sets out uniform federal electoral rules across Canada. In order to maintain their consistency across jurisdictions, EC's long-standing practice has been to apply such court decisions respecting the constitutionality of the *Canada Elections Act* uniformly across Canada. The Alberta court decision is binding until it is stayed by a court or overturned on appeal.

## Polling Place Process Enhancements Updates

Michel Roussel, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Electoral Events and Innovation, provided the Committee with an update on EC's Polling Place Process Enhancement (PPPE) project.

Mr. Roussel explained that the Agency is on target to meet the major milestone of establishing a partnership through the Systems Integrator request for proposal (RFP), which aims to provision e-poll book software and hardware and to support the logistics of managing nationwide e-poll book solution design, development, implementation, readiness, deployment, operations, decommissioning and inter-event asset management services. The RFP responses will unveil the price tag for a solution that meets the functional, technical and security requirements of EC.

The Agency's original deployment-scale working assumption was an estimate that the PPPE solution could be deployed in up to 70% of advance polls and 50% of ordinary polls. EC now plans to reassess the deployment-scale working assumption based on the new knowledge available and the results of functional and security testing.

The high-level project work plan is split into three releases:

- Release 1 – November 2017: Deliver Release 1: complete a test of the E-Poll Solution with vendor “as is” functionality, and functional requirements gap identified.
- Release 2 – September 2018: By-election system release tested and ready for use in a by-election, if scheduled.
- Release 3 – January 2019: General election (GE) system release tested and ready for use in the 43rd GE.

The final checkpoint in the project will be an end-to-end security assessment and authorization (SA&A), which has already been started and will carry on being conducted by SA&A specialists.

In closing, Mr. Roussel reminded participants that, while PPPE has undertaken to address most of the accessibility and convenience issues that led to some long wait times during advance polls and ordinary polls at the last GE, EC will continue to keep close to the forefront of its efforts the

principles of effectiveness and efficiency and, most important, the democratic principles of integrity, trust, transparency and total confidence in Canada's electoral process.

### **Round Table Discussion**

There were questions regarding bingo sheets – the forms used to record the identifier number of electors who come to vote – in the new model. Mr. Roussel explained that, while the intent is to make them available in the electronic format, getting poll-by-poll results will require different mechanisms since voters will be able to vote at any table.

Some members wondered whether voting at any table would impact efficiency during the counting process, and were concerned that this new process would better serve the political parties, as opposed to electors. Mr. Roussel agreed that this would impact the amount of time required for the counting process, and he assured members that EC's stakeholders have been looking into this. He also noted that providing bingo sheets to political parties is a legislative requirement. Mr. Perrault added that EC is always striving to serve both electors and political parties to the best of its capacity.

A member enquired about EC's contingency plan regarding any potential issue with its electronic systems. Jacques Mailloux, Executive Director, Electoral Innovation, answered that EC is required to have a separate manual process ready and to ensure that there will be a fallback should an electronic system fail.

## **Elector Services in Remote Indigenous Communities**

Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, presented Elector Services in Remote Indigenous Communities (ESRIC), a pilot project designed to provide returning officers (ROs) with the time, opportunity and tools to engage leaders within remote Indigenous communities to collectively plan appropriate election services in those communities. This approach aims to build relationships between ROs and community leaders in an effort to improve access to voter services in remote areas. It also seeks to ensure the ESRIC project accounts for the unique cultural characteristics of Indigenous communities and their capacity to contribute to the optimal administration of an election.

Ms. Torosian noted that the 42nd GE saw an unprecedented increase in Indigenous voter turnout, which created some service gaps that were particularly evident in remote Indigenous communities: ballot shortages, lack of advance voting options, and voting delays due to high polling day registration. She explained that, compared to the general population, Indigenous electors have lower registration rates, less access to advance voter services, and lower levels of awareness and/or less access to information on the electoral process. That is why Indigenous electors are among EC's three priority groups (the other two being new voters and people with disabilities) that face significant barriers to voting compared to the general population.

To supplement EC's existing services for Indigenous electors, such as community relations officers – Indigenous (CRO-Is), the Indigenous Elders and Youth Program, voter information products in 11 Indigenous languages, and on-reserve polling sites (advance and regular), EC is proposing the following service enhancements to support Indigenous participation:

- A change in how ballots are allocated to address the risk of shortages
- Enhancements to e-registration
- A new approach to the allocation of advance polling locations
- Authorizing mobile advance polls in low-density areas (CEO recommendation A18, subject to legislative change)
- Ensuring the vote-on-campus program also meets Indigenous needs
- More engagement of Indigenous organizations between elections
- A pilot project in remote Indigenous communities (ESRIC)

Ms. Torosian described the project's background and shared EC's sources of evidence informing ESRIC, such as administrative data from the 42nd GE, the Assembly of First Nations' report *Facilitating First Nation Voter Participation for the 42nd Federal General Election*, stakeholder consultation with national Indigenous organizations, facilitated discussions with ROs and assistant returning officers (AROs), interviews with election administrators (EAs) and input of the Field Working Group. The findings from the qualitative research show that EAs need more time, opportunity and tools to engage with remote Indigenous communities to provide better service. These findings helped EC to formulate the problem statement and to shape the proposed project deliverables that will provide EAs with the time, opportunity and tools to engage Indigenous community leaders, and will support EAs as they collaborate with leaders of these communities to provide better services for Indigenous electors.

The ESRIC project seeks to address the three aspects of the problem statement using a variety of methods. Which methods each RO chooses to use will be based on consultation with the community and an understanding of their needs.

Problem Statement	ESRIC Will...
Lower registration rates	Encourage registration at community events, offer registration kits to community leaders and integrate registration into mobile polling tours
Less access to advance voting services	Offer alternative voting options to communities that identify a need for them
Lower levels of awareness / less access to information on the electoral process	Seek to increase the awareness of community leaders and electors through engagement at community events (as invited), targeted publications and CRO-Is

To determine the scope of the project, EC had to determine which were the “least-served” communities by looking at two indicators from administrative data from the 42nd GE: on-reserve polling divisions (PDs) with higher-than-average polling day registration, and PDs with a higher-than-average distance to advance polls. The 96 PDs that scored high on both of these indicators were scoped into the project. These 96 PDs are distributed throughout 28 electoral districts.

To address challenges faced by both remote Indigenous communities and ROs, ESRIC will encourage communication between ROs and community leaders at several points in the electoral cycle, beginning approximately 1.5 years prior to the election and continuing through the election period. With community leaders’ consent, ROs will periodically consult and share information via telephone, e-mail, social media and visits to community events. ESRIC will also enhance elector services in the scoped-in communities, which may include increasing the number of CRO-Is in remote Indigenous communities, potentially hiring community liaison staff to help build relationships before the election, and increasing the number of alternative voting options in these communities (depending on their needs).

In closing, Ms. Torosian informed participants of the project’s evaluation plan, which will examine ESRIC’s success from a number of perspectives, including election data, interviews and discussions with field staff, and contracted evaluation activities with communities whose PDs were scoped into the project. Should ESRIC’s initiatives prove successful, EC plans to expand them to other areas where they might benefit Indigenous electors, both within remote communities and, as appropriate, in non-remote areas.

## **Round Table Discussion**

ACPP members appreciated EC’s proposed approach to elector services in remote Indigenous communities. There were questions regarding early voting options in those communities, and more specifically whether EC is considering adding more mobile polls. Mr. Perrault explained that, because reserves differ so much from one another in terms of their realities and needs, ESRIC will be about going to communities in advance and hearing what they want and need, and that will inform EC’s decisions on how to deliver its services in those communities.

Some members wondered whether EC would also focus on addressing issues other than service issues, to which Ms. Torosian responded that EC’s main focus is making voting accessible to all electors, and ensuring its service package responds to their needs so that they know when, where and how to vote. EC already provides key information in 31 heritage languages, and the intent is to be as inclusive as possible. EC also offers an interpretation service at our service desk, but this service demands more planning from both EC and the elector. It is hard to get the message out on the interpretation service. EC staff can communicate in different languages, but EC cannot operate in all of those languages.

There was a suggestion that ESRIC should be extended to candidates because, in remote areas, the notion of running as a candidate might not be as well understood as voting and there might be individuals who wish to run a campaign as an independent candidate but for whom, in remote areas, there are huge barriers.

## Policy on Polling Site Location

Louise Tremblay, Assistant Director, Operations and Field Governance, provided an overview of EC's proposed Policy on Polling Site Location. Following the 42nd GE, electors provided feedback on various issues regarding the choice of polling locations, such as building accessibility, proximity and familiarity. To justify and explain the choice of polling locations and the selection criteria, EC is developing a Policy on Polling Site Location, which will apply to general elections, by-elections and referendums in the following locations: RO offices, additional assistant returning officer (AARO) offices, external service points (i.e. colleges and universities), mobile polls, advance polls and ordinary polls.

Ms. Tremblay explained that there are three factors in balance that EC considers when choosing a suitable polling location: accessibility, proximity and familiarity.

The accessibility factor consists of 15 mandatory criteria. If accessibility issues are identified, they must be mitigated or, if that is not feasible, a CEO's special authorization is required. The proximity factor stipulates that a polling location has to be situated at a reasonable distance from the elector's residence, and that electors can expect to find their polling location at a distance that is comparable to that of any local government service. The reasonable distance varies according to the type of vote (advance, ordinary, mobile) and the territory served (urban, rural or remote). Finally, the familiarity factor takes into account a location used in previous electoral events, a location used by multiple levels of government for electoral events (federal, provincial, municipal), or a public place (i.e. schools, community centres).

EC must also consider the operational constraints that ROs face that may impede their flexibility, such as their tight schedule, the availability of locations, and population movements.

The Policy on Polling Site Location also includes a new sequencing of pre-event activities. ROs must first visit potential polling locations and assess them, then review the polling divisions and advance polling district boundaries around the potential polling location, and then assign the polling divisions (electors) to polling locations. This new strategy will enable ROs to assign electors to the most optimal polling location.

### Round Table Discussion

ACPP members broke into smaller groups to discuss EC's four proposed engagement questions.

#### Discussion 1: Geographic Considerations

##### Engagement Question

What are the specific considerations we should take into account:

- At the local level?
- For rural areas?
- For remote locations?



### Summary of Discussions

- Some participants mentioned that people in rural areas expect to vote at the same place as in previous elections.
- For remote locations, EC should consider weather conditions and time of day for safe travel. EC should also ensure that voting options are clearly communicated to electors.
- It was suggested that EC should present all options to electors in advance, and should also take demographics into account when choosing a polling location.
- Some participants noted that it is easier to vote within one's own community; therefore, the closest location in another community may not be the best option.
- It was also suggested that EC should consider standardized travel time to get to polling locations.

## **Discussion 2: Accessibility, Proximity and Familiarity**

### Engagement Question

Key Factors: Accessibility, Proximity and Familiarity

- What are some possible concerns with any of the three key factors?
- How does our proposed policy address some of the complaints and issues your candidates and party might have heard during the last GE?

### Summary of Discussions

- Participants said EC should communicate a change in polling location from a previous election to avoid confusion, e.g. clearly identify the new polling location on the voter information card with a different colour.
- It was suggested that electoral management bodies (EMBs) should share their data on suitable polling locations to ensure consistency across EMBs, locations and elections.
- Some participants mentioned that their party received a lot of complaints regarding familiarity of the polling locations, while others deemed familiarity to be the least important factor due to change over time. Other complaints received included that the polling place was too far, that electors did not have enough time to vote, and that the commute time was too long.
- Some participants felt that familiarity is not as important in urban centres as it is in rural areas, while others felt that some urban spaces were not as favourable for some groups of people as for others. For instance, cultural comfort was mentioned as an important factor: churches and other places of worship might make people uncomfortable, and a neutral site is preferred.
- It was noted that EC should provide a clear map of the polling location, as well as information about public transit.
- Participants asked EC to bring a draft of the policy to the next ACPP meeting.

## **Discussion 3: Considerations and Concerns**

### Engagement Question

What types of considerations or concerns should we take into account:

- From a candidate's or a candidate's representative's perspective?
- From the voter's perspective?

### Summary of Discussions

- Participants agreed that the voter perspective was most important.
- It was mentioned that EC should ensure that polling locations are politically neutral in relation to candidates' offices, religion / place of worship, campaign signage, no third-party links or connections, etc.
- Parking and public transit accessibility were also mentioned as additional considerations that EC should take into account.
- Some participants suggested that EC should consider using libraries, condo buildings, places with easy transportation, and nursing homes.
- Participants reiterated that polling places should be located within a local community and not in another community.
- It was also noted that accessibility in terms of proximity will vary across Canada.

### **Discussion 4: Communications**

#### Engagement Question

What is the most important information that EC should communicate:

- To parties?
- To candidates?
- To electors?

### Summary of Discussions

- Some participants mentioned that there should be more communication to electors about alternative voting options such as at home and at the RO's office. Additionally, if a polling location has changed from a previous election, EC should communicate the rationale within the community, and communicate both the criteria used to select polling locations and the statistics or research to support these criteria (in plain language).
- It was suggested that EC should streamline its communications and prepare call center agents with the policy.
- There was also a note that candidates and parties should be familiar with the policy so that they can communicate it to electors.
- It was suggested that EC should involve previous ROs and election workers in their consultations on the Policy on Polling Site Location, and that the Agency should communicate the policy to electors, candidates and parties.
- EC should also provide a map of the polling location and of the station, as well as a map of the available parking and public transportation.
- Some participants felt that EC should do outreach activities with the public at all times, and not just during an election.

## Electronic Financial Return Modernization

Jeff Merrett, Director, Regulatory Instruments & Systems, provided an update on the Electronic Financial Return (EFR) Modernization project. EFR is a software program provided by EC to facilitate the reporting of financial information. It allows political entities to record financial transactions, creates financial returns based on information entered, and generates receipts for contributions. He explained that EC is replacing EFR with a browser-based application to facilitate the reporting of financial information of political entities. The new EFR will provide for simplified data entry and expand data import capability, create financial returns based on information entered and generate receipts for contributions, and allow digital consent and full electronic submission of returns and supporting documentation to EC.

Mr. Merrett informed members that, since the last ACPP meeting, EC has held focus groups with agents and auditors of electoral district associations and candidates and has surveyed parties to better understand the needs and expectations for a new reporting system. From these activities, the Agency learned that the features and capabilities we had envisioned were widely acknowledged as on-track and useful, and that concerns largely centred around the themes of simplicity of use, guided user support, accessibility and control over data, and security and privacy of information. One of the project's next steps will be to engage usability experts to review and assess the application as it is being developed to ensure EFR will offer a clean design, an intuitive user interface, opportunities for data import, autofill features (such as for addresses), tools for managing data (such as contributor lists), etc.

Mr. Merrett indicated that EC is now conducting an SA&A process, which will determine whether the IT security requirements established for the system are met and whether the safeguards work as intended. EC will enforce the necessary security measures through reinforced business processes, validation procedures, and identity and access management. EC will also conduct a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) to identify the potential privacy risks of new or redesigned programs or services, and also to help eliminate or reduce those risks. Mr. Merrett explained that PIAs are meant to describe and document what personal information is collected; how it is collected, used, transmitted and stored; how and why it can be shared; and how it is protected from inappropriate disclosure at each step.

### Round Table Discussion

Some members expressed their concerns about the fact that all of the information would be stored in EC's systems. They suggested that EC should explore a solution where records and data could be kept in both EC's and the users' systems. There were some questions about whether this system would be optional or mandatory, and Mr. Merrett said the paper form would still be available. He also assured members that the data that EC will have access to will be the same as today, as EC will not be recording any more information. The Agency will have access only to the information that parties submit.

## Accessibility Guidance

Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, provided an update on EC's Guidance to Political Parties on Accessibility. She reminded members that EC will be developing and distributing information and guidance on services and products for electors with disabilities to candidates and political parties prior to the next GE. As the guidance is being developed, ACPP members will be consulted on the clarity of the information, and on opportunities and barriers to implementation that parties and candidates may face.

At the ACPP AGM in June 2016, members of the Advisory Group on Disability Issues (AGDI) had the chance to talk to ACPP members about accessibility considerations for candidates and parties. A key concern they raised was that political parties have many misconceptions about the costs associated with creating accessible material and planning accessible events. At the recent AGDI meeting, several members noted that websites and meetings that are accessible to people with disabilities need not be expensive if accessibility is built into the design early on.

EC advised AGDI members that we would be developing a guide on accessibility for political parties and candidates, and we asked them what it should include. According to the members, the guide should include information and best practices on:

- Accessible websites
- Holding accessible meetings and events, including American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) interpretation, captioning, print communications in alternative formats
- Developing communications products in plain language and alternative formats such as Braille, large print and digital formats accessible to people with print disabilities
- Sensitivity training—addressing misconceptions about people with disabilities
- Accommodating and supporting candidates with disabilities

AGDI members also suggested that the guide should have information on available expertise and resources on accessibility, including relevant agencies, organizations, standards and reference guides.

Ms. Torosian informed members that EC also consulted the AGDI on a range of service enhancements and policies affecting all voters, including some initiatives to address the needs of persons with disabilities, such as polling location selection criteria, voter feedback forms, voter identification and an oath of assistance. EC discussed some of the service enhancements and improvements planned for the 43rd GE and asked the AGDI to suggest organizations and experts we should consult. The enhancements include modifications to the Braille and tactile voting templates, the testing of optical character recognition technology, the potential for providing ASL and LSQ through a new mobile application at the polls, and the pencils used for marking ballots. EC also informed them about future consultations on online processes and document submission, and asked them to complete a follow-up task on best practices for wayfinding at polling stations and the physical accessibility of doorway thresholds with rubber mats.

## Early Voting Options

Sylvie Jacmain, Director, Alternative Voting Methods & Operational Outreach, presented the new service model for early voting options in RO and AARO offices and other service points. She explained that Canadians increasingly opt to vote by special ballot, and that to respond to Canadians' needs, EC is exploring different options to improve the vote by special ballot. She indicated that the current service model cannot sustain a greater demand, nor does EC believe Canadians would continue to be tolerant, as the current service model has two separate service points and two agents to see, where electors have to answer the same questions and show pieces of identification twice. Additionally, this service model is mostly paper-based, and there is a long wait time between the two services.

The proposed new service model, designed to respond positively to the higher demand, will amalgamate revision and vote by special ballot services and leverage the deployment of technology at service points. EC will also develop a strategic and timely communications approach for electors and political entities. The objective is simply to offer a better experience to electors who want to vote by special ballot in RO and AARO offices and post-secondary institutions, and this new service model offers many advantages:

- One service agent able to offer all services
- Streamlined and faster services
- Ability to respond to the greater demand
- Increased accessibility
- Increased compliance

In closing, Ms. Jacmain invited members to test the current and the new service models with a demo set up during the break.

When members returned from their interactive break, Susan Torosian, Executive Director, Policy and Public Affairs, explained the rationale for the promotion of early voting options and the approach being considered for 2019. She reiterated that voters in many Canadian and international jurisdictions are increasingly voting in advance of election day, and there was a 117 percent increase in voting by special ballot in 2015.

However, while many electors are aware of the possibility of voting at an advance poll, few know about voting at their local EC office. In the 2015 Survey of Electors (unaided), 64 percent of respondents knew it is possible to vote at an advance polling station, while only 3 percent knew it is possible to vote at a local EC office, and 13 percent knew it is possible to vote by mail. She also stated that in 2015, 25 percent of non-voters said they had been too busy to vote (which represents approximately 2 million electors, or 7 percent of eligible electors), and 15 percent of non-voters said they had been out of town (which represents approximately 1 million electors, or 4 percent of eligible electors).

We also know that there is no standard pattern in the timing of voters' decision:

- In 2015, 58 percent of voters made their vote decision during the campaign, including 14 percent on polling day.
- In 2011, 45 percent of voters decided during the campaign, including 11 percent on polling day.
- In both 2015 and 2011, the proportion of undecided electors was around 30 percent with three to four weeks left in the campaign, before falling to about 20 percent by polling day.

EC believes that the new service model will improve the voting experience of those who want to vote by special ballot in RO and AARO offices and post-secondary institutions, and that an increased awareness of early voting opportunities will lead to greater numbers of electors who use them, as early voting opportunities will be appealing to those voters who feel informed and ready to vote. However, EC is facing some communications challenges in the promotion of early voting options, namely:

- How do we raise awareness of early voting options without converting voters who traditionally vote at advance polls or on election day to early voting options?
- How do we manage voters' expectations of the voting experience by voting channel?

## **Round Table Discussion**

ACPP members broke into smaller groups to discuss EC's four proposed engagement questions.

### **Discussion 1: Impacts on Campaign – Logistics**

#### Engagement Question

What impacts might early voting have on candidates' campaigns from a logistics perspective?

Consider:

- Counting of special ballots
- Candidates' representatives
- Other?

#### Summary of Discussions

- Some participants expressed their concerns around fairness, as larger parties could be at an advantage with early voting in many aspects. For instance:
  - Larger parties have the resources to be ready earlier in the process, while other parties are not necessarily ready as soon as the writ is dropped.
  - Larger parties are more familiar to the electorate, and electors might not know of the smaller parties' candidates so early in the election calendar.
- A suggestion was made that EC should focus on a communications campaign to clarify the election calendar and to inform both political parties and electors about the early voting process, and that there is a need for increased communications around voting options.

- Participants agreed that early voting requires faster organization and confirmation of candidates, and that it is the party's responsibility. However, it was recognized that smaller parties might not have the resources to organize faster in light of early voting. EC could help by providing relevant information to parties so that they can get organized, such as how to best use the resources they have.
- Some participants noted that scrutineers should be present at early polls and for the counting of special ballots.
- Voting on election day was generally preferred.

## **Discussion 2: Impacts on Campaign – Promotion**

### Engagement Question

What impacts might promoting early voting have on candidates' and parties' campaigns and logistics?

### Summary of Discussions

- There were some questions about how increased early voting might affect the election outcome.
- Participants were concerned that promoting early voting prior to day 18 would also promote uninformed electors, as it would mean less time to inform the electorate about party platforms and candidates, or that it would send a message to the public that the campaign does not matter, as long as people vote.
- There were discussions around small versus large parties, and some participants felt that promoting early voting would favour the larger parties: the smaller parties would have less time to inform the electors about their parties and candidates, and voters tend to favour the larger parties because that is what they know and are most familiar with.
- There were suggestions that EC should craft a pre-writ communications strategy, not for early voting opportunities, but to acclimatize voters to the coming election. The post-writ communications strategy should include a list of candidates printed for each ED, and should ensure that the list of candidates is more prominent on EC's website.
- Promoting early voting post day 18 was generally considered to be the best strategy.

## **Discussion 3: Impacts of National Promotion**

### Engagement Question

Promoting the early voting option on a national scale at the close of nominations:

- What are some possible benefits?
- What are some possible concerns?

### Summary of Discussions

- Some participants said that, while early voting facilitates the vote for electors who need it, it should not be promoted too heavily, and that EC should not try to convert voters to options other than election day.
- It was also noted that messages about options might be confusing early in the campaign and that the promotion of early voting options would not necessarily convert non-voters.



- There were some concerns that parties might withhold controversial issues until later in the campaign.
- Most of the identified benefits of promoting the early voting option on a national scale at the close of nominations pertained to electors: the electorate will be more aware of all opportunities to vote and will experience less stress about voting on election day. There was also a general agreement that having more Canadians exercise their right to vote is most important.
- Participants also mentioned that early voting options would be a good opportunity for targeted promotion, e.g. students, people who are “too busy,” airports, shopping malls, etc. However, EC should ensure that its communications plan clearly lays out all options and does not favour any one over the others but lets the electors choose for themselves. EC should also ensure that its communications plan clearly lays out the voting process.
- Participants mentioned that parties should be better informed about the special ballot process as well.
- Some participants noted that they want Canadians to be engaged throughout the campaign, and that early voting might be an obstacle to that. They reiterated that promotion must begin only after the close of the nomination period and not before.

#### **Discussion 4: Impacts on Electors**

##### Engagement Question

What are the types of considerations we should take into account from the voters’ perspective:

- What are some benefits of early voting options?
- What possible concerns might electors raise with you?

##### Summary of Discussions

- Participants recognized the benefits of being informed about the various voting options from an elector’s perspective.
- Some participants mentioned their lack of confidence that headway will be made in reaching non-voters through greater access to early voting. Additionally, parties do not put energy into reaching non-voters because of their limited resources and the unclear return on investment.
- Some concerns were raised about the risk that promotion of early voting opportunities might be confusing to employers, who must remain informed about the obligation to give time off on voting day.

## **Meeting Adjournment and Forward Calendar**

In closing, the A/CEO thanked ACPP members for their participation, feedback and comments. He reminded members that they should expect to be consulted on current and upcoming initiatives, as the Agency will need to get parties’ views on some courses of action.



## Appendix A: Agenda

### Meeting of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties and OGI Steering Committee

DoubleTree by Hilton  
1170 Aylmer Road, Gatineau, Quebec

#### AGENDA

##### Day 1: Monday, November 20, 2017

Time	Agenda item
8:00–9:00	<i>Breakfast and registration</i>
9:00–9:10	Welcome
9:10–10:30	Acting CEO's introductory remarks
10:30–10:45	<i>Break</i>
10:45–11:15	Polling Place Process Enhancements updates
11:15–12:00	Elector Services in Remote Indigenous Communities
12:00–1:00	<i>Lunch (served on site)</i>
1:00–1:35	Policy on polling site location overview
1:35–2:45	Policy on polling site location – Discussion
2:45–3:00	<i>Break</i>
3:00–3:30	Electronic Financial Return modernization
3:30–4:00	Accessibility guidance
4:00–4:15	Day 1 wrap up

##### Day 2: Tuesday, November 21, 2017

Time	Agenda item
8:00–9:00	<i>Breakfast</i>
9:00–9:10	Welcome
9:10–9:50	Early voting options overview
9:50–10:35	<i>Break and demo</i>
10:35–12:15	Early voting options – Policy discussion
12:15–1:15	<i>Lunch (served on site)</i>
1:15–2:00	Meeting adjournment and forward calendar
2:00 – 2:30	Upcoming By-Elections
2:30–2:45	<i>Break</i>
2:45–4:45	OGI Steering Committee meeting

## Appendix B: Meeting Participants

Political Party	Representative(s)
Animal Protection Party of Canada	Stephen Best Liz White
Christian Heritage Party of Canada	Rod Taylor Peter Vogel
Communist Party of Canada	Andrew Garvie
Conservative Party of Canada	Greg Labuschagne
Green Party of Canada	Nick Carter Marlene Wells
Liberal Party of Canada	John Arnold (Observer) Azam Ishmael Jessica Spindler
Libertarian Party of Canada	Peter d'Entremont Jean-Serge Brisson
Marijuana Party	John Akpata Talis Brauns
Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada	Anna Di Carlo Enver Villamizar
National Advancement Party of Canada	Stephen Garvey
New Democratic Party	Robert Fox
Pirate Party of Canada	Travis McCrea
Progressive Canadian Party	Al Gullon
Rhinoceros Party	Jean-Patrick Berthiaume Pascal Gélinas