



**Remarks of the Chief Electoral Officer  
before the  
Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs**

**Presentation of the Main Estimates 2014–15**

**June 5, 2014**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

## **Introduction**

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for inviting me to discuss the 2014–15 Main Estimates for my Office. I am accompanied by Mr. Hughes St-Pierre, Chief Financial and Planning Officer, Mr. Belaineh Deguefé, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Integrated Services, Policy and Public Affairs, and Mr. Michel Roussel, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, Electoral Events.

Impact of  
Bill C-23

Prior to discussing my Office's Report on Plans and Priorities, I wish to remind the Committee that at the time of preparing our Main Estimates, Bill C-23 had yet to be introduced. As a consequence, the priorities outlined in the report will need to be reviewed and adjusted. We will also review our operating budget and draw on the statutory authority to deal with additional expenditures that may be required.

I would like to appear before the Committee in the fall to give you more information on our progress in implementing the new provisions of the *Canada Elections Act*; on key changes for the next general election in this new operating context; and on our initial budget estimates for that election.

As we continue our preparations, I would like to underline my commitment, and that of my staff, to implementing the provisions of the Act in a timely and effective manner.

### **Budget Authorities of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer**

Appropriation /  
Total Main  
Estimates

Today, the Committee is studying our annual appropriation, which is \$30.5 million. This represents the salaries of approximately 350 full-time-equivalent employees. Combined with our statutory authority, which funds all other expenditures under the *Canada Elections Act*, our 2014–15 Main Estimates total \$97.1 million.

Decrease from  
Previous Year

This is an \$18.7 million decrease from our 2013–14 Main Estimates. There are three main reasons for it: the phasing out of quarterly allowances to political parties, a \$7.4 million decrease; the completion of the main components of our office consolidation project, a \$9.3 million decrease; and the conclusion of the redistribution of electoral districts, a \$2.5 million decrease.

## **Priorities for the 2014–15 Fiscal Year**

The major focus of my Office for this fiscal year is completing preparatory work and mobilizing our resources to achieve a state of full election readiness for an election called after April 2015.

In preparation for a 2015 general election, we are improving the services required for voters. This includes implementing the provisions of Bill C-23. Our overall objectives are to ensure the integrity of the conduct of elections and make it easier for Canadians to register and vote. I would like to explain some of this work in more detail.

### ***Improvements in support of electoral integrity***

Compliance  
with Voting Day  
Procedures

As indicated in our management response to the 2013 *Compliance Review* report, we are planning additional administrative measures to improve compliance with election day procedures.

These include improved recruitment practices, modernized training, and when possible, simplified procedures and clearer instructions for election workers.

Record-keeping errors occur when election officers handle exceptions, such as voters whose names do not appear on the voters list. To address this issue, we will pursue measures to ensure that we have most accurate and current voters list possible on election day.

### ***A modernized voter registration system***

Modernized  
Voter  
Registration

This year, Elections Canada will introduce a new voter registration system.

This system will combine a new online registration service with a new approach to revising the voters list during an election – one that targets polling divisions known for high volumes of polling day registrations – and will promote voter registration among first-time electors.

To make this possible, my Office has invested in developing a secure national voters database that can be updated in real time by returning officers and electors themselves during an election.

### ***Improvements in information to electors***

Information to  
Electors

We are making improvements to the Electoral Reminder Program, which is our multimedia advertising and information campaign for elections. It

delivers information to electors on when, where and how to register and vote, and how to prove their identity and address.

For the next general election, information will be provided in a wide variety of new formats. There will be frequent reminders to ensure that Canadians know how to register and know their options for voting – on election day, at advance polls, by mail or at their local Elections Canada office. One important focus will be on reaching electors before the issue of the writs, through targeted promotion of online registration, to reduce registration at the polls.

I have provided members with a handout that summarizes the goal of the program, the channels we will use to connect with electors, and the general timing of its rollout.

Finally, we will offer increased specialty communications for people with varying abilities, such as products in Braille or large print, open- and closed-captioned videos, and specialty audio broadcasts. As well, our website will describe the accessibility of individual polling sites. We will also continue to provide information in numerous Aboriginal and heritage languages.

## ***Implementation of the new provisions of the Canada Elections Act***

Another priority this fiscal year will be to implement the new provisions of the Act resulting from Bill C-23. I will mention only two aspects today.

Commissioner  
Move to Office  
of the DPP

First, Bill C-23 moves the Commissioner of Canada Elections from our agency to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. My officials have initiated discussions with that Office for the transfer of the Commissioner and his staff.

Guidelines and  
Interpretations /  
Advisory  
Committee of  
Political Parties

Second, Bill C-23 requires the Chief Electoral Officer to issue non-binding guidelines and interpretation notes, as well as written opinions, on the application of the Act to registered parties and associations, nomination contestants, candidates and leadership contestants. We plan to convene the Advisory Committee of Political Parties in the fall to determine an approach and forward agenda for addressing these provisions. I intend to use this opportunity to formalize the committee's role as an advisory body to the Chief Electoral Officer.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chair, my colleagues and I are happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.