

For Immediate Release  
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## **Report Released on the Investigation into Breaches of the *Elections Act* in the Municipality of the County of Richmond**

Elections Nova Scotia has entered into eight compliance agreements as a result of its investigation into potential breaches of the *Elections Act* by the Municipality of the County of Richmond Council and the Municipality's Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The breaches relate to the reimbursement by the Municipality of the cost for tickets purchased to attend a political fundraiser in May, 2014.

Elections Nova Scotia has concluded that the eleven individuals investigated were unaware their acts may have been in breach of the *Elections Act*. Two of those investigated were cleared during the investigation. Eight of nine remaining individuals accepted responsibility for their acts. In consideration of this, and other facts of the investigation, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has signed compliance agreements with the CAO, the Warden and six councillors. One councillor has not signed an agreement at this time. A compliance agreement is a voluntary agreement on terms and conditions that the CEO considers necessary to ensure the individual's compliance with the *Act* in future. Compliance notifications are published in the [Compliance section](#) of the Elections Nova Scotia website.

The contributions from the eight individuals which were illegally reimbursed for the tickets they purchased, had been accepted by the Liberal Electoral District Association for Cape Breton-Richmond. In a December 2016 letter, the CEO instructed the EDA to reimburse the portion eligible for the tax receipt. Within two weeks the EDA returned the funds to the Province of Nova Scotia Department of Finance. Based on the EDA's decision to comply with the CEO's directive, no further action against the EDA will be taken by the CEO.

"Elections Nova Scotia had the full cooperation of all individuals involved in the investigation, including the municipal representatives, the Officers of the Liberal Electoral District Association for Cape Breton-Richmond and the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party (NSLP)" said Chief Electoral Officer Richard Temporale.

The [investigation report](#) is available in the [Compliance section](#) of the Elections Nova Scotia website.

## **Elections Nova Scotia Offers Amnesty Period to Report Breaches of *Elections Act***

Effective immediately, ENS is launching an amnesty period to individuals, corporations, unions and municipalities that come forward and report similar instances where breaches of the *Act* may have occurred in the past.

We understand that some organizations such as corporations, unions or municipalities reimburse the purchase price of ticket for employees or members attending corporate, service organization, and charity events on the grounds that their attendance often fosters mutually beneficial community and corporate stewardship.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, political fundraisers must be treated differently for the following reasons:

- Political financing rules ensure the public knows who, through their financial contributions, may have an influence on various political agendas.
- There are limits on who can contribute to a candidate or a party and how much they can contribute in any given year.
- Personal provincial income taxes are forgone in the form of tax receipts to those who either donate money or purchased tickets to political fund raising events.
- Because these are deemed to be personal donations, no individual or organization may reimburse directly or indirectly for a contribution made by an individual.

The rules governing political contributions are set out in Sections 234 to 258 of the *Act*. However, based on the evidence found in the investigation into officials with the Municipality of the County of Richmond, some individuals and organizations such as corporations, unions or municipalities are not fully aware of the particular rules governing political contributions and the limitations as set out in the *Act*.

It is unknown how widespread the practice of organizations reimbursing individuals who attend political fundraising events might be. What is known is that this investigation has led to wide-spread coverage and therefore, public interest in this topic in general. As such, it has presented ENS with an opportunity to educate and inform the public-at-large about the rules governing political financing in Nova Scotia. It also presents an opportunity for individuals, corporations, unions or municipalities who may have unwittingly been involved in a past event under similar circumstances. Effective immediately, ENS is launching an amnesty period. This is an opportunity for individuals, corporations, unions and municipalities to come forward to report similar breaches of the *Act*. The amnesty period will expire at the end of this fiscal year, March 31, 2017.

For more information about the Amnesty period, visit [electionsnovascotia.ca](http://electionsnovascotia.ca) or contact Dorothy Rice at ENS at 902-424-8584.

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