



Report on the Conduct of the November 26, 2024, Provincial General Election and Recommendations for Legislative Change

42nd Provincial General Election | November 26, 2024

Published by the Chief Electoral Officer, September 11th, 2025



Volume 2

Elections that work for you



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The Honourable Danielle Barkhouse
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia
Province House
1726 Hollis Street
Halifax, NS
B3J 2Y3

Dear Honourable Speaker:

The Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Proceedings of the 42nd Provincial General Election held November 26, 2024, is published in three volumes.

Volume I, Statement of Votes & Statistics published on May 7, 2025, provided an overview of the election including a summary of results and detailed statistics on the vote. *Volume II, Report on the Conduct of the November 26, 2024, Provincial General Election and Recommendations for Legislative Change* is released to you today, includes lessons learned and legislative change recommendations. *Volume III, Financial Information & Statistics*, will be published later in 2025 and will provide financial information on election expenses, candidate reimbursement, election administration costs, and financial statistics.

I am honoured to present *Volume II, Report on the Conduct of the November 26, 2024, Provincial General Election and Recommendations for Legislative Change* to the Legislative Assembly, in accordance with Section 163 of the *Elections Act*.

Sincerely,



Dorothy Rice
Chief Electoral Officer

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Message from the Chief Electoral Officer



Dorothy Rice
Chief Electoral Officer

AS CHIEF ELECTORAL Officer (CEO) for Nova Scotia, I am pleased to provide this report that covers the execution of the Provincial General Election (PGE) that took place on November 26, 2024, and the legislative changes that I recommend after receiving feedback from voters, staff, and stakeholders during post-election debriefs.

My mandate is to deliver fair, inclusive, and accessible elections with a high level of integrity and independence. Part of this role is to provide strategic advice on election-related matters and best practices in

accordance with the terms of the *Elections Act*, and relevant laws.

The challenges faced by Elections Nova Scotia (ENS) and other election management bodies in Canada have resulted in a changing landscape as we respond to external demands, a need to improve processes through technological change and the requirement to meet voters' changing expectations. Two of these challenges are the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation as well as the need to continuously modernize

the electoral process. I would like to highlight these challenges.

1. Misinformation and Disinformation

This ongoing and emerging issue is faced by electoral management bodies including ENS and it undermines the fundamental trust in the integrity of elections. With the changes in traditional news sources, voters attain information via social media that presents challenges with misinformation that must be offset by aggressive information sharing by ENS. In addition, the threat of foreign interference has increased the need for coordinated efforts to monitor and address issues during elections.

2. Modernization

With the increase in use of technology as we deliver elections, the reliability of internet service in all corners of Nova Scotia has presented new challenges. The continued delivery of services such as e-Ballots rely on good connection, and planned improvements to service will enable further enhancements in the voting process.

As an independent non-partisan agency, ENS reports to the members of the House of Assembly through the Speaker. With a high level of integrity, ENS remains accountable to all eligible voters who reside permanently in this province.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team who delivered this election, including the staff at head office, temporary election workers hired for administration, warehouse and outreach, and returning officers and their election officials. It takes thousands of people to deliver an election, and the team who contributed to the delivery of the 42nd PGE got the job done!

The recommendations I have included in this report, if enacted, represent the next steps of electoral reform to improve processes and to ensure that we maintain the integrity of our electoral process. I know that the ENS team is well positioned and capable to integrate these changes in our strategic plan as we prepare to meet the challenges of the electoral planning cycle for the 43rd PGE.



With a high level of integrity, ENS remains accountable to all eligible voters who reside permanently in this province.”

Summary

Volume I, Statement of Votes & Statistics, published on May 7, 2025, provided the detailed voting statistics and an overview of the conduct of the 42nd PGE. That report is available on the ENS website (electionsnovascotia.ca). The following is a summary of the election and its outcome.

On October 27, 2024, at the request of Premier Tim Houston, the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, ONS, KC, dissolved the Legislative Assembly. An Order in Council directed the CEO, Dorothy Rice, to issue the writs of election to all 55 electoral districts. The date set for the 42nd PGE was Tuesday, November 26, 2024.

The return of the writs of election confirmed the following candidates were elected to the House of Assembly:

PC Party	43
Liberal	2
NSNDP	9
Independent	1

42nd PGE by the Numbers

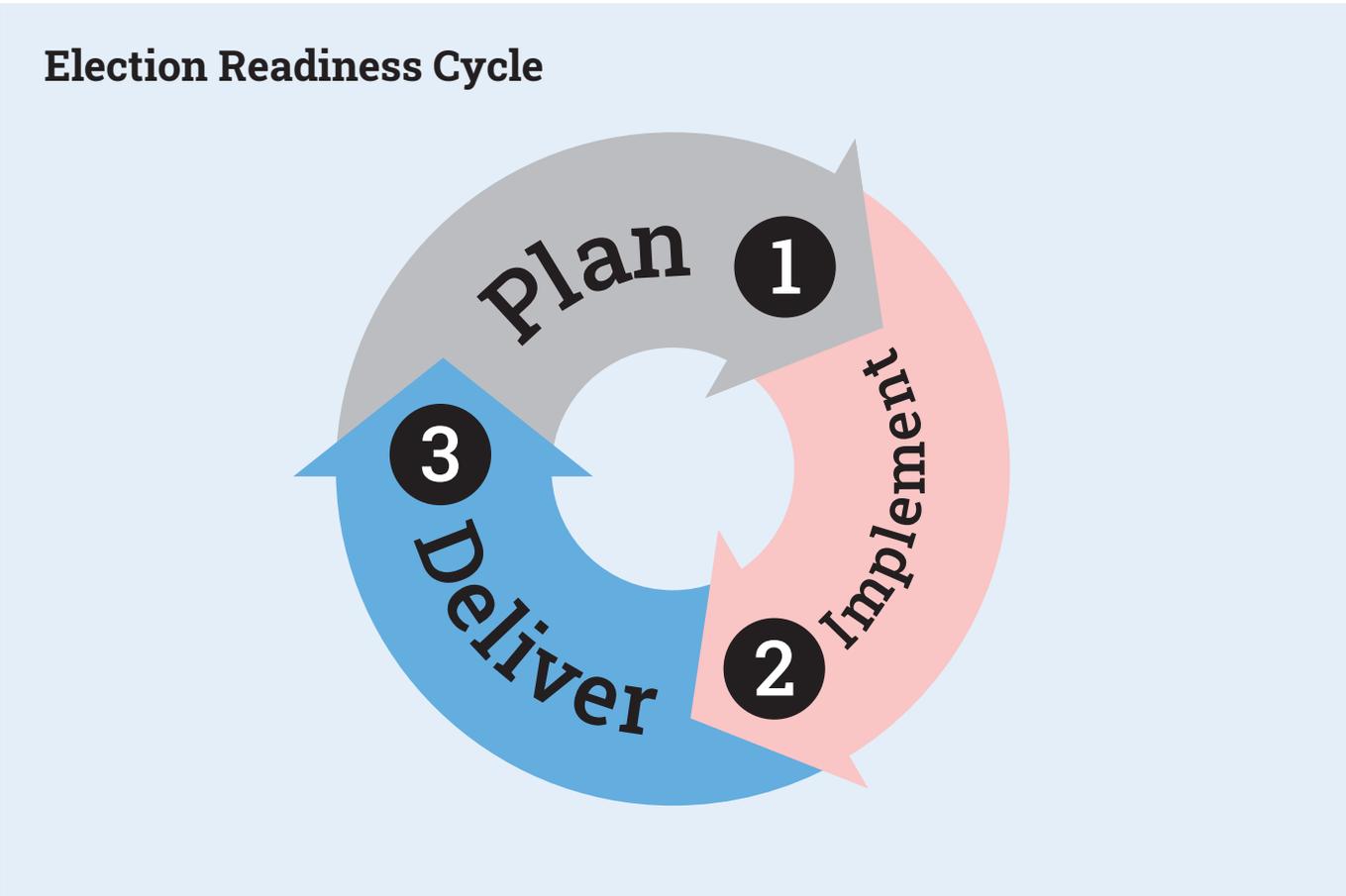
- 5 Registered Political Parties
- 788,427 Registered Voters
- 354,059 Valid Votes Cast (45% Turnout)
- 5,318 Votes Cast Remotely by Write-in Ballot
- 6,200 Election Workers Hired
- 761 Voting Locations
- 119 Tablets in the Field
- 191 Nominated Candidates
- 55 Electoral Districts
- 220 Hours of Voting Over 24 Days

Electoral Planning

Being Election Ready

ENS commenced the election readiness cycle for the 42nd PGE in 2023 with the development and approval of organization election readiness projects. As this was ENS’s first election readiness planning cycle with fixed election date legislation, the approach to readiness was modified from previous cycles.

The implementation phase was proposed to start in the Spring of 2024 with the kick-off of Returning Officer (RO) assignment work, such as voting location inspections. These initiatives commenced in May of 2024, and in June 2024 indications were made regarding the potential for an election call prior to the fixed election date timeframe. The organization responded by triggering the expediting of all election readiness projects and activities. More specific details on these activities can be found in the section covering Organizational Implementation.



Legislative Context

Following the 41st PGE that took place in August 2021, Richard Temporale, the CEO at that time, released a report outlining proposed legislative change recommendations. While there were several collaborative discussions with the Department of Justice, who is responsible for the *Elections Act*, there were more pressing Government priorities that prevented these recommendations from being tabled in the legislature before the election call. As a result, the 42nd PGE was held under the same legislative authority as the 41st PGE.

The current legislative change recommendations include a combination of the previously requested proposals that are still relevant, plus new recommendations stemming from the 42nd PGE.

Organizational Implementation

To be election ready, the organization including operations, IT, communications, and finance teams came together and worked with the ROs to conduct various election readiness assignments. The following section details the assignments undertaken during the election readiness cycle for the 42nd PGE.

Recruitment

The original schedule for the recruitment of the returning office core staff was November, 2024, however the timeline for this plan was revised to have the assignment executed in July/August, 2024. This assignment required each RO to recruit the following returning office core staff roles:

1. Assistant Returning Officer (ARO)
2. Revision Assistant (RA)
3. Training Officer (TO) – optional to hire, based on skill and need
4. Poll Supervisor (PS) for the continuous poll
5. Presiding Officers (POs) for the continuous poll
6. Information Assistant (IO) for the continuous poll

By mid-August, 2024, the majority of ROs had completed this assignment and had their roster of selected staff ready to work whenever the election was called.

Across the province, roughly 385 returning office core staff were hired to work.

Returning Office Core Staff Training

The original planned timeline for training of returning office core staff was between April and May of 2025, which included virtual preparatory training in April followed by in-person training in HRM in May. The timeline for training of returning office core staff was brought forward from April/May 2025 to September/October 2024, and the delivery model was revised to include only virtual delivery of all training. The decision to deliver a modified training program was due to the logistics required to carry out in-person training for 440 core staff (includes ROs) that could not be met. A high number of provincial election workers also deliver municipal elections, which added to the scheduling challenges. In-person training requires over a week to deliver, hotel accommodation for more than 150 participants, seven conference rooms, a large ballroom for meals, 126 computers, and 60 printers. While these logistical requirements were previously secured for April/May 2025 with a local hotel, in the summer of 2024 when ENS made inquiries, no local hotel could meet the requirements on short notice.

Approximately 66 virtual training sessions were delivered by nine ENS subject matter experts on six election specific topics. Due to the timing of the election call in October, virtual training for results reporting entry at the returning office was postponed and educational materials and videos were provided to the ROs to inform them on this topic.

Relying on virtual training as a replacement for in-person training is not ideal, as was learned during the 41st PGE when virtual training was delivered in 2021 due to the pandemic. Our future election readiness plan includes more certainty for training schedules to ensure our returning office core staff receive in-person training that will better prepare them for their roles during an election. Plans also include refresher training at various intervals in the election readiness cycle.

Returning Office and Voting Location Inspections

Inspections of prospective returning offices and voting locations took place between May and July of 2024. These inspections are best conducted in the Spring/Summer months. Over 1,000 locations were inspected and just over 800 were leased for the 42nd PGE.

Two of the challenges noted following the 41st PGE were experienced again during 42nd PGE.

1. Inadequate Physical Accessibility

Most locations inspected in mid 2024 met the accessibility requirements or could be temporarily remediated to meet them. This positive review was encouraging, however, when the election was called in October, ROs were not able to secure some or all of their inspected locations. As a result, the ROs were forced to lease spaces based on availability, and had to rely on temporary remediations or inaccessible locations that had to be used with limited modified access (e.g. returning office in Sydney-Membertou).

2. Lack of Connectivity

During the inspections conducted in the leadup to the 41st PGE in 2021, ROs experienced increased challenges to find locations that could meet our technical requirements, including good cellular signal and internet access. As detailed in the post-election reports following the 41st PGE, some of these services had continued to degrade since the 40th PGE. Unfortunately, the 42nd PGE testing indicated that reliable connections were less reliable than hoped for. To mitigate this issue, ENS placed 55 orders with Starlink as a backup solution, and most were deployed to the electoral districts. This lack of functioning cellular and internet connectivity impacted the performance of numerous e-Ballot Systems across the province with intermittent service, which resulted in a requirement of our election workers to resort to contingency voting (paper write-in ballots) frequently. We are pleased to report that the contingency plan for voting ensured that electors were not turned away when they arrived at a poll to vote.

Polling Division Review

Polling division reviews are required each election readiness cycle due to population movements across the province. The polling division review assignment was scheduled to be conducted in the Fall of 2024 and required each RO to work with ENS Geographic Information System (GIS) staff and individuals from electoral district associations on the review. With a predicted early election call, the decision was made that if the election were called prior to January 2025, ENS would deliver the election with the same polling divisions as were used for the 41st PGE. If the election was not called in 2024, the assignment would still be conducted and all the subsequent GIS work completed to prepare all the required digital and printed maps. With the election call in October 2024, the ROs did not conduct the polling division review assignment, and the 42nd PGE was conducted using the same polling divisions used in 2021.

Conduct of the 42nd Provincial General Election Delivery

The images below outline the challenges faced by the ENS team and mitigations introduced to address these challenges.

ENS Challenges

CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
 <p>Training Planned for In Person Booked May 2025</p>	 <p>Online and Virtual Sept and Oct 2024 delivery</p>
 <p>Hiring of Core Staff Two ROs resigned after writ issued</p>	 <p>EOL Accepted Jobs Pool of EOLs were in place to assist new ROs</p>
 <p>Internet Connectivity Degradation of service in recent years in rural areas</p>	 <p>Starlink Purchases Procured Starlink-provided support for setup</p>
 <p>Postal Strike – Voters Threat was public knowledge when election called – talks broke down Nov 14</p>	 <p>No VIC Decision Difficult decision to not issue VIC-strengthened marketing campaign TV, radio, newspaper, social media</p>
 <p>Postal Strike – Internal Payment of wages and suppliers</p>	 <p>Access NS Arrangements made with Service NS and RO staff to deliver pay cheques</p>
 <p>Candidate and Party Applications for nomination not approved due to incomplete forms</p>	 <p>External Legal Counsel Consistent messaging to applicants developed</p>

Staffing Returning Officers (ROs)

At the time the election was called, ENS had 53 of 55 ROs appointed. Following the election call, two of the appointed ROs resigned, leaving ENS with four RO vacancies to fill during an active PGE. ENS Operations staff were able to recruit four ROs in a timely manner, three of whom had limited election experience and one who had been an existing Election Officer Liaison (EOL) working with ENS with election experience. Operations staff provided the three new ROs a crash course on election administration and provided extra support during their returning office opening. In the leadup to an election call, RO resignations are a concern for ENS, as this role is critical to the administration and delivery of an election at the electoral district level. In future, ENS will continue to focus on RO retention, stronger mentorship programs and will ensure a strong complement of EOLs are hired and ready to fill the role of RO should it become necessary. During the writ period, the CEO visited seven returning offices across the province to observe operations.

Training Officers

The position of training officer was new for this election. ENS had received feedback from many ROs on the challenges to train early voting and election day workers at the same time as they were required to meet the other critical demands of their role. ROs had the option to hire a training officer to assist them during this key time during the writ period. It was not a mandatory hire because some ROs preferred to deliver their own training. Due to the early election call, the train-the-trainers program was not fully implemented for those hired to fulfil this role. In future, this program will be in place and training will be delivered in person.

Technology Implementation

The e-Ballot System was piloted prior to the province wide roll-out in the 42nd PGE, first in the Preston By-election held in 2023, and the Pictou-West By-election held in 2024. These pilots provided the confidence in the use of the system and gave insight into the public's reaction to the system, which was positive overall during both by-elections.

Introducing new technology in a by-election is less challenging than during a PGE and ENS knew there would be some challenges. One of the biggest challenges was maintaining stable system connectivity to the internet as detailed above in the section titled Returning Office and Voting Location Inspections. The loss of internet connectivity was intermittent throughout the entire election, causing election workers to rely on our contingency voting processes, which is manual and paper based. While this challenge was disappointing for ENS, we were prepared for it due to our past experiences with cellular and internet service across the province.

The above noted challenge aside, the feedback collected during the 42nd PGE from voters and election workers, consistent with the by-elections, was overall positive for use of the e-Ballot System. Going forward, ENS has a high level of confidence in the use of the e-Ballot System, particularly when the cellular and internet reliability improves.

Cybersecurity

During the 42nd PGE ENS worked very closely with the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, Nova Scotia department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions, Microsoft Critical Situation Management Team, RCMP and M5 Public Affairs team for advice and services to support and enhance the robust processes of our defense to cyber security attacks and incidents, and crisis communication support during an incident, if needed.

A cyber incident was detected the first week into the PGE with a phishing campaign which involved emails being distributed impersonating a communication from ENS regarding Internet Voting. Internet Voting was not a voting method offered to electors during the 42nd PGE. We acted swiftly and worked closely with all stakeholders going through the following steps:

- Reviewed and identified the issue
- Informed senior leadership
- Consulted with our M5 crisis communications support and Microsoft's Critical Situation Management Team
- Informed Canadian Centre for Cyber Security (CCCS) and RCMP, triggering ongoing tracking and monitoring from the CCCS for this matter
- Developed a plan of action
- Wrote and circulated an internal memo to field staff
- Informed media outlets to help get information to voters quickly
- Sent detailed media release and posted information on our website – English and French
- Shared Q&A script information with our public and internal call centres
- Participated in several media interviews to raise voter awareness
- Informed our government partners – Department of Cyber security and Digital Solutions and Communications Nova Scotia
- Informed registered political parties

The effective collaboration among stakeholders was crucial during this PGE in navigating and overcoming the cybersecurity challenges that we face in this digital age.

Postal Strike

When the writs of election were issued, a postal strike was a high threat to the execution of the election. Fortunately, printing had taken place of an early election voter awareness card that was sent via Canada Post within days of the election call. The information on the personalized Voter Information Cards (VICs) cannot be finalized until voting locations are secured, and by that time, the strike was imminent. The difficult decision to abandon the plan to produce and send VICs and to roll out a high intensity communication program “*No VIC, No Problem*” via traditional and social media was quickly implemented. The call centre was also prepared for the increase in voter inquiries of “where do I vote?” Payments to workers and suppliers were made in a timely manner during and after the election by contracting an independent delivery service and with the cooperation of Service Nova Scotia.

Candidates and Parties

Before the close of nominations on November 6 at 2:00 PM, 191 candidates were confirmed with completed and accepted nomination forms. Before the election was called, 91 candidates were registered. Candidates may be registered anytime between elections if that candidate plans to spend money, receive contributions or receive transfers from a registered party, if they are supported by that party. Candidate registrations do not result in a candidate’s name on a ballot. During the nomination period, nine candidates did not receive nomination approval due to incomplete applications.

Results Reporting for Early Voting Polls

With the province wide implementation of the new e-Ballot System, ENS anticipated that most of the unofficial results would be returned and released publicly much faster than historically experienced, this being attributed to the digital results produced by the e-Ballot System for all early voting polls.

Unofficial results were available and winners declared earlier than in previous elections, however, there were unforeseen challenges which impacted the expediency in submitting and the accuracy of the unofficial early voting poll results. The delays and accuracy challenges were a result of human error in completing the data entry. One of the contributing factors to this was that field staff did not receive in-person, hands-on training on the new procedures for results reporting due to the early election call.

As this was the first experience with province-wide digital results for early voting polls, the lessons learned will guide the improvements to training to ensure future challenges are not experienced.

Outreach Strategies

ENS engages in outreach efforts with underserved voters through our IDEAS (inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility) Committee. The goal is to help underserved voters participate fully in the electoral process and exercise their democratic rights. In collaboration with our community IDEAS partners, ENS developed an outreach strategy for the 42nd PGE to help build ongoing relationships with underserved voter communities to ensure their needs are understood and met.

ENS hired four Outreach Liaison Officers in June of 2024 to lead the IDEAS work for the 42nd PGE. The implementation of the outreach program was accelerated over the Summer of 2024 in anticipation of an early election. Although the accelerated planning did not allow for all outreach initiatives in the strategy to be fully realized, the outreach team was able to improve diversity recruitment, provide direct communication, deliver three voting locations and to implement a feedback survey. These initiatives were reported on in Volume I.

ENS will continue to collaborate with IDEAS partners to build on the successes of our outreach strategy and improve offerings for underserved voters in future elections.

CIVIX

ENS provided financial support to CIVIX to enable the delivery of a student vote program to students across Nova Scotia. CIVIX was able to encourage 158 schools across the province to register to participate in the program, which saw 18,445 students cast their vote. The results of the vote aligned with the actual results in that the PC Party won the majority, with NDP in opposition, Liberal Party in third, and Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin elected as the only independent member in the House of Assembly.

ENS will continue to partner with CIVIX to deliver this valuable program that encourages students to get engaged and participate in the democratic process.

Communications with the Public

The ENS mandate includes public communications to ensure Nova Scotian voters receive information describing how, when, and where to vote. Throughout the election period, information is distributed to our stakeholders, eligible voters, candidates, election workers, registered political parties, third party advertisers, and the public-at-large. Communications plans for the 42nd PGE had included the development of a voter education and awareness marketing campaign. When election readiness was accelerated, these plans shifted and communications efforts were quickly updated to include a program to address the challenge of the pending postal strike.

The context for voter communication is constantly changing. Not only are disinformation and misinformation concerns, but the decline of mainstream media outlets and the proliferation of social media platforms has fragmented the public audience. This makes reaching voters more complex. ENS communications focuses on positioning the agency as a trusted source of electoral information. To continue to evolve our communications efforts, ENS will focus resources on voter education between electoral events to build the ENS brand and improve voter awareness.

Recommendations for Legislative Change

Background on Status of Recommendations following the 41st PGE

As stated in the Message from the CEO, the proposed legislative change recommendations published following the 41st PGE held August 17th, 2021, were not tabled in the House of Assembly. Most of those recommendations are still relevant and will be included with the new legislative change recommendations that are presented following the 42nd PGE. There are a few recommendations made following the 41st PGE that are no longer relevant due to changes to the *Elections Act* and/or internal government procedure(s). The following summarizes, at a high-level, the recommendations that were previously requested, but will not be included in the updated recommended changes.

Theme	Summary of Recommendations Removed
Fixed Date	Establish a pre-writ campaign period that commences 120-days before election day.
	Reduce the duration of the election period from a maximum of 46 days to a maximum of 37 and fix the timeframe for issuance of a Writ of Election.
Alignment	Align the period covering election expense spending limits, reimbursement limits and maximum election expenses with both the pre-writ campaign period and the writ period for fixed-date elections.
	Subsection 8 (1) of the <i>House of Assembly Act</i> needs to align to Section 29A of the <i>Elections Act</i> in terms of the duration of the House (previously max of five years, now four-year fixed terms).
	Warrants to pay for by-elections rather than include estimates in annual budget submission.

Overview of New Recommendations from the 42nd PGE

The recommendations for legislative change presented in this report have been developed based on the post-election review and feedback received during the delivery of the 42nd PGE. The intent of these recommendations is to improve Nova Scotia's electoral process to achieve the highest quality election administered in our province. Included in the process to develop these recommendations, ENS consulted with the Election Commission (EC).

The eleven recommendations are grouped into three themes: Electoral Finance, Transparency and Clarity. Each recommendation presented includes a brief explanation as to why the CEO is proposing the change to be considered by members of the House of Assembly.

Electoral Finance

The recommendations for legislative change presented in this section pertain to electoral finance. If new information is received by ENS, further recommendations may be made in the final post-election report, *Volume III, Financial Information & Statistics*, which will be published later in 2025. Volume III will provide financial information on election expenses, candidate reimbursement, election administration costs and financial statistics.

Publicity Costs

Candidate's campaigns have had a challenging time in meeting the provisions of the *Elections Act* as it pertains to payment of their election expenses during an election, particularly those expenses related to publicity costs. The *Elections Act* does not contemplate that a candidate uses their personal credit card for the payment of publicity costs, but in an era where traditional print media is declining and is being replaced by digital streams, candidates often have no option but to pay for such services using a credit card.

Recommendations 1 and 2

Allow for greater flexibility in how a candidate pays for publicity costs.

1. Add a clause under ss. 261(4) to allow candidates to pay for publicity costs directly and with their personal credit card, if required.
2. Add a reference to the new clause to ss. 261(5).

Tax Receipts

Tax receipts are provided to the Official Agents of registered parties and to candidates' Official Agents during an election, to issue to individuals who make monetary contributions. The tax receipt allows the contributor to claim a tax credit for a political donation on their annual income tax return.

During an election, tax receipts are issued by the local returning officer to candidate campaigns. This decentralized issuance of tax receipts has been challenging in the past.

Recommendation 3

To streamline the process and reduce challenges with the issuance of tax receipts during an election.

3. Allow tax receipts to be issued by the Chief Electoral Officer, instead of by the returning officer, to the Official Agents of each candidate.

Conducting Audits

Candidate's campaigns that spend more than \$500 on election expenses are legally required to have their election expense report audited. While it remains important to have election expenses audited, the total amount to be audited should be reconsidered.

Recommendation 4

4. Increase the threshold to require an audit of candidate's election expenses from \$500 to \$1,000 by amending ss. 229(3).

Registered Candidate's Annual Report

The *Elections Act* requires candidates registered with ENS to file annual reports that detail any financial activity such as raising funds or spending funds. The candidate's Official Agent is required to file this annual report with ENS.

While the *Elections Act* allows for filing extensions upon request to the Chief Electoral Officer for other filings, no extension is currently contemplated in the *Elections Act* for a candidate's annual financial report. Additionally, the *Elections Act* allows for various administrative penalties for failure to submit required filings to the CEO but does not contemplate such penalties for late or not filing a candidate's annual report.

Recommendations 5 and 6

5. Allow the CEO the discretion to grant an extension of up to 30 days to a registered candidate's Official Agent for the filing of a candidate's annual report by adding a new subsection to s. 230.
6. Allow the CEO to issue administrative penalties to a registered candidate's Official Agent who is late or fails to file the candidate's annual report.

Transparency

Transparency is of key importance to the integrity of the electoral process. The following recommendations seek to add new and modify existing provisions of the *Elections Act* with the goal of increasing transparency.

Official Agents

The role of Official Agent is critical to a registered candidate. A candidate cannot raise and spend funds and run a campaign without having an Official Agent. Currently, there are no restrictions on the number of candidates an official agent can be appointed to represent in an electoral district.

Recommendation 7

7. Allow an individual fulfilling the role of Official Agent to represent a maximum of one candidate per electoral district by adding an additional clause to ss. 169(2).

Reporting Financial Misconduct

Registered parties, electoral district associations and registered candidates are required to file financial reports with the CEO annually, after elections and at various times as required by the *Elections Act*. At the core of these reporting requirements is transparency, particularly when there is a reimbursement of funds and/or public funding. Financial misconduct may be discovered in any organization such as public entities and private business. The CEO is seeking to strengthen the provisions that ensure transparency in the *Elections Act* by recommending the timely disclosure of financial misconduct.

Recommendations 8 and 9

8. Ensure the timely reporting of financial misconduct once known by amending ss. 171(1) and adding a new clause.
9. Allow the CEO the discretion to require a registered party, electoral district association and/or candidate to have a financial review conducted upon disclosing financial misconduct by adding a new section to the *Elections Act*.

Clarity

As the electoral process evolves it is important to ensure there is clarity regarding regulations and processes. The recommendations for legislative changes in this section are intended to bring clarity to existing legislative provisions.

Financial Misconduct

With the recommendation of timely disclosure of financial misconduct, it is imperative that the *Elections Act* defines what the CEO deems financial misconduct to mean as it relates to the electoral finance regime.

Recommendation 10

10. Add a definition to s. 2 of financial misconduct.

Recounts

The *Elections Act* defines the procedures and allows for discretionary authority of the CEO when conducting recounts. The CEO must hire individuals to undertake the recount and allow candidates, their legal counsel, and others to be present to witness the recount.

Recommendation 11

11. Amend ss. 151(1) to provide clarity on which individuals may attend a recount.

Conclusion

The election readiness planning cycle for the 42nd PGE commenced in 2022 with program plans based on a fixed election date. Progress was well underway when comments were made to the media in June 2024 that alerted our office to a possibility of an earlier than planned for election call. The staff at ENS pivoted and adjusted the timelines for the execution of election readiness initiatives with the revised goal of being fully election ready in the Fall of 2024. While our election readiness plan was not fully implemented as had been originally planned, the ENS team including permanent staff, temporary election workers and our field staff did a tremendous job delivering the 42nd PGE.

Following the conclusion of the 42nd PGE, the most common sentiment from many who worked it was that it had been a very challenging election. Many of the challenges have been detailed in this report, such as securing leases for suitable returning office space and voting locations, external cyber threats, issues related to the reliability of cellular and internet infrastructure and the training of field staff. A common theme for the challenges faced is that we are dependent on external providers for a successful outcome. Examples of these include:

- Rental of returning offices and voting locations – Property owners lease spaces to ENS, which may not be possible due to a variety of reasons.
- Telecommunication and connectivity services must be dependable – In order to administer services, we rely on telecommunications companies to provide stable cellular and internet services, which have not been consistently provided.

While these dependencies on providers will continue, enhanced planning for future elections will address some of the uncertainty created in these areas.

In 2026, ENS will commence its election readiness cycle for the 43rd PGE. The organization will build on the lessons learned in 2024 from the experiences of the readiness program and the delivery of the 42nd PGE, and will focus planning on creating certainty. To do this, plans to better manage risks will prepare ENS for the delivery of the 43rd PGE. Strategies are in place to adjust readiness cycle plans by adopting enhanced adaptive and iterative approaches, and by strengthening our mitigations.

We are confident that we will be ready for the 43rd PGE, whenever it may be called, and that our team at ENS will again execute its strategy professionally with a high level of integrity.

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