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Chief Electoral Officer to Recommend Stronger Measures to Protect Ballot Secrecy

In the forthcoming Annual Report of Elections Nova Scotia to the House of Assembly, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) will recommend a review and legislative amendments of the provisions of the *Elections Act* to ensure ballot secrecy.

During the 2013 Provincial General Election, nine contraventions of the *Elections Act* were remedied through compliance agreements in which the offender recognized the offense and agreed to take corrective measures.

One breach of the *Elections Act* could not be resolved through a compliance agreement. A voter photographed his marked ballot and later posted that photo on a social media site to reveal how he had voted.

The CEO is of the opinion that a fundamental principle of our free elections, the secret ballot, is challenged by the offence. However, on review of the file after an investigation conducted by the RCMP, it has been determined that there isn't a likelihood of conviction under the current provisions of the *Elections Act*.

"Ballot secrecy is a fundamental principle of democratic elections," said Richard Temporale, Nova Scotia's chief electoral officer. "To that end, elections have strict procedures to ensure voters are not able to voluntarily or otherwise disclose proof of how they voted to another person. Such measures include elections officials only issuing a single paper ballot at a time, signing each paper ballot, directing the voter how to fold the ballot after marked, and forbidding cameras in the polling place. If the current provisions in the *Elections Act* do not safeguard the

principle of ballot secrecy, we will recommend changes to the act to the House of Assembly that will.”

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