

ELECTIONS CANADA  
*Serving DEMOCRACY:*  
*A STRATEGIC Plan*

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*Serving* DEMOCRACY: A STRATEGIC *Plan*

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## A Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

As any good captain knows, if you do not chart a course, the ship will be at some risk of not reaching its destination. A strategic plan is like a navigational chart designed to help guide an organization through unknown and sometimes difficult waters to reach its goal. Elections Canada's goal, as Canada begins its journey into the 21st century, is to further improve the planning, management and delivery of elections and referendums, thereby serving and fortifying the democratic process. This document is intended to help Elections Canada reach that goal.

The direction outlined in this document was developed after wide consultation with Elections Canada staff and with our stakeholders. It reflects a consensus on the major areas where Elections Canada must focus its attention as we head into the next millennium.

This plan builds on the significant progress already made in meeting the goals for improved service and innovation that were set out in our first strategic plan in 1994. Guided by that plan, we successfully met the challenges of the 36th general election in 1997, a national enumeration, 12 by-elections and a general election in the Northwest Territories. As well, we were able to implement a host of changes on the legislative, technological and administrative fronts, thanks to the focus which the first plan provided.

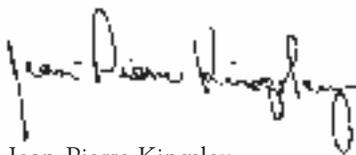
Of these changes, the establishment of the National Register of Electors stands out as the most far-reaching. Originally estimated to yield net savings of \$30 million per federal event, this computerized database of registered electors has exceeded expectations for efficiency, accuracy and cost savings. Efforts to interest other jurisdictions in its use for provincial and municipal electoral purposes will continue over the period covered by this plan, so as to maximize the benefits that stand to accrue to all Canadian taxpayers from this investment.

The last five years have brought many changes to the way in which elections are conducted in Canada. For the next several years, the pace of change promises to be even more intense as a result of rapid advances in technology, legislative change and evolving expectations on the part of electors. Our ability to adapt and respond to these changes will be bolstered by this second edition of Elections Canada's strategic plan, which will also help us maximize opportunities to improve electoral administration.

Elections Canada's revised strategic plan outlines several of the key challenges we will face and how we intend to meet them. It describes what we believe are the key demographic, legislative and technological trends that will influence Elections Canada over the next few years. It also highlights the improvements that will be required in our organization and operations to respond to these trends.

We are committed to ensuring that Elections Canada continues to position itself among the most modern and innovative electoral bodies in the world. As in previous years, we will be reviewing our strategic plan periodically to ensure that it remains relevant to the evolving needs of our Office, our stakeholders and Canadian electors.

It is a privilege to lead a dynamic, multi-talented team whose commitment to serving democracy is exceptional. Together, we will follow this plan to ensure that the federal electoral process, which has served Canadians so well in this century, continues to do so in the years to come.



Jean-Pierre Kingsley  
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada



# Introduction

Elections Canada's role in planning for, managing and administering elections is integral to the success of the federal democratic process. Candidates, political parties and all Canadians rely on Elections Canada for accurate, reliable and impartial electoral information and guidance.

***“Elections Canada is on the right track – it feels great to be part of the team.”*** Georgina Lupton, Returning Officer

Political parties and candidates depend on us to ensure a level playing field has been established for federal electoral events.

Electors rely on us to provide clear, understandable information about the voting process and to ensure that the means are available to cast a secret and secure ballot. They, as well as candidates, expect a transparent process, based on the principles of fairness and integrity.

In order to ensure compliance with electoral laws by the candidates, the political parties and the public, the Chief Electoral Officer appoints an independent Commissioner of Canada Elections. The Commissioner is responsible for monitoring compliance, for investigating alleged violations, and for prosecuting offences.

The Chief Electoral Officer also appoints a Broadcasting Arbitrator who has responsibility for allocating free and paid air time to all registered political parties during an election, and to referendum committees during a referendum.

Elections Canada's work extends well beyond the actual administration of electoral events. Between elections, for example, Elections Canada must ensure that the National Register of Electors is as up-to-date as possible so that the Office is ready to respond to an election call at any time. In order to do so, we continue to develop and maintain relationships with federal, provincial and territorial departments and agencies that provide us with the necessary data to update elector information.

In addition, we develop and carry out ongoing voter education and information programs, disseminating information in a variety of ways to help increase awareness of the electoral system. Working with associations and organizations representing Aboriginal peoples, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities and multicultural constituents, we define programs and produce tools adapted to their needs to facilitate and improve access to voting.

Another important responsibility of Elections Canada is the production and distribution of maps of electoral districts that identify their urban and rural areas. These are now being converted for electronic storage which will allow for faster and more efficient reproduction and distribution.



## *Our Mandate*

**Elections Canada is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. It must be prepared at all times to conduct federal general elections, by-elections and referendums. It must also carry out voter education and information programs, and provide support to the federal electoral boundaries commissions that are established to adjust the boundaries of federal electoral districts following each decennial census.**



After the minimum 36-day period of a general election, by-election or referendum, Elections Canada's work continues: auditing, calculating and paying electoral expenses reimbursements, preparing reports to Parliament, and providing the public with information on the process and the results. We also systematically evaluate our performance following each event and introduce improvements for the next one. At the same time, we take the necessary steps to return to a state of readiness and maintain it between events.

Our constant concern is to fulfill our responsibility to ensure that Canadians can exercise their choices in elections and referendums in an open and impartial process.

# Looking Back:

## THE 1994-1998 STRATEGIC PLAN

Elections Canada's revised plan builds on the achievements we've realized in implementing our first strategic plan. This next section recaps the key strategies we adopted in our 1994-1998 plan and highlights some of the ways in which we carried out our mission.

### KEY RESULTS

*The 1994-1998 strategic plan identified six key results areas and Elections Canada has made substantial progress in each one.*

## 1 Improving Service

Our goal was to meet client expectations for excellence in service while maximizing efficiency in election delivery and administration. We have continually improved client service by applying new procedures and making greater use of information technology. A major accomplishment has been the creation of the National Register of Electors. The Register not only simplifies voter registration, it also eliminates the need for enumeration, significantly reduces costs, and greatly improves efficiency and effectiveness.

### THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF ELECTORS

**1995** A project team was established within Elections Canada to examine the feasibility of a permanent register of electors.

**1996** The project team concluded, in a report submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, that a register of electors was feasible and cost-effective.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was briefed throughout the development of the project. The results of the research and feasibility phase were presented to the Committee in April 1996.

Bill C-63 was passed by Parliament in December 1996 allowing the establishment of the National Register of Electors, reducing the election period from a minimum of 47 days to 36, and providing for staggered voting hours across the country.

**1997** The last federal door-to-door enumeration was held in April 1997 in all provinces except Prince Edward Island and Alberta. Bill C-63 permitted the use of final voters lists from the Prince Edward Island and Alberta provincial elections held in November 1996 and March 1997 respectively. The results of this final enumeration became the basis for the National Register of Electors.

**1998** Data from the National Register of Electors were used to prepare preliminary lists of electors for two federal by-elections (Port Moody-Coquitlam, B.C., and Sherbrooke, Que.).

The first update cycle was completed, reflecting updates from federal, provincial and territorial data sources.

In accordance with the Canada Elections Act, the annual list of electors produced from the National Register of Electors was provided to members of Parliament and registered political parties in October 1998.

Elections Canada continues to maintain the National Register of Electors and, as legislation allows, to pursue opportunities to share data from the Register with other electoral jurisdictions in Canada.



*“We are on this ship together –  
Elections Canada at the helm and  
returning officers at the paddles.  
No one goes anywhere without  
clear direction, respect for the  
vessel and a shared passion  
for the journey.”*

Alice Killam, Returning Officer

## 2 Professionalism

In our 1994 plan, we challenged ourselves to provide leadership that would promote a work environment conducive to individual professional growth. Since then, we have increased our efforts in training staff to ensure that our service delivery values are understood and shared. One important innovation has been a flattening of the traditional organizational hierarchy. Capitalizing on our modest size, we have instituted regular meetings of middle managers and supervisors with the Chief Electoral Officer in informal settings to exchange ideas and discuss important issues.

We have increased efforts to ensure that returning officers, who are appointed by Order in Council, as well as other electoral officials, are kept abreast of changes we are considering and are consulted on matters affecting them. In addition, we've tailored our training programs to deal with the dynamic technological and legal environment in which officials perform their duties.

## 3 Parliamentary Support

In order to promote the integrity of the electoral system, and to ensure a thorough and ongoing review of electoral legislation and the establishment of compliance programs, we have strengthened the relationship between parliamentarians and Elections Canada. This has been accomplished through greater interaction with parliamentary committees, in particular the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

*“Working through the last enumeration and an election has given me a much better understanding and respect for the X that I put on my ballot.”* Patricia Elliott, Special Projects Officer

## 4 Community Awareness

Working co-operatively with educators, national associations, youth groups and advocates, we have expanded our efforts to enhance public awareness and understanding of the electoral process, and of our role in delivering that process. Our public messages are targeted to specific groups, including youth, Aboriginal and ethnic communities, persons with disabilities, and electors voting under the Special Voting Rules, in addition to parliamentarians and electoral officials. Our communications plans, as well as our information and advertising campaigns consider these target groups.

Between elections, both general and targeted education efforts are designed to support electoral information published during an election or referendum.

### ELECTIONS CANADA'S WORK ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE SINCE 1994:

61 visits from foreign delegations

155 technical assistance and observer missions

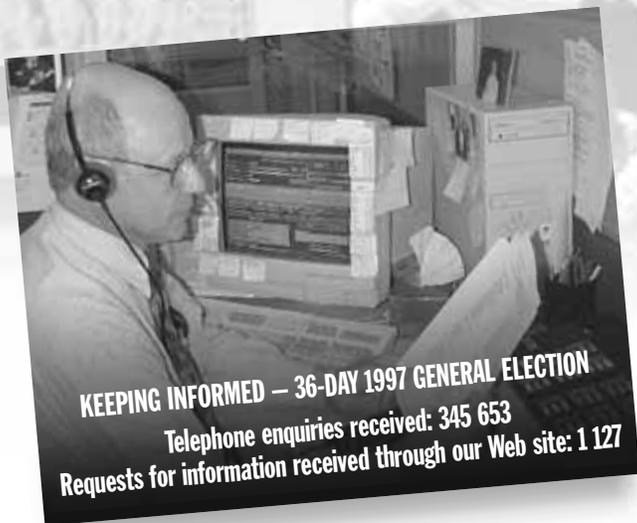
In 1995, we launched our Web site, anticipating that it would be particularly useful to our target groups. It has grown to become a significant reference source, as well as a forum for two-way communication, a source for election-related forms, and a means of following the vote count on election night. Plans are now being prepared for a youth voter education segment.

## 5 Innovation and Improvement

Building the capacity for change and fostering comfort with new ideas within the organization are ongoing activities. Our work in developing the National Register of Electors and in refining several management information systems, as well as the emphasis we've placed on planning at all levels,



Elections Canada's Web site: <http://www.elections.ca>



have all been driven by the recognition that change is a constant factor in our organization. Employees at all levels have been encouraged to share ideas and opinions and to work collaboratively toward maximizing organizational knowledge and minimizing any disruptive effect change can have.

## 6 International Services

In continuing our efforts to support democratic development around the world we have worked with our provincial and territorial partners on several international initiatives. We have provided professional and technical services in response to requests from institutions such as the Canadian International Development Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. As well, we have participated in various international electoral forums.

### OUR INFORMATION PRODUCTS INCLUDE:

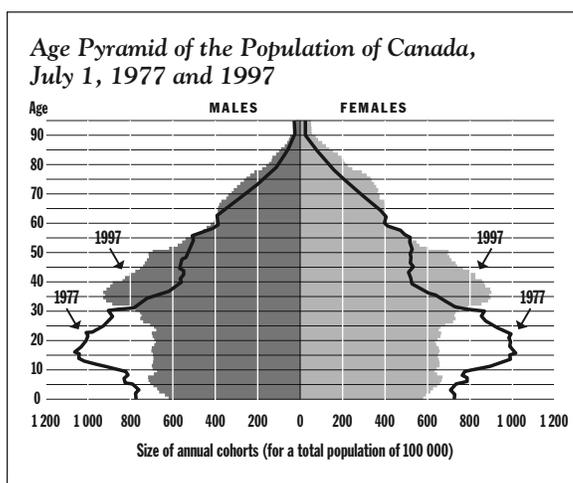
- *Exploring Canada's Electoral System*, a CD-ROM on the federal electoral process
- *I Can Vote!*, a booklet that explains voting procedures in plain, straightforward language
- *Canada's Electoral System*, a comprehensive brochure which summarizes the history of voting in Canada and describes the electoral process
- *Choosing Our Mascot*, a junior election simulation kit to promote understanding of voting rights and obligations among children
- *Election off the Shelf*, a manual and kit for student elections

# Looking Ahead:

## THE STRATEGIC PLAN 1999-2002

Being prepared at all times to conduct elections or referendums requires not only that we keep abreast of changes in our society, but also that we maintain the flexibility necessary to adapt and strengthen our operations to meet evolving needs. This strategic plan is shaped by our understanding of the environment in which we operate, and the impact it is likely to have on determining our strategies for the future.

We have identified several areas that need to be taken into account in ensuring continual improvement of our performance. These include Canada's changing demographics and their impact on the needs and attitudes of clients and stakeholders, a changing legislative environment, and rapid advances in technology.



Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 91-213-XPB

## Demographics

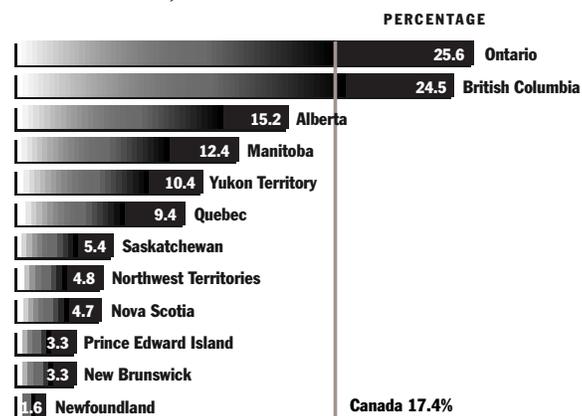
### DIVERSITY

Statistics Canada reports that in 1996, 53 percent of population growth in Canada could be attributed to immigration. In that year, immigrants made up over 17 percent of the Canadian population, the highest percentage since the late 1940s. Because the birth rate in Canada is dropping steadily, the trend toward immigration as the predominant driver of population growth is expected to continue. When we develop information programs for electors, we therefore have to take into account increased cultural diversity, in terms of different languages and cultural norms, as well as the experience new Canadians have had with other electoral processes. This approach is well entrenched at Elections Canada. We have already produced a great deal of information in the languages of the major groups of new Canadians as well as in several Aboriginal languages. We intend to continue our efforts to meet the electoral needs of an increasingly diverse population.

### AGING

Between 1950 and 1990, the number of people over the age of 65 tripled, making this the fastest growing sector of the population. This trend is expected to continue. As a result, the proportion

**Immigrants as a Percentage of Provinces and Territories, 1996**



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census



of electors with reduced mobility is rising, increasing the need for special efforts on our part to ensure these electors have full access to the voting process. A number of special provisions for mail-in ballots and assisted voting have been put in place, and will be further refined in coming electoral events.

#### **MOBILITY**

Canadians in younger age brackets are becoming more mobile, in the geographic sense, than ever before. In addition, factors such as globalization

of the economy and the international scope of many large businesses result in more Canadians working outside of the country. This increases the number of electors who cannot vote at ordinary polls; hence, there is a growing demand for alternate voting mechanisms such as the mail-in ballot.

#### **PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

In 1991, according to Statistics Canada, 16 percent of Canadians reported some level of disability, a slight increase over 1986. This can be attributed at least partly to our aging population. Disabilities that need to be taken into consideration by Elections Canada include physical and mental health conditions, as well as learning disabilities. Ensuring accessibility to the voting process for persons with disabilities continues to be a priority for Elections Canada.

#### **LITERACY**

About one in six Canadians has difficulty reading printed materials, and adult literacy surveys indicate that approximately 40 percent of Canadians aged 16 to 65 have difficulty fully understanding printed documents. Finding alternative ways to keep all Canadians informed of their voting rights is a special challenge for Elections Canada. We have adopted a “plain language” policy and have developed special audio and video materials to explain the voting process to persons who have difficulty reading. Elections Canada intends to continue to develop programs to deal with literacy issues.



***1997 general election: 99 percent of all polling stations have level access.***

## Attitudes

### CHANGING VALUES

The voter turnout rate in the 1997 federal general election, at 67 percent, was the lowest since 1925. Elections Canada's analysis of survey data compiled

*Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums, 1925-1997*

DATE OF ELECTION/REFERENDUM	VOTER TURNOUT (%)
29 October 1925	66.4
14 September 1926	67.7
28 July 1930	73.5
14 October 1935	74.2
26 March 1940	69.9
27 April 1942 <sup>1</sup>	71.3
11 June 1945	75.3
27 June 1949	73.8
10 August 1953	67.5
10 June 1957	74.1
31 March 1958	79.4
18 June 1962	79.0
8 April 1963	79.2
8 November 1965	74.8
25 June 1968	75.7
30 October 1972	76.7
8 July 1974	71.0
22 May 1979	75.7
18 February 1980	69.3
4 September 1984	75.3
21 November 1988	75.3
26 October 1992 <sup>1,2</sup>	71.8
25 October 1993	69.6
2 June 1997	67.0

<sup>1</sup> A referendum

<sup>2</sup> Does not include Quebec, as Quebec conducted its own referendum

Source: *A History of the Vote in Canada*, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada for the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, Canada, 1997

in the 1997 Canadian Election Study\* suggests that lack of awareness of the available voting opportunities was one of many factors contributing to this decline. Other research studies point to a value shift in many democracies, including our own, that is producing diminished participation in all forms of political activity. While Elections Canada cannot assume the role of "change agent" with respect to Canadian values, we are committed to providing all electors with the information necessary to participate in the electoral process.

## The Legislative Environment

Since the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing submitted its report in February 1992, the legislative environment has changed significantly. Electoral reform will continue as the government seeks to streamline and improve the effectiveness of the electoral system. Given the societal trends to which Elections Canada must adapt, additional flexibility is needed in some aspects of our legislative framework. Elections Canada officials continue to work diligently to ensure that parliamentarians are provided with the information and analysis needed to update and reform electoral legislation.

## Advances in Technology

In 1998, Elections Canada commissioned a study of technology and the voting process. The resulting data, as well as other surveys and research, indicate a growing acceptance among Canadians of the use of information technology to assist in delivering electoral services.

\* The Canadian Election Study is an academic research project on the Canadian electorate at federal elections, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. For the 1997 study, Elections Canada contributed questions on elector participation, electronic voting and third party spending.

**Recent surveys indicate that approximately 40 percent of Canadian homes have computers and that about 3.4 million Canadians – some 17 percent of the population – use the Internet.**



For an increasing number of Canadians, technology offers the prospect of a more accessible and more efficient electoral process. As a result, we will continue to study the feasibility of electronic voting as an option in the voting process, supplementing traditional voting mechanisms.

Running an election or referendum requires the use of hundreds of tonnes of equipment and supplies.

During the 1997 general election, Elections Canada shipped the following supplies across the country:

Sheets of Ballot Papers	5 310 000
Ballot Boxes	67 100
Voting Screens	67 200
Special Voting Kits	301 000
Supply Kits for Polling Stations	55 000
Computers	1 951

## OUR LEGAL FRAMEWORK

**ELECTIONS CANADA IS GOVERNED BY THE FOLLOWING ACTS OF PARLIAMENT:**

- *Canada Elections Act*
- *Referendum Act*
- *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*
- *Dominion Controverted Elections Act*
- *Constitution Act, 1867*
- *Constitution Act, 1982, which includes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

# Our Vision

## Our Mission Statement

The mission of Elections Canada is to demonstrate excellence and leadership in electoral matters. Through the valued efforts of staff members and election officers, the agency serves the needs of electors and legislators alike in an innovative, cost-effective and professional manner.

### WE ENVISION THAT:

*“Elections Canada will be an efficient, innovative and technologically advanced organization staffed by a stable, professional and motivated workforce capable of managing federal general elections, by-elections and referendums whenever called upon to do so. Electors will have universally accessible and secure options for casting their votes, for obtaining accurate information, and for registering to vote. Elections Canada will be recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in electoral management.”*

## Our Values

### WE ARE COMMITTED TO:

- the integrity and openness of the electoral process
- a fair and inclusive system, accessible to the entire Canadian electorate
- the participation of all Canadian electors in the electoral process
- staff training and development to provide our client groups with the highest possible level of service

### WE STRIVE FOR:

- high-quality, cost-effective and professional service to our clients
- excellent relations and interaction among staff and with the public
- leadership in performance and innovation among electoral organizations worldwide
- efficiency and effectiveness in achieving our objectives



*“There is a real commitment from staff to think and serve locally, nationally and globally.”* Alma McDonald, Returning Officer

*“Through democracy, I can express my feelings, my wishes and my needs.”* Francine Dalphond, Manager, Publication Services



**WE FIRMLY BELIEVE IN:**

- maintaining the impartiality and independence of Elections Canada
- teamwork and open lines of communication throughout the organization
- building a sense of community among staff who care about the work they do, who share our goals, and who enjoy working together
- encouraging innovation, creativity and openness among all staff members

## Key Results Areas for 1999-2002

Our strategic planning review identified training, new business processes, and management practices as areas that should be given priority within Elections Canada. The following key results areas, goals and strategies will guide the preparation of operational plans to help us better carry out the mandate given us by Parliament.

### 1 Service

**GOAL:**

To provide efficient and effective electoral services to meet the needs of all stakeholders, including electors, parliamentarians, political parties, candidates and the international community.

**STRATEGIES:**

- To deliver accessible, effective and efficient service, through innovative approaches such as adopting new ways of doing business, applying new technology, and creating partnerships.
- To maintain the integrity, fairness and transparency of the electoral process through programs that promote compliance with relevant legislation and regulations, and that increase public confidence in the electoral process.

### 2 Performance Improvement and Innovation

**GOAL:**

To improve our ability to deliver services efficiently, effectively and imaginatively in response to the needs of stakeholders.

**STRATEGIES:**

- To recommend and support legislative change that simplifies and improves administration of the electoral process.
- To maintain event readiness and strengthen organizational performance by continually improving internal management and administrative processes.

### 3 Organizational Development

**GOAL:**

To ensure that all staff and electoral officials are fully trained and operating in a fulfilling work environment.

**STRATEGY:**

- To foster an environment which promotes professional growth, commitment, and mutual respect and recognition, while valuing the diversity and evolving needs of all staff, returning officers and other election officials.



*“Elections Canada is a leader in the evolution of democracy.”*

Bonnie Marga, Financial Analyst

## A MAJOR OPERATION

To carry out a general election or referendum, the headquarters staff at Elections Canada instantly grows from approximately 200 to over 600 people. In addition, tens of thousands of electoral officials are hired across Canada to staff offices of returning officers and more than 56 000 polling stations in 301 electoral districts.



*“Elections Canada’s drive for quality in all aspects of its work encourages one to strive for personal excellence.”*

Nancy Smith, Manager,  
Products and Services,  
National Register of Electors

## Conclusion

Elections Canada has a strong and dedicated team of employees who continually strive to deliver high-quality service to Canadians. Over the last several years, the agency has developed a corporate culture that is achievement-oriented and willingly embraces change where needed. In addition to addressing the challenge of retaining professional staff, we are also creating systems and processes that streamline administration and improve corporate memory. We have put an increased focus on succession planning and on flexibility in meeting our human resources requirements.

The strategic goals for the next four years emphasize service, performance improvement and organizational development. The operational environment will likely become more complex while stakeholder expectations continue to change. Recent studies of Canadians' interest in citizen engagement, decision-making, and policy development will play a major role in the consultation models we develop and adopt.

In this climate, this strategic plan charts a course that builds on past successes to help Elections Canada continue to be one of the most innovative and service-oriented electoral organizations in the world.

*“Challenge ... the harder the task, the more rewarding the result.”*

Gilles Gauthier, Elections Expenses Coordinator