

A NOTE TO THE OFFICIAL AGENT

The *Official Agent's Handbook* provides significant and relevant information for official agents and is organized in a way that walks a person through the tasks of the job from the moment of appointment to the time of final reporting after the end of an election.

Official agents initially will want to concentrate on the *Official Agent's Guide* and use the *Summary of the Official Agent's Guide* as a quick reference to consult throughout the campaign. The *Accounting Guide* and the *EFA* are also good supporting materials and are referred to directly in the *Official Agent's Guide*.

What's In This Handbook?

The *Official Handbook* contains the following seven sections (by tab number):

- 1. A Note to the Official Agent** - Information on Elections Manitoba and assistance offered to official agents.
- 2. A Summary of the Official Agent's Guide** – This summary provides discussion of the most pertinent and commonly referenced sections of *The Official Agent's Guide*.
- 3. Official Agent's Guide** - This guide focuses on what an official agent needs to know about *The Election Financing Act* (the *EFA*).
- 4. Accounting Guide – Accounting For Purposes of The Election Financing Act** - This guide establishes the accounting principles upon which, and the framework within which registered parties, constituency associations, candidates, and other participants in the electoral process responsible for compliance with the *EFA*, exercise judgment when making accounting and disclosure decisions.
- 5. The Election Financing Act** - The legislation governing campaign finance within the Province of Manitoba.
- 6. Forms** - Appointment forms and financial statement forms for candidates and official agents.
- 7. Candidate's Checklist** - A summary of a candidate's responsibilities under *The Elections Act* and *The Election Financing Act*.

Campaign Finance Legislation

Campaign finance legislation has existed in Manitoba since the early 1980's. Over the years, the legislation governing campaign finance law in Manitoba, *The Election Financing Act (EFA)*, has evolved into what exists today. Significant amendments have broadened the obligations placed on the participants in the democratic process, many of whom are volunteers.

Ensuring compliance with the provisions of the EFA is the responsibility of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and Elections Manitoba. The role and position of the CEO, among other things, is to instill public confidence in the electoral process in Manitoba and to assist those who have a responsibility to comply with the EFA.

Due to the financial nature of many of the provisions of the EFA, candidates, registered parties, and other participants are often required to file statements or forms that report financial balances and transactions. The EFA requires that certain of these forms be audited, and reported upon, by an external auditor.

The Compliance Program of Elections Manitoba

For compliance purposes, the EFA authorizes Elections Manitoba to review, examine, and inspect forms and returns filed under the EFA, along with any underlying support. The Compliance Program of Elections Manitoba is an internal program of review where forms and returns are selected for review using either pre-established criteria or a random basis. Overwhelmingly, Elections Manitoba works with registered parties, campaigns, and constituency associations to rectify unintentional instances of non-compliance without serious consequences, nevertheless, the consequences can be serious if legislative requirements are not followed.

The Compliance Assistance Program of Elections Manitoba

Elections Manitoba has a legislated mandate to provide assistance to financial officers, official agents, candidates, registered parties, constituency associations and auditors to help them comply with the EFA. Some of the ways assistance is provided include:

- Hosting information sessions throughout the province for official agents, campaign managers and candidates before and during an election;
- Maintaining a website with important information – www.electionsmanitoba.ca
- Meeting individually with official agents and representatives on request;
- Handling telephone inquiries (during an election there are extended hours);
- Issuing periodic reminders to participants (e.g. a reminder of a filing deadline);

Information Sessions

Elections Manitoba offers a number of information sessions for official agents, campaign managers, and candidates to help make things easier. A written guide is one way to provide assistance but sometimes it helps to hear things directly. Official agents may only do this job once every three or four years at most and given the changes to the EFA that take place in the interim, it is recommended that all possible means of learning be considered.

Attending an information session is strongly recommended.

Information sessions are put on throughout the province and, in the past, have been well received. Many official agents who have attended in the past have said that the sessions should be mandatory. Attending a session will also give you a chance to ask any questions you might have and to meet someone from Elections Manitoba who you can call later (it never hurts to make a contact). A schedule of information sessions can be obtained by calling Elections Manitoba or by logging on to its website.

Contacting Elections Manitoba

General inquiries:

Elections Manitoba
120 – 200 Vaughan Street
Winnipeg MB R3C 1T5

Telephone: 204-945-3225
Toll Free in Manitoba: 1-800-282-6069
Facsimile: 204-945-6011

General Email Address: election@elections.mb.ca
Website: www.elections.mb.ca

Inquiries on The Election Financing Act:

Email: finance@elections.mb.ca

Inquiries on The Elections Act:

Email: operations@elections.mb.ca

Candidates, official agents and others are **strongly encouraged** to contact Elections Manitoba as often as necessary in order to understand the requirements of *The Election Financing Act* or *The Elections Act*.