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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development

### **Expenses engagement begins, legislation streamlined**

VICTORIA – Consultation with stakeholders regarding expense limits for local government election campaign participants starts today, announced Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development Coralee Oakes.

The minister will seek stakeholders' views on how to develop expense limits that work in all B.C. communities and ensure that running for office remains affordable and accessible.

Meetings with B.C.'s local government area associations' boards, elector organizations, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM), and others will occur over the next several weeks. The minister will also write to all local governments and the British Columbia School Trustees Association to invite their feedback, and publish a short discussion paper online to invite public input until Jan. 31, 2014.

Following stakeholder engagement, results will be assessed with a view to introducing legislative amendments which, if approved, will come into effect for local elections after 2014.

This second phase of consultation builds on work by the Local Government Elections Task Force, which determined expense limits would be more effective than contribution limits in promoting participation in the election process. The Task Force recommended that expense limits apply to all campaign participants including candidates, elector organizations and third party advertisers.

Phase one of consultation with the public and stakeholders on the White Paper on Local Government Elections Reform ended Oct. 23, 2013, and was led by parliamentary secretary Linda Reimer. That consultation will result in some streamlining to the proposed Local Election Campaign Financing Act (LECFA) to address comments regarding clarity and workability. Forty-nine feedback responses were submitted through a mix of public and targeted consultation, with the majority of respondents expressing general or specific support for proposed changes but identifying key themes including:

- Views that the definitions of “election advertising” and “third party advertising” are too broad and could limit freedom of speech.
- Some requests to maintain the current provision that allows anonymous contributions of less than \$50, and suggestions to make anonymous contributions provisions similar to the provincial Election Act (allowed in relation to fund raising events).
- Clarification about whether “passing the hat” at fund raising events would still be allowed with a ban on anonymous contributions.
- Requests for sponsorship information requirements for signage.
- Questions about the funding model anticipated to support the additional compliance and enforcement activities of Elections BC.
- Comments about the length of the new Act and importance of understanding the new rules particularly given the penalties for non-compliance.
- Reinforcing the importance of new and revised educational materials
- Statements that expense limits should be implemented for the 2014 local government elections.
- A petition advocating for example, limits to campaign contributions and spending.
- Form letters promoting the corporate vote.

The ministry will work with Elections BC to undertake a comprehensive advisory and educational program to ensure election participants and the public understand the new campaign finance rules in the proposed legislation that will, if passed, apply to the November 15, 2014, local elections. A summary of consultation comments will be posted to the ministry’s website by Nov. 29 at: <http://www.cscd.gov.bc.ca/LocalGovtElectionReform/>

**Quotes:**

**Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, Coralee Oakes –**

“Expense limits are a key aspect of modernizing the local government election process because they will help provide a good picture for the voting public of campaign costs but not limit participation by various parties considering running for local office. The changes won’t be implemented in 2014 due to the scope and magnitude of the phase one changes already proposed for an election year – this approach allows local governments and candidates to become comfortable with the initial changes first.”

**Parliamentary Secretary, Linda Reimer –**

“A consistent theme we heard during the initial consultation was that there need to be workshops and more education and advice so that the rules are understood for all election participants. We’ll work with Elections BC, the Local Government Management Association, the Ministry of Education and the UBCM to ensure that happens and also revise or develop new advisory materials as necessary.”

## **Union of British Columbia Municipalities President, Rhona Martin –**

“UBCM supports an approach that seeks a broad range of view on the question of expense limits and I encourage local governments to respond to the Minister’s request for feedback.”

### **Quick Facts:**

- The next local government elections are Nov. 15, 2014.
- Local government election rules apply to municipalities, regional districts, parks boards, the Islands Trust, and Boards of Education.
- The campaign finance rules apply to local election participants including candidates, elector organizations, and third party advertisers.
- Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba have campaign finance rules that include expense limits for local governments.

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