

Electoral Council of Australia

**Report of the visit by the Electoral Council of Australia delegation to Elections Canada
in June 1999 to study the Canadian National Register of Electors.**

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1 Summary

In June 1999, a delegation of members of the Electoral Council of Australia (ECA) visited the Canadian Federal electoral authority, Elections Canada, to study the National Register of Electors (NRE) system. The visit was initiated by the awareness of the ECA that Elections Canada had developed the NRE as a permanent voters' list in a move away from their traditional method of compiling a voters' list through door to door enumeration just prior to each electoral event. The development of the NRE has relevance to the current change in methods in Australia of updating the Commonwealth, State and Territory electoral rolls, from door to door Habitation Reviews (HRs) to Continuous Roll Update Methods (CRU). Therefore, the ECA supported a delegation of members to study the development of the NRE.

The ECA noted that the addresses of elector records on the NRE are updated on an ongoing basis from change of address data from other government agencies, such as Revenue Canada, Canadian Drivers Licence Agencies and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The change of address data was originally supplied by individuals to those agencies for their business needs and is only passed on to Elections Canada if the individual signs a simple agreement. This method of updating change of address data has some parallels to the CRU data matching activities and other CRU opportunities being developed in Australia. Therefore, the negotiations with government agencies, data supply agreements and data transfer methods were of interest to the ECA delegation.

In addition to studying the NRE, the delegation also received briefings on the partnership of Elections Canada and Statistics Canada in developing an Electoral Geographic System for address management and redistribution and developments in electronic voting methods.

The timetable of activities of the delegation included a briefing from Elections British Columbia about the BC Permanent Voters List (PVL) and a briefing from Elections Quebec about the Quebec Permanent List of Electors (PLE), attendance at the Conference of Canadian Electoral Officials, a briefing from Elections Canada about the NRE and presentations from the government agencies from whom Elections Canada receives change of address data for updating the NRE

The main findings of the delegation were:

- The NRE is still under development in relation to address management and data sharing arrangements with the Provinces and Territories. Legislative restrictions prevent Elections Canada from sharing the Register data with any agency including Provincial and Territorial electoral authorities for use beyond electoral purposes.
- Elections Canada has entered into agreements with Revenue Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Provincial and Territorial Drivers Licence Agencies for the supply of change of address data and information about potential new electors, and the Vital Statistics Agencies (Registrars General) for death information. From these sources, Elections Canada updates address changes of electors already on the NRE, directly without seeking a specially signed elector form. This takes advantage of the formal identification checks already made by those agencies. As the majority of NRE transactions are address changes (similar to Australian roll transactions) it enhances the ease and rapidity of roll update procedures considerably. The percentage of roll changes per annum is similar to those in Australia, ie approximately 20% of electors move each year. That figure is reasonably constant across other partner agencies.
- In the data exchange programs for updating the NRE with Revenue Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, active and informed consent of the elector is required before the change of address details are passed to Elections Canada. There is an "opt out" option available for drivers to prevent their information being forwarded to Elections Canada from Provincial and Territorial Motor Registries.
- The development of agreements between Elections Canada and external agencies for the supply of change of address data received Prime Ministerial and Ministerial support and involved

the Canadian Privacy Commissioner and other stakeholders. There is ongoing participation with the external agencies in research and streamlining of the data matching activities.

- A partnership between Elections Canada and Statistics Canada is developing an Electoral Geography System, known as the National Geographic Database (NGD) using ARCINFO. This system is separate from the NRE but the systems exchange data. Geocoded and geo-referenced address information passes from the NGD to the NRE while elector numbers flow from the NRE to the NGD. Integration of the systems is not contemplated.

From the findings of the visit, the delegation made the following recommendations for consideration by the ECA, about the maintenance of the electoral roll in Australia. The major recommendation concerns updating the electoral roll from external data sources. The delegation recommends the ECA members consider the recommendations and a timetable to achieve the actions required to effect them.

- An implementation report be prepared by the ECA's sub-committee, CRU Implementation Steering Committee (CISCO) to investigate direct address changes being made to elector records already on the electoral roll from change of address data from suitable Federal, State and Territorial data source agencies, without seeking a specially signed elector form. The report should emphasise that such a change would not remove the onus of an elector to remain properly enrolled at all times.
- CISCO should undertake research into the effect of such direct address changes on the close of roll processes undertaken before each election.
- CISCO should take into consideration that direct address changes would take advantage of the formal identification required by those agencies and would reduce transaction processing costs and speed up roll changes. Suitable data source agencies would include major government agencies which require formal personal identification for their transactions. These include the Australian Tax Office (ATO), Centrelink, State and Territory Motor Registries and other appropriate State and Territory authorities such as Stamps Duties Offices. Data captured from those agencies for roll updating should be name, address, gender and date of birth. Data from utilities may not be suitable for address changes as utilities only record the subscribers' details, may not require formal personal identification for utility supply and may not record elector specific data correctly. However data from utilities is useful in other ways for CRU activities.

Any consideration of data sources should take into account probable changes to the Commonwealth Electoral Act now before the federal Parliament.

- CISCO would also need to take into account approaches required by the AEC to the Tax Office and Centrelink to obtain address change data on a regular basis; approaches by State and Territory members to their Motor Registries and taxing authorities; and approaches by ECA members to their respective governments to effect regulatory or legislative change to allow address changes to be made to elector records without seeking a specially signed elector form. In addition, CISCO would also note the high level support required from relevant Commonwealth, State and Territorial Ministers, the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and the Privacy Commissioner to effect address changes without signature.
- Address management of the Address Register should continue to include all habitable and eventually non-habitable addresses. This is in line with current developments in extending Geographic Information Systems capabilities for address databases.
- Evaluation of suitable data sources should continue for present data matching CRU activities.

2 Recommendations

The recommendations of the delegation are:

2.1 Main Recommendation - Direct Address Change Implementation Report

CISCO should prepare an implementation report on updating the electoral roll through direct address change. This would involve receiving change of address data for updating elector records already on the roll from suitable government agencies, without seeking a specially signed elector form. The report should cover issues of feasibility, cost, suitable government agencies, consultative processes, high level government support, legislative and regulatory requirements and responsibility issues for electoral authorities.

2.2 Direct address change data

If implementation of direct address changes is supported by the ECA, then the following recommendations would require consideration.

2.2.1 Data Source Agencies

The agencies which would be suitable as data sources for direct address changes should be those which require formal personal identification for their business transactions. These may include the ATO and Centrelink and State and Territory Motor Registry agencies. Data from utilities may not be suitable as utilities only record the subscribers' details, may not require formal personal identification for utility supply and may not record elector specific data correctly. However data from utilities is useful in other ways for CRU activities.

2.2.2 Data

Data captured from those agencies for direct address changes should be name, address, gender and date of birth.

2.3 Major actions required to proceed with direct address changes

The AEC would be required to approach the Australian Tax Office and Centrelink to obtain address change data on a regular basis.

States and Territories members would be required to approach their Drivers Licence and Motor Registration and other State agencies to obtain change of address data for roll updating.

High level support is required from relevant Ministers, the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, Privacy Commissioner to effect direct address changes without seeking a specially signed elector form

2.3.1 Timetable

If implementation of the direct address change process for roll updating is supported by the ECA, a suitable timetable should be set to achieve the process by late 2000.

2.4 Continuing CRU activities

The evaluation of suitable data sources for present CRU data matching activities should be continued.

2.5 Address Register

The address management activities of the Address Register should continue to include all habitable and eventually non-habitable addresses. This is in line with current developments in extending Geographic Information Systems capabilities for address databases.

3 Introduction

This report details the activities undertaken by the ECA delegation to the Canadian Federal electoral authority, Elections Canada. The report lists findings of the study visit, makes recommendations relevant to the administration of the electoral roll in Australia and actions required to achieve those recommendations.

3.1 Background to the visit

Canada has a federal electoral authority and an independent electoral authority in each Province and Territory similar to that of electoral administrations in the Commonwealth, States and Territories of Australia. The development by Elections Canada of a permanent list of electors, the NRE, and the discontinuation of the enumeration door knock has considerable relevance to the change in Australia from updating the Commonwealth, State and Territory electoral rolls by Habitation Review (HR) door knocks to CRU methods in Australia. Despite the impact of compulsory (Australia) versus non-compulsory (Canada) systems, there are many parallels in electoral and enrolment administration between Australia and Canada relevant to the interests of the ECA members.

3.2 Australian context of electoral roll updating

In Australia, the electoral roll for Commonwealth, State and Territory elections was traditionally updated using biennial HRs. In 1995, the Australian Joint Roll Council (now the ECA) commissioned a report to investigate alternative methods of maintaining the electoral roll.¹ The report recommended that HRs be replaced by “...a new Continuous Roll Update process to provide higher roll integrity, with a more accurate, timely and cost effective method of roll maintenance.” Following the recommendations of the report, a Pilot Study was conducted in Queensland using Australia Post Change of Address data to write to electors who had just moved, with enrolment information.² The results of the Pilot Study indicated the appropriateness of expanding this CRU activity to a national trial and also developing other CRU methods as the main roll update methods in Australia to largely replace HRs. CRU activities in 1999 include a national program of using Australia Post change of address data, data mining activities to identify addresses where electors may be incorrectly enrolled and data matching activities with other government agencies.

3.3 Members of the delegation

The members of the delegation to Canada were:

Paul Dacey,	Assistant Commissioner Elections and Enrolment,
Ken Evans,	Electoral Commissioner for Western Australia,
Bob Longland,	Australian Electoral Officer for Queensland,
Janet Taylor,	Executive Secretary, Electoral Council of Australia,
Steve Tully,	Electoral Commissioner for South Australia (joined the delegation on 24 June 1999).

3.4 Purpose of the delegation

The purpose of the visit by the delegation of the ECA was to study the:

- development and ongoing maintenance activities of the NRE,
- negotiations between Elections Canada and Canadian Government agencies for the supply of change of address information for data matching with electoral records on the NRE,
- communication with the Privacy Commissioner and other stakeholders in the development of the NRE,
- data sharing agreements between Elections Canada and Provincial and Territorial electoral agencies.

In addition, the ECA was interested in the partnerships between Elections Canada and Statistics Canada in establishing an Electoral Geographic System and any advances in electronic methods of voting or vote counting by Canadian electoral authorities.

¹ Australian Strategic Planning, “*Report into Electoral Roll Review Alternatives*”, April 1996.

² Australian Joint Roll Council, “*Report on the Continuous Roll Update Pilot Study 1996-7*”

3.5 Objectives of the delegation

- To gain an understanding of the development and maintenance of the NRE in Canada and compare it to the present CRU methods being introduced in Australia.
- To gain information about advances in developments in Geographic Information Systems, a national address register and electronic electoral technologies.

3.6 Timetable of the visit

Monday 21 June 1999	Visit Elections British Columbia in Victoria, British Columbia. Discussion on BC roll and federal/provincial operating arrangements.
Tuesday 22 June 1999	Travel Vancouver to Ottawa.
Wednesday 23 June 1999	Visit Elections Canada for a briefing from the Director General of Elections, Quebec about the Quebec Permanent List of Electors. Opening Reception of the Conference of Canadian Election Officials.
Thursday 24 June 1999	Attendance at the Conference of Canadian Election Officials.
Friday 25 June 1999	Attendance at the Conference of Canadian Election Officials
Saturday 26 June 1999	View closed Website at Elections Canada and discuss various Elections Canada operational systems. Discussions with Canadian Electoral Officers about Provincial and Territorial electoral processes and international electoral issues.
Sunday 27 June 1999	Meeting of the ECA delegation regarding issues arising from briefings and the Conference.
Monday 28 June 1999	Briefing by the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Canada senior staff on the role, mandate, authority and structure of Elections Canada. Presentations by the Electoral Council of Australia delegation on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AEC operations and the electoral roll for the Commonwealth, States and Territories - Paul Dacey • Strategic directions of the AEC – Bob Longland • CRU – Janet Taylor • South Australian State Electoral Office – Steve Tully • Western Australian Electoral Commission – Ken Evans Meeting with Ms Hassard, Director of Legal Services, Elections Canada, regarding Third Parties and Mandatory Voting and Registration. Presentation about the NRE, including data management, data quality management, products and services and interjurisdictional co-ordination.
Tuesday 29 June 1999	Presentation from Elections Canada on Electoral Geography Systems. Meeting with the Canadian Commissioner of Access to Information and Executive Director of the Canadian Privacy Office. Presentation from Revenue Canada regarding the data matching of change of address data with Elections Canada. Presentation from Citizenship and Immigration Canada re acquisition of data to maintain the National Register of Electors.
Wednesday 30 June 1999	Presentation from Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators regarding the data matching of changes of addresses from Motor Vehicle and Drivers Licence registrations with Elections Canada. Presentation from Office of Registrar General, Ontario regarding the data matching of deceased records with Elections Canada.
Thursday 1 July 1999	Canada National Day

4 Summary of briefings with Provincial electoral agencies

4.1 Elections British Columbia (Elections BC)

This briefing was held at Elections BC in Victoria, British Columbia with Mr Bob Patterson, Chief Electoral Officer and Ms Linda Johnson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer and staff of Elections BC on Monday 21 June 1999. This briefing covered an overview of Elections BC, the BC Provincial Voters List System, the Recall Initiative Verification System, the Geographic Information System used for electoral redistributions and electronic filing of financial reports.

4.1.1 Provincial Voters List (PVL)

While BC has had a permanent electoral roll since 1948, the current version of the PVL was created from a final enumeration in 1982. The PVL has operated as a permanent voters' list since then by updating on a continuing basis from different data source agencies. It has been operated on the central government mainframe since then. The list has 2 million electors from an estimated eligible 2.8 million people. Municipalities are increasingly using the PVL for their elections. The PVL is shared with Elections Canada for updating the NRE. Elections BC can only use data from the NRE of Elections Canada for electoral purposes as Elections Canada has a legislative restriction on the use of the NRE beyond electoral purposes. As Elections BC uses the PVL for jury lists and other non-electoral purposes, it does not use data from the NRE for these purposes. Elections BC is preparing legislation that will enable transfer of federal data to the province but restrict its use to electoral purposes.

4.1.2 Cost

Over a 5-year cycle, \$7.5 million has been spent on voter registration costs. In that same period, a total of \$95 million was spent on elections, recalls and initiatives, mail enumerations and redistributions.

4.1.3 Maintenance and updating activities

The PVL is updated from obtaining direct change of address data from external data source agencies and mail reviews. Electors can also update their address details by phone or email. There is no minimum residential eligibility period for changes of addresses within the province. It is estimated that up to 25% of the population moves each year.

"*MOVO*" is the method of updating elector details from motor vehicle and drivers licence change of address data. The BC Electoral Act provides for the collection of the *MOVO* information. Address changes are made automatically without separately seeking the signature of the elector. Matching between records on the motor vehicle and drivers licence databases and the PVL is difficult with only 55% matched. This rate rises to 80% with deduplication and more precise addressing. No acknowledgment is forwarded to the voter after an address change is made. Electors are given the opportunity to sign an "*opt out*" form so that their address changes are not passed to the PVL. A copy of the "*opt out*" form is at Attachment A.

Vital Statistics Canada passes monthly updates of deaths to the PVL.

A recent mail review in the Spring of 1999 was directed to 240,000 non-voters and non-actives (electors with no address changes). 37,000 responses were received. 200,000 names were deleted where no response was received within 50 days.

Utilities such as electricity authorities are not used much for updating the PVL, as only the subscriber's name is recorded on the utilities' databases. In addition, in BC, rental agreements often include electricity supply, so utilities may have no record of any occupant.

4.1.4 Registration

Eligible electors register for the first time using a card which is numbered and that number then forms the basis of the registration number which remains with the electoral record unless a change of name occurs.

Electors may register and vote on Polling Day.

There is no proactive enrolment activity for first time enrolment on the PVL or strategies directed to increase 18 year olds' enrolment.

4.1.5 Recall and Initiative Verification Systems (RIVERS)

Recalls and Citizen Initiated Referenda (CIR) are regulated by the Recall and Initiative Act. The RIVERS system has been developed to verify names, addresses and signatures of petitions for Recalls and CIR.

Recalls are petitions to “recall” (dismiss) a Member of Parliament (MP). A recall is instituted by a petition being raised with a 200-word statement outlining reasons to recall the MP. The petition must contain signatures of 40% of all the voters on the PVL in order for the petition to be processed. All names and addresses and signatures on the petition must be verified with elector records on the PVL.

The RIVERS system verifies the details on the petition by scanning in the names and addresses and performing a staged matching process to match them against the PVL. From those matched, a manual comparison is made of the signatures with those recorded for the elector on the PVL to establish whether the required 40% is achieved.

A CIR requires a petition with signatures from 10% of electors in each of the 75 electoral districts in BC. The RIVERS system is used to verify a sample of signatures of the petition with those on the PVL.

4.1.6 Redevelopment of the PVL

The PVL system is being updated. It is to be maintained fully on an in-house computer instead of the central government mainframe which has proved to be unwieldy and slow. \$7.5 million is required to redevelop the PVL. The system will also include Electoral Boundary Management, Client Communications, Addresslist, administrative information, support for Divisional Returning Officers and financial filing and disclosure for political parties.

4.1.7 Address database

Geodata BC, a British Columbia agency is building an address register for British Columbia. This will be a Geographical Information System including the street network. Elections BC will contribute money and then pay ongoing costs to participate.

4.1.8 Redistributions

BC has 75 electoral districts. Each district has about 37,000 electors based on a plus or minus 25% tolerance. Exceptions to the tolerance can be made to accommodate weighting for sparsely populated areas.

The BC Redistribution Commission includes a Judge, the Electoral Commissioner and a government appointed person. Only population figures are used to set electoral boundaries and political factors and voting patterns are not taken in account for redistributing boundaries.

4.1.9 Electronic lodgement of financial reports

Elections BC have introduced a system of electronic filing of financial reports from candidates. Template based software for the system was developed by SDR Technologies for Elections BC. This company has developed similar software for some US states.

The system is suitable for the complete bookkeeping requirements of candidates and in accordance with accrual accounting standards it can record all accounting expenses, incomes and donations etc. The system can be downloaded by candidates from the Elections BC website or obtained on CD.

Financial Reports from candidates can be transmitted to Elections BC by the internet, diskette or hard copy. Both annual and election returns are required and all returns must be filed on the same day. At the moment the system is voluntary but it is hoped that all candidates will use it as it can be used for all their bookkeeping requirements.

Completed returns will be published on the internet site with a queriable databases, eg a query could be made as to all political donations by a particular company.

4.2 Elections Quebec

This briefing was held with M. Jean Jolin, Directeur General of Elections for Quebec and M. Poiret at Elections Canada on Wednesday 23 June 1999. M. Jolin outlined details about the Quebec Permanent List of Electors.

A copy of the full presentation from Elections Quebec is available from the ECA office.

4.2.1 Permanent List of Electors (PLE)

The PLE has been maintained since 1995. It is used for Provincial, Municipal and School Board elections in Quebec. Prior to 1995, separate door to door enumerations were conducted prior to each Quebec Provincial, Municipal and School Board election. Now, the PLE supports all these elections. There are approximately 5 million electors on the PLE. The PLE is independent of the federal NRE. It is updated directly from change of address data from Quebec government agencies through data matching. Elections Quebec gives the PLE on a quarterly basis to Elections Canada to update their NRE. However Quebec electors must give their consent for their data to be given to Elections Canada. To date, 100% of electors have given that consent.

The PLE records the names of all Quebec citizens who wish to be on it. It is not compulsory to enrol, however it is estimated that 91% of all eligible electors are on the PLE. Citizens have the choice of their enrolment record on the PLE being used for Provincial elections and not Municipal or School Board elections.

4.2.2 Register of Electors

The PLE is divided into the Register of Electors and the Register of Territories. The Register of Electors contains the elector specific details of name, date of birth and gender, the list the elector wishes to be on, eg Provincial only or Municipal, postal address and preferred language. Only maiden names of women are recorded on the PLE, as on most Quebec government databases, in order to facilitate data matching between agencies.

4.2.3 Register of Territories.

This Register contains boundary information with addresses, (developed from municipal information and the last enumeration) and a description of territories (provincial divisions and subdivisions divided into polling districts of approximately 350 electors).

4.2.4 Maintenance and updating of the PLE.

The main data source for updating elector records on the PLE is direct change of address data from the Quebec Medical Board (Health Insurance) database which is passed to the PLE each month. There is a legislative requirement for the Medical Board to give the data to Elections Quebec. Quebec residents must keep their addresses current on their medical insurance card which also has photo identification. Each name on the Medical Board database is assigned a matching code. When a change of address occurs, the code indicates the address changes are to be passed to the PLE in the next update. Direct address changes are made to elector records on the PLE automatically with no separately obtained signature from the elector.

Names of 18 year olds are added automatically to the PLE, however these electors are given the opportunity to have their name removed.

93% of address changes are matched to elector records using name, date of birth and gender. The remaining 7% are non-matches that may include duplicates and these citizens are contacted for further details.

The cost of the Medical Board data to Elections Quebec includes only the processing costs.

Another source of data for updating the PLE is information from Canadian Citizenship and Immigration. The name and address details of new citizens go on to the PLE automatically, however new citizens are given the opportunity to have their name removed.

Electors can also update their addresses by phoning Elections Quebec, (outside the elections period).

Fourteen permanent and ten temporary staff are required to maintain the PLE at Elections Quebec.

4.2.5 Registration

A first time entry on the PLE requires proof of identification such as a driver's licence.

Electors may register and vote on polling day.

4.2.6 Redistributions

Quebec has 125 Provincial seats with approximately 40,000 electors in each seat, with a plus or minus 25% tolerance. A redistribution occurs after two Provincial elections. All three levels of electoral jurisdictions, Provincial, Municipal and School Boards have different boundaries.

4.2.7 Elections

When the writ has been issued for an election, a card is sent to each address confirming the electors recorded on the PLE for that address. A second later card is sent to each address with polling location and information.

Electors must produce an identification card at the polling place to be issued with a ballot paper. This legislative requirement was recently introduced in response to perceived concerns about fraudulent voting.

4.2.8 Roll change statistics

The annual change to the PLE consist of:

- 20% of electors change details each year
- 16% of changes are address changes
- 84% of changes to the Register come from the Medical Board
- 4.1% of changes are from deaths
- 1.13% of changes are corrections to details
- 0.121% of changes are new citizens

5 Conference of Canadian Electoral Officials

The Conference of Canadian Electoral Officials was held 23 June 1999 to 26 June 1999. The ECA delegation attended all sessions. This conference is held annually and hosted by the various electoral jurisdictions in turn. The 2000 conference is to be hosted by Elections Manitoba in Winnipeg.

The agenda included jurisdictional reports from each agency, topics of interjurisdictional relevance, reports from sub committees, legal issues, international activities and innovations in electoral administration. An outline of some of the most relevant topics to the delegation's visit follows.

The agenda for the 1999 conference and a list of attendees are at Attachment B. Full copies of all documents distributed at the conference are listed at the end of this report and are available from the ECA office.

5.1 *Jurisdictional reports*

Each electoral agency reported on events in the past year. As an example, the North West Territories (NWT) reported on the conduct of the first election for the new territory of Nunavut (adjoining NWT). The Chief Electoral Officer for the NWT, Mr David Hamilton, reported on the jurisdictional difficulties and legislation required to permit his agency to conduct the election, restrictions of the weather due to the election being held in February, remote polling and the overall cost. In general, the reports highlighted achievements, activities, developments and planned changes focussed for the coming year.

5.2 *Electronic voting*

Elections Canada presented a consultancy report titled, "*Technology and the Voting Process*"³ which examined the implications of information technology for the voting process in Canada. The report is the final result of an analysis of issues relative to the electoral process for Elections Canada. The study concentrated specifically on options to improve access to the act of casting a vote, rather than the steps leading up to that, such as registration and electoral processes following, such as counting the vote.

The report, "...attempts to explore both the issues and the new technologies, in the context of the changing attitudes and expectations of Canadians about the electoral process, and about the act of voting in particular."⁴ The report identified attitudes, perceptions and voting habits of Canadians and the effect of information and communications technology on the electoral environment.

The technologies investigated were "...telephone, Internet, cable, kiosk and ATM (automatic teller machine) devices, portable data capture devices-both digital and cellular, smart cards and other personal identifier devices."⁵ The report found the technologies of electronic kiosks, telephone and internet offered the most potential for electronic processes due to their wide accessibility and growing public acceptance in commercial operations. It was considered that these technologies may assist electoral processes to be more accessible to electors and more efficient.

5.3 *National Geographic Database*

Elections Canada presented details on their National Geographic Database (NGD) which is being developed in partnership with Statistics Canada. The NGD aims to be a single common geographic database to organise spatial data to support the business activities of the two agencies. The system will provide mapping products for Elections Canada for redistributions and "*redistricting*" of polling districts (polling areas of approximately 300 electors) and support Statistics Canada's Census activities. Mapping products will show georeferencing, natural features, place names, street names and address ranges and electoral, statistical and administrative boundaries.

³ KPMG/Sussex Circle, "*Technology and the Voting Process*", 1998.

⁴ Ibid, page 13.

⁵ Ibid, page 20.

Elections Canada has a large staff working on the NGD to receive and process new address information and perform ongoing redistributions of polling divisions and general redistributions.

5.4 Electoral Reform and legal issues

A briefing was given by Elections Canada to the Conference about *The New Canada Elections Act – Bill*. The Bill makes provision to regulate *election advertising*, (including blackouts for internet advertising), *election opinion surveys* and *financial reporting from parties and candidates*. The Bill also clarifies and categorises offences with new forms of penalties tailored to offences and new enforcement provisions including voluntary compliance agreements and injunctions to operate during an election period. (A copy is available from the ECA office)

A new *Compendium of Election Administration in Canada*, prepared by Elections Canada was distributed at the conference. (A copy is available from the ECA office)

5.4.1 Election advertising on the Internet

A paper was also presented which compiled the investigation and prosecution responsibilities for Canada and each Province and Territory (where in place) in the regulation of political and election advertising on the internet and the content of internet sites of political parties. Few jurisdictions had received complaints on internet political advertising or had any legislation in place to police the issue. British Columbia reported it received complaints concerning the absence of sponsor identification on political advertising on the internet. It was also noted in this document that the Province of Newfoundland, considered that “...*this (internet) means of campaigning /advertising lends itself as a method of circumventing advertising and campaign expenditure definitions as well as advertising cut off deadlines prior to polling day. Virtual impossible task of policing.*”⁶

5.5 National Register of Electors Advisory Committee

Elections Canada proposed this Committee to be a forum for input to Elections Canada’s initiatives in data matching for updating the NRE. It was proposed the Committee would consider quality and security of data, timeliness and sharing policies. The membership of the Committee would comprise representatives from Provincial and Territorial electoral agencies and the data source agencies from which direct address change data is gathered for updating the electoral roll. The Committee would gather information on initiatives in the member jurisdictions which impact on data quality and security. It was noted that the scrutiny of practices regarding data collection and transfer by privacy advocates is increasing and therefore an Advisory Committee is an appropriate vehicle to discuss improvements in data transfer without compromising privacy.

⁶ Conference papers of the 1999 Conference of Canadian Electoral Officials, “*Investigations, Prosecutions and the Internet*”

6 National Register of Electors

The presentation about the NRE was given by with Mr Rennie Molnar of Elections Canada on Monday 28 June 1999. A full copy of the presentation is available from the ECA office.

6.1 NRE

The NRE is the permanent list of electors for conducting federal elections and referendums in Canada. The NRE is maintained by obtaining direct address change data from government agencies and updating elector records on the NRE directly without seeking a separately obtained signature of the elector.

6.2 Development of the NRE

The development of the NRE commenced with a feasibility report about its development to the Canadian Parliament in March 1996. The report examined the feasibility of setting up and maintaining a continuously updated automated national register of electors instead of compiling a list from enumeration just prior to each electoral event.⁷

A subsequent synopsis of the NRE Project by Deloitte Consulting showed that such a register would be feasible, cost effective and permit a shorter electoral period by eliminating enumeration.⁸

A number of key federal agencies were consulted during the development and implementation of the NRE. These included, Statistics Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Revenue Canada, Privacy Commissioner and the Privy Council Office.⁹

In December 1996, the Canadian Parliament amended the *Canada Elections Act* to establish the National Register of Electors.

In October 1998, Elections Canada produced the first annual list of electors from the NRE. The list was based on the final enumeration of 1992 and incorporated updated change of address data from Provincial, Territorial and federal data source agencies.

6.3 Cost

The development of the NRE cost \$13 million and the annual maintenance between elections is \$5 million. All maintenance is in-house and there is no outsourcing. Estimated savings of producing the NRE compared with the previous enumeration method of compiling an electoral roll is \$30 million. These savings are from no longer conducting enumeration and being able to reduce the election period.

6.4 Data sharing with Provinces and Territories

Elections Canada has a legislative restriction on the NRE being used for any purpose other than electoral purposes. This prevents sharing of the roll with the electoral authorities of the Provinces and Territories where that information will be used for non-electoral purposes, eg jury lists.

There are no current plans to change this legislative restriction. However, debate exists as to the interpretation of the relevant legislative provision, including the time when the electoral data of the NRE ceases to be the property of Elections Canada, the interpretation of "electoral purpose" and whether a provision in a Provincial or Territorial Electoral Act to provide an electoral list for another purpose, makes that purpose an "electoral purpose". In addition, it is recognised that it is difficult to impose conditions on the Provinces and Territories in their use of the NRE data which is contrary to their own legislation.

⁷ Elections Canada, Register of Electors Project Team, "The Register of Electors Project. A Report on Research and Feasibility", March 1996.

⁸ Deloitte Consulting report, "Elections Canada – National Register of Electors", 1998, page 1.

⁹ Deloitte Consulting report, "Elections Canada – National Register of Electors", 1998, page 3.

The Provinces and Territories have a mix of electoral register management methods. Nova Scotia enumerates and produces a list before electoral events. Prince Edward Island is similar and enumeration is part of their neighbourly culture. Quebec and British Columbia maintain their own lists as detailed previously in this report. Ontario used Elections Canada's NRE in the Spring 1999 Provincial election and the process had some administrative and operational problems which resulted in current unresolved issues and challenges to the election. Alberta maintains its own register and is evaluating different maintenance options, as is Newfoundland.

6.5 Quality Assurance

The reliability benchmark for the NRE is to have 92% of eligible federal electors in the Register with accuracy of 80% of electors at a correct address. This accuracy benchmark was based on 20% of the records on the NRE changing each year. So if a Register is used that is a year old it is assumed that it will be 80% correct.

It is estimated that 5% of the eligible population are never enrolled.

6.6 Maintenance and updating the NRE

Changes to addresses of elector records already on the Register are made directly by Elections Canada from the data sources of Revenue Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Motor Voter programs and Vital Statistics Canada (deaths only). No separately obtained signature of the elector is required to change an address. No advice is forwarded to electors that their details have been changed on the Register.

Elector details are not transferred from Elections Canada to the data source agencies, as Elections Canada, as noted above, cannot pass on the NRE except for electoral purposes.

The Canada Elections Act requires active consent of the elector for transfer of data from federal sources.

For Quebec electors, Elections Canada updates the Register from Quebec's list of electors. No other sources of data are used to update the Quebec section of the NRE. For British Columbia, the BC list of electors and BC agencies are used to update the Register.

As was the case during the enumeration days, the pre-election "*revision*" of the rolls remains one of the key update mechanisms. "*Revision*" is the period from the issue of the writ up to and including the Polling Day, during which electors can register and change their addresses

6.7 Roll change statistics

The annual changes to the Register are 20%, consisting of:

Moves	16%
18 year olds	2%
New Citizens	1%
Deaths	1%
TOTAL	20%

6.8 Enrolment of 18 year olds

Elections Canada extracts data on unregistered 18 year olds from the data it receives from Revenue Canada, Motor Registries and new citizens and aggregates it to produce a mailing list. A registration package, "*Get ready to make your mark*", is forwarded to these people with a pre-printed form which can be signed and returned. Some 360,000 packages are mailed each year but no detailed statistics were available on the response rate. A copy of the form is at Attachment C.

7 Data source agencies for updating the NRE.

The ECA delegation received briefings from four government agencies, which supply change of address data to Elections Canada for updating the NRE. These were Revenue Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators and Canadian Vital Statistics.

Full copies of the presentations by the agencies are available from the ECA office.

7.1 Summary of data source updating for the NRE

Each data source agency has a data supply agreement with Elections Canada. The data supplied to Elections Canada is change of address data. It is forwarded quarterly or half yearly depending on the agency, with some moves for monthly updates where relevant, eg death data from Canadian Vital Statistics.

All data source agencies, require either the active informed consent of electors before details are forwarded to Elections Canada or provide an "opt out" opportunity for electors to prevent their details being forwarded (except for death data). The change of address data is forwarded to Elections Canada in one of two ways depending on the agency. Either an indicator on the external agency's database notes a change of address occurring which triggers the data to be forwarded to Elections Canada, or the agency's entire database is downloaded to Elections Canada for data matching on a regular basis.

7.2 Revenue Canada

The briefing was held with Ms Marian Miller of Revenue Canada at Elections Canada on Tuesday 29 June 1999. The briefing outlined the acquisition of taxfilers' change of address data from Revenue Canada for updating the NRE. Elections Canada had identified Revenue Canada as the best source of change of address data for updating the NRE in its 1996 feasibility study into the development of the NRE.

7.2.1 Agreement

It was considered to be a major innovation for Revenue Canada to give direct address change data to Elections Canada from taxfilers' details. The agreement was signed in 1997 and covers conditions and procedures for transfer of individual identification data, principles for obtaining consent, confidentiality, description of information to be transferred, format, frequency, conditions and procedures for data transfer, handling enquiries and costs.

This project had Prime Ministerial and Ministerial support.

7.2.2 Business Case

The main business case factors which promoted the agreement for the acquisition of data from Revenue Canada, were the high quality, frequency and broad coverage of the tax filer change of address information. In addition, by maintaining a regularly updated NRE through using this data, revision costs may be lower, therefore costs per federal electoral event may be lower than predicted and the marketability of the Register to Provinces and Territories would be increased.

7.2.3 Costs

The start up costs of the development of the data acquisition from Revenue Canada were \$3 million over the 1997/8/9 tax years. 89% was spent on enquiry handling, 3% system development, 7% publications and 1% for information technology.

Ongoing costs were \$600,000 for 1997/8, (51% for enquiries, 33% for publications, and 16% for data capture) and \$500,000 for 1998/9, (57% for data capture, 14% for enquiries, and 29% for publications). Ongoing costs are estimated at \$800,000 for 1999/00.

Elections Canada pays for a page of the Tax Guide which explains the process to taxfilers and an insert leaflet, titled "*Message from the Chief Electoral Officer*" (see Attachment D).

7.2.4 Data transfer and data matching procedure

The initial data matching process involved matching the NRE and Revenue Canada's data bases and assigning a unique Elections Canada identifier number to taxfilers who were already enrolled, through a double blind match process. This identifier number is now used for the ongoing data matching where change of addresses on taxfilers' records occur.

Revenue Canada provides name, address and data of birth to Elections Canada where tax filers have consented for their details to be forwarded. Revenue Canada receives information for address changes from tax returns, applications for child tax benefits and client contacts.

Revenue Canada invokes address accuracy validations on a City Index database before an address change is captured, processed and forwarded to Elections Canada.

Data is transferred from Revenue Canada to Elections Canada by magnetic tape twice yearly in January and June.

7.2.5 Public information and awareness campaign

A comprehensive public information campaign including press releases about the updating of the NRE from tax returns, was directed at a number of groups in the community at the start of the project.

Taxfilers were made aware of the initiative through information on the tax return form and tax guide. The return envelope had a reminder on the back. The notice of assessment they receive following the processing of their tax assessment acknowledges their consent or non consent.

The tax preparation industry was advised through email, web site and articles in industry journals.

Members of Parliament were given an information package about the project.

Revenue Canada received 37,500 public enquiries regarding the transfer of change of address data which was 1% of the estimated number. Elections Canada received 13,330 public enquiries which was 2.5% of the estimated number.

7.2.6 Consent

A representative of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada was involved in the 1996 feasibility study. Subsequently, the support of the Privacy Commissioner for active informed consent of the taxfilers to be sought on the tax form was a key factor in Revenue Canada proceeding with the project.

Tax filers must give new consent for their details to be passed to Elections Canada every year. Revenue Canada insisted that the tax filer be given this opportunity to give or withhold consent for their information to be passed to Elections Canada every year. This was because Revenue Canada considered people might not remember one year to the next whether they have given consent and their tax return may be completed by another person.

Revenue Canada includes acknowledgment of the consent with the taxation assessment notice to the taxfiler. This was considered the most appropriate method of acknowledgment as the taxfiler is likely to read the assessment notice.

Consent may be revoked at any time.

The consent rate by taxfilers for their change of address data to be forwarded to Elections Canada was 80% in 1997/8 and 84% for the 1998/9 tax year (March to February). 5% refused

consent and 11% left the consent tick box blank. In the Provinces and Territories in 1998/9 consent rates varied from 92% in the province of Newfoundland to 75% in British Columbia.

Copies of Revenue Canada forms, an extract from the tax guide and a message to taxfilers from the Chief Electoral Officer are at Attachment D.

7.2.7 Future steps to improve data transfer to Elections Canada

The project is under evaluation to see how the consent rate can be improved. Research will be conducted to improve response rates through improvements to accounting software and the instructions to the tax preparation industry which may make the consent question easier to understand and process.

7.3 Citizenship and Immigration Canada

This briefing was held with Mr Greg Bell of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) at Elections Canada on Tuesday 29 June 1999 and outlined the acquisition of data about new citizens from CIC for updating the NRE. Elections Canada identified CIC as the best source of data about new citizens for updating the NRE in its 1996 feasibility study into the development of the NRE.

7.3.1 Agreement

The agreement between Elections Canada and CIC was signed in 1997 and covers the data on new citizens to be transferred, the mechanism, the format, frequency, conditions and costs of transfer.

Data is received by Elections Canada via magnetic tape in January, April, July and October.

7.3.2 Data and data transfer

CIC is the only source of data on new citizens and registers 150,000 to 200,000 new citizens each year.

CIC provides name, address, data of birth and gender of new citizens who have consented to details being added to the NRE.

7.3.3 Costs

The start up costs of the data transfer from CIC, were \$116,000 in 1997/8. Ongoing costs have been \$75,000 in 1997/8, \$40,000 in 1998/9 and are estimated at \$48,000 for 1999/00. These costs are considerably lower than for data from other agencies. The major component of ongoing costs is handling of enquiries.

7.3.4 Consent

The active and informed consent of new citizens is required for data to be passed to Elections Canada. Applicants for citizenship are forwarded a letter and pre printed form which includes the following consent request:

“Do you authorise Citizenship and Immigration Canada to forward your name, gender, address and date of birth to Elections Canada so that this information can be added to the Register?”

Two other consent questions about data sharing with other agencies are also asked on the form. No separate signatures are required for any of the three questions, because the signature on the bottom of the whole form is taken to refer to everything on the form.

40% of new citizens consent to their data to be passed to Elections Canada.

A copy of Section 9 of the *Application for Canadian Citizenship* showing the consent information and question is at Attachment E.

7.3.5 Future steps to improve data transfer to Elections Canada

Elections Canada and CIC have identified several areas which may improve the consent rate. Firstly, evaluation of the form and the consent request question is required. The form has been changed three times since the agreement to improve consent. However, here is a lag in the form being used and finally processed as it takes 12-14 months for citizenship to be approved, so old forms are sometimes still in operation.

Secondly, no evaluation of refusals or breakdown into socio-demographic or any other grouping has yet been conducted but may be valuable for the project.

7.4 Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators

This briefing was held with Mr Ian Tomlinson of the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators at Elections Canada on Wednesday 30 June 1999 and outlined the collection and processing of change of address data from Motor Vehicle and Drivers' Licence Registrations for updating the NRE.

7.4.1 Agreement

There are individual contracts between Elections Canada and eleven of the separate provincial and territorial databases. No agreement exists with Alberta because of privacy concerns.

7.4.2 Data and data transfer

Data matching is carried out between the NRE and the Motor Registry databases by the complete drivers licence file from each jurisdiction being downloaded for matching to Elections Canada on a quarterly basis.

The data downloaded includes name, address and date of birth. Changes of addresses are made to matched records on the NRE only. Non matched records on the Motor Registry registers are not added to the NRE nor followed up.

7.4.3 Consent

Licensed drivers have the option of not having their voter registration information updated from the Motor Voter program by completing an "opt out" form.

A copy of the "opt out" form for the British Columbia *MOVO* is at Attachment A.

7.5 Office of the Registrar General Ontario (ORG)

This briefing was held with Ms Indira Singh of the ORG at Elections Canada on Wednesday 30 June 1999 and outlined the data sharing agreement with Elections Canada. The ORG registers and maintains information on births, adoptions, marriages, changes of name and deaths in Ontario. In aggregate, the Provincial and Territorial Registrars General are a cooperative group under the banner of Canadian Vital Statistics.

7.5.1 Agreement

The agreement between Elections Canada and Vital Statistics provides for data on deaths to be transferred electronically to Elections Canada on a quarterly basis. The agreement was commenced in October 1997. A joint working party of Elections Canada and ORG staff established a business case for the transfer of death data to update elector records on the NRE. The agreement reflects one of the ORG's key functions, which is the provision of data to manage national registries.

7.5.2 Cost

The cost to Elections Canada of the data on deaths includes processing costs only.

7.5.3 Data transfer

Data on approximately 77,800 death registrations is provided annually to Elections Canada. The data includes name, last known address, date of birth and place of birth.

7.5.4 Future steps to improve data transfer to Elections Canada

The ORG aims to improve the quality of data capture and data entry of death information to enhance the data matching capability of the transfer of this information.

The ORG will continue its Aboriginal outreach registration to improve the accuracy of death registration in remote communities.

It is planned that change of name information be also forwarded to Elections Canada.

The frequency of transfer of deaths data will change from quarterly to monthly.

8 Findings

8.1 NRE

The NRE is still under development regarding address management and data sharing arrangements with the Provinces and Territories.

The previous roll updating system of enumeration was staffed by political party appointees. So the NRE now takes the roll updating process a step away from any perception of a lack of independence in the roll process.

8.1.1 Data sharing with Provinces and Territories

Legislative restrictions prevent Elections Canada from sharing the NRE data for use beyond electoral purposes. This restricts them sharing the list with Provinces and Territories who have legislative requirements to on-provide that information for other purposes, eg jury lists.

8.1.2 “Revision” process

There is no effective “Close of Rolls” as known in Australia, after a writ has been issued for an election. Instead, the “revision” process exists from the issue of the writ up to and including Polling Day. During this process electors can enrol for the first time or change their enrolment details. As updates to address changes from data sources are generally quarterly, this gives a lag time resulting in a many changes during the “revision” process prior to elections. Under the NRE process, the degree of change through revision is expected to increase. This was the case with the recent Ontario election where the NRE was used. There were changes to the roll of some 40% of electors and this has implications for the expected cost savings predicted by Elections Canada when developing a business case for the NRE.

Electors can register and vote on polling day.

8.1.3 Roll changes per annum

The percentage of roll changes per annum is similar to that in Australia, ie approximately 20% each year. The Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators and Elections Quebec also experience this number of changes in address details per annum.

8.1.4 Register access

The electoral rolls in Canada are not a public document. MPs receive an annual update only (federally, this is in October) and the roll is reserved for the conduct of an election. The basis of this approach is personal privacy and there appear to be no concerns about electoral integrity that underpins the Australian approach to broad public roll access.

8.2 Updating the NRE

Elections Canada can update address changes on the NRE directly from external data sources without seeking a special signed elector form. This enhances the ease and rapidity of roll update procedures considerably, as the majority of NRE transactions are address changes (similar to Australia). It appears Canadians do not have a problem nor do they query this non-participative procedure. It was suggested this may be because enumeration was non-participative so they are used to it. Only about 3000 enrolment cards are received per annum and in fact this method of changing enrolment details is discouraged.

The data exchange with Citizenship and Immigration Canada results in enrolment of 44% of new citizens. It was considered that the AEC’s current new citizens’ enrolment system, which enrolls 95% of new citizens, is very favourable in comparison.

8.2.1 Acknowledgment of address change of electors

No acknowledgments of changed enrolment details are sent by Elections Canada to electors after direct address change updating. However, just before an electoral event, a letter is sent

to the current address, advising of the polling booth to attend, which indicates any inaccurate enrolment details which can then be changed by the elector during the “*revision*” process.

8.2.2 Consent

In the data exchange programs for updating the NRE with Revenue Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, consent of the elector is required before the details are passed to Elections Canada. No consent is required from the Motor Vehicle and Drivers Licence Boards, rather an “*opt out*” form may be filled in to prevent the data being passed to Elections Canada.

Revenue Canada confirms the consent (or non-consent) given by taxpayers for their details to be sent to Elections Canada, by including it with the taxation assessment.

9 Abbreviations

AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
BC	British Columbia
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CIR	Citizens Initiated Referendum
CISCO	CRU Implementation Steering Committee
CRU	Continuous Roll Update
ECA	Electoral Council of Australia
HR	Habitation Review
MOVO	Updating the BC PVL from motor registration and drivers licence data
MP	Member of Parliament
NGD	National Geographic Database
NRE	National Register of Electors
ORG	Office of the Registrar General, Ontario
PLE	Quebec Permanent List of Electors
PVL	British Columbia Provincial Voters List
RIVERS	Recall and Initiatives Verification System (BC)

10 Attachments

- A. Copy of the “*opt out*” form for British Columbia Motor Voter program.
- B. Agenda and Attendees at the 1999 Conference of Canadian Electoral Officials.
- C. “*Get ready to make your mark*”, Elections Canada enrolment information for 18 year olds.
- D. Copies of Revenue Canada forms , an extract from the tax guide and a message to taxfilers from the Chief Electoral Officer.
- E. Copy of Section 9 of the *Application for Canadian Citizenship*

11 Documents available at the ECA office

1. Presentations from the Director General of Elections for Quebec regarding the Quebec Permanent Voters Lists.
2. Presentations from Revenue Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, Ontario Registrar General on the data sharing arrangements with Elections Canada.
3. KPMG/Sussex Circle, Report "*Technology and the Voting Process*", June 1998
4. Elections Canada National Geographic Database Maintenance System, Business Requirements Definition Study. March 1999.
5. Elections Canada Strategic Plan "*Serving Democracy : A Strategic Plan*," 1999-2002
6. Elections Canada, "*Electoral Insight*", June 1999, Vol 1, No 1
7. Canadian Election Officials Conference 1999, Conference Papers
8. *The New Canada Elections Act – Bill C83*
9. Compendium of Electoral Legislation for Canada.
10. Elections New Brunswick, "*Manual for Supervisory Deputy Returning Officers*".(distributed at the Conference
11. Elections New Brunswick, "*Manual for Supervisory Deputy Returning Officers and Poll Clerks*". distributed at the Conference