

Building and Construction Trades Department , Canadian Office, AFL-CIO (613) 236-0653
Government and Regulatory Affairs

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Canada Elections Act

January 1, 2007 was the effective date for changes to the *Canada Election Act*. These changes are significant and need to be discussed within your organizations.

A Building Trades organization (including our individual affiliates) cannot make political contributions during or leading up to a federal election. The amended act prohibits corporations, trade unions and groups from donating to either political parties, candidates or leadership contestants.

Donations or contributions can only be made by individual Canadian citizens or permanent residents. As a guideline \$1,100.00CAD is the donation limit to each political party, candidate or leadership contestant. You may not make political donations with funds received by you from others for the express purpose of donation.

Things we have traditionally done within our organizations like "phone banks" for candidates and sending campaign workers during regular business hours are both prohibited under the new act. **If you**

have members who wish to work on a candidate's campaign they must do so on their own time outside of business hours. The employee may take an unpaid leave to work on a volunteer basis. If an employee is running for office they may be granted a paid leave of absence without the funds being considered a donation to the candidate or party.

Cash donations over \$20.00CAD cannot be accepted – all other donations must be made by cheque. The act also makes it an offense to try and avoid the rules for ineligible contributors, for contribution limits or to try and conceal a contributor's identity.

So what does this all mean to us? How can we be an effective political force with these new guidelines?

There are really two ways to proceed:

1. A grassroots campaign to improve communication with elected officials on the ground in ridings across Canada that extends beyond election campaign periods.

2. We decide as a group to apply as a Third Party with Elections Canada and

advertise on behalf of our members and issues in the public forum.

If we decide to go with the first option, the way we interact with government will have to evolve to a place where we all have strong, long term relationships with our local elected officials.

An open, honest and grassroots dialogue will be necessary to impact public policy and our country.

Scenario number two is more complex, potentially more expensive, and certainly more public.

Organizations (including our own) can apply to become registered third party advertisers during an election campaign and then would be subject to specific rules and regulations making up the *Canada Elections Act*. The Act places financial and procedural limits on participating parties who want to advertise during an election campaign.

If we go this way it will be important to deliver one unified message across the Building Trades in Canada – fragmented sound bites will not be effective. Continued....P2

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The way we communicate with our industry partners has evolved- the way we communicate with government is no different. It is important to be organized, prepared and to understand what is at stake in future elections.

For more information and the complete list of rules and regulations regarding campaign financing visit: <http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=fin&document=index&dir=lim&lang=e&textonly=false>

Brad Wall and the Saskatchewan Party swept to power in an election that will change the face of politics and public policy in the Province.

The people of Saskatchewan decided Lorne Calvert and the New Democrat Party were past their prime - this will be a sea change in approach to government in the Province.

It is interesting to note (with the ballots barely counted) on November 14 Statistics Canada has labeled Saskatchewan as a "growth" province. Retail sales have increased month over month six times in 2007 and new home prices in Saskatoon have risen 50% year to date. Employment growth has risen 10% - **hardly numbers to scoff at.**

Simply, the Saskatchewan Party's claim that the province is stagnating is wrong. Saskatchewan is sitting on a large supply of untapped natural resources and has a highly educated population. There is no debate young people have recently left in record numbers for the economic powerhouses elsewhere in Canada. Saskatchewan can get them back with the right economic conditions.

Change for change's sake is not always a good thing. The Saskatchewan Party will pursue a mandate of incremental conservatism - this will have a negative effect on the labour environment in the Province. Their platform indicated they will "respect the right of labour and management to negotiate collective agreements, by

removing legislated limits on the length of collective bargaining agreements..." This could have the impact of destabilizing existing deals we have signed with owner/clients.

The people of Saskatchewan sent a clear message this month. Time will tell if the Sask Party was clear with their platform and works to provide any real benefit for the Province. We will see if they will show respect for the rights of Labour and Saskatchewan's workplace.

For more information :

<http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/indi02i.htm>

<http://www.saskparty.com/>