

**SUBMISSION  
TO  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS TASK FORCE**

**BUILDING TRADES PERSPECTIVES AND PROPOSALS  
ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION REFORM**

**SUBMITTED APRIL 8, 2010 TO THE  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS TASK FORCE**

**British Columbia and Yukon Territory  
Building and Construction Trades Council  
#204 – 4333 Ledger Avenue, Burnaby, B.C. V5G 3T3  
Tel: 604-291-9020 Fax: 604-291-9590  
[bcytbctc@bcbuildingtrades.org](mailto:bcytbctc@bcbuildingtrades.org)  
[www.bcbuildingtrades.org](http://www.bcbuildingtrades.org)**



## **Introduction**

The BC and Yukon Building and Construction Trades Council is the central labour organization for construction trade unions in the province. The Building Trades Council and its sister organization, the BC Bargaining Council represent over 40,000 workers from every local community in BC.

The BCYT-BCTC has five regional councils that co-ordinate construction union engagement with local governments. The regional councils are chartered organizations divided geographically into the following districts;

Kamloops – Revelstoke - Okanagan and District BCTC  
Kootenay BCTC  
Prince George and District BCTC  
Vancouver Island BCTC  
Vancouver - New Westminster and District BCTC

Through the democratic process of regional district councils Building Trades unions designate representatives to attend and make presentations to municipal and local government council meetings. Local government jurisdiction and decision making directly impacts construction workers and the industry as a whole. The issues at stake include; building code regulations and administration procedures, worker qualifications, tendering policy and pre-qualification guidelines for tender bidders, engineering requirements, environmental assessment regulations, monitoring and administration.

With respect to amendments to local government electoral changes the Building Trades Council would like to echo many of the comments made in the submission by CUPE BC to the Local Government Elections Task Force.

## **Corporate Voting**

A proposal to expand voting rights to corporate entities, businesses and/or landlords is not supported by the BCYT-BCTC and its affiliate union members. Local government democracy is not served by granting extra votes to businesses entities or those who have property. Put simply we support the principle of one person, one vote.

Granting extra voting rights to one societal group opens a Pandora's Box of fairness questions. If businesses and landlords are to get an extra vote why not grant double votes to other non-profit societies in the community. Indeed why not open double voting to every special interest group, tenants, charitable organizations, etc.....

Local governments should be brought into line with provincial and federal electoral rules. We should be moving forward towards the harmonization of electoral rules and regulations between the different levels of government, not going back to an era where extra voting privileges were granted to entities and individuals based on their property and landownership titles.

### **Campaign Spending**

The BCYT-BCTC supports provincially coordinated efforts to standardize and oversee reasonable spending limits by local government candidates. As with provincial election regulations these limits should be backed up by transparent and impartial administrative procedures. Candidates should be required to appoint a financial officer who would be responsible for keeping a record of all expenditures and filing a statement of campaign expenses. We support the involvement of Elections BC in the administration, monitoring and enforcement of these regulations.

### **Campaign Contribution Limits and Public Financing**

The BCYT-BCTC supports the position taken by CUPE in its submission to the Local Government Elections Task Force. Contribution limits should be consistent with provincial election regulations. We also support the initiation of a system of tax credits to encourage greater participation by individual citizens in election financing.

### **Disclosure, Enforcement and the Role of Elections BC**

Again, the BCYT-BCTC supports the submission made by CUPE regarding the establishment of regulations and administration of those rules. Elections BC is eminently qualified to oversee training of local officials and to support the compliance of regulations regarding campaign finance disclosure. For the sake of consistency in standards across the province we back an increased role for Elections BC in the oversight of local government elections.

### **Conclusion**

The Building Trades do not support the granting of extra voting rights to businesses, corporate entities or landlords. Electors of local government authorities should be limited to one vote per person, period.

Campaign spending limits and the administration of these rules should be clear. The BCYT-BCTC supports an increased role for Elections BC in oversight of

spending limit rules, monitoring and enforcement of these rules for local government candidates across the province.

The same goes for contribution limits. We support regulations that mirror provincial election rules and administration of those rules. Elections BC should require audited statements from local government candidates and their financial officers. To increase transparency records of these contribution reports should be available to the public in an easily accessible electronic format.