



Report on the Survey of Registered Third Parties for the 43rd General Election: Wave 2 Summary

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This public opinion research report presents the results of research on the electoral experience of registered third parties conducted to help evaluate the October 21, 2019, federal election.

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Executive Summary

Purpose of Research

In 2018, Bill C-76 introduced new rules for third parties that expanded the types of activities that are regulated as well as the time frame during which they are regulated. As part of its post-mortems following the 2019 federal general election, Elections Canada sought to obtain reliable survey data for the following purposes:

- To understand registered third parties' experiences, opinions and attitudes about the third party political financing regime under the *Canada Elections Act*.
- To provide information to support the evaluation of Elections Canada's programs and services, and identify opportunities for improvement.
- To provide input into the agency's performance indicators, reports and recommendations to Parliament.

The *Survey of Registered Third Parties* was the first survey of third parties undertaken by Elections Canada. The survey was conducted in two waves; the first wave¹ addressed activities and products relevant to the pre-writ and writ periods, while the second wave addressed those relevant to the post-election time frame. This report presents the findings of the second wave, which covers various aspects of completing and submitting the *Electoral Campaign Return* (also known herein as "the return"). It also revisits some key topics from the first wave, including the helpfulness of Elections Canada's products and services, which may have been used in preparing the returns and financial agents' views on regulated activities after filing their return.

Methodology

Forum Research administered a two-wave, quantitative survey² to the 2019 financial agents of registered third parties as these individuals were well situated to answer questions that relate to the third-party political financing regime.

This survey is the second of two waves to gauge the public opinion of the financial agents of registered third parties. The survey was available online in both official languages. Of the 55 financial agents who participated in the first wave, 54 agreed to be contacted for a follow-up. These 54 received an invitation to complete the survey, and 29 responses³ were received, equivalent to a 54% response rate.⁴

¹ The report for the first wave – *Report on the Survey of Registered Third Parties for the 43rd General Election: Wave 1* – can be found at

<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rec/eval/pes2019/thipar&document=index&lang=e>

² A print version of the survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

³ Due to the small sample size, figures throughout the report are stated as frequencies and proportions, as opposed to percentages. Figures should be used with caution for those questions with a small number of respondents.

⁴ The response rate was calculated by dividing the total number of responses to the survey (29) by the total population who could have participated (54).

Key Findings

Electoral Campaign Return

- Most financial agents found the *Electoral Campaign Return* easy to find and submit, but difficult to fill out.
- Despite perceiving some steps as easy, the majority of financial agents said that completing and submitting the return was a lot of work and also reported that the overall process was difficult.
- The majority of financial agents said that their third party did not request an extension to the return submission deadline. Those who did request an extension reported that it was easy to figure out when they needed to submit the request form, and they found it easy to complete and submit.
- Most financial agents found it easy to determine whether their third party was required to submit an auditor's report with their return, and most reported that their third party was required to file one. Of those who filed an auditor's report, the vast majority said that hiring an auditor was easy.

Elections Canada's Products and Services

- The findings for the use and the helpfulness of Elections Canada's products and services were similar to those in Wave 1. The two most commonly used tools were the *Political Financing Handbook for Third Parties, Financial Agents and Auditors* and the "New Requirements for Third Parties" document. They were also found to be the most helpful tools. The Political Financing videos were reported to be the least used tool.
- A handful of respondents reported using the Political Entities Support Network (1-800 number), and about half of those who used it found it helpful. Aside from using the 1-800 number, just under half of financial agents reported that they contacted Elections Canada in another way – either by phone or email. The vast majority of those who did said that they made contact by email and that they were satisfied with the help they received.
- When asked about other kinds of products or services that would have made the process easier, the most common response was a request for more clarity on compliance, rules and regulations.
- Most financial agents said they did not consult any other source aside from Elections Canada since the last survey, in contrast to Wave 1, when a majority did so. However, as in Wave 1, those who did consult another source most commonly reported consulting a lawyer.

Regulated Activities

- When financial agents were asked to state their level of agreement (or disagreement) with various statements related to regulated activities, over half disagreed with each of the following statements: "It was clear which of my third party's activities were regulated under the *Canada Elections Act*" and "Reporting my third party's regulated spending under the right category (e.g. partisan activity, election survey, election advertising) was easy." These results are consistent with Wave 1.

Statement of Political Neutrality

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Forum Research Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research.

Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



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