



Report on the 2016 UBC Okanagan Student Election

DATED MARCH 21st, 2016

CONTENTS:

PART I – Introduction

PART II – Concerns Summary

PART III – Moving Forward

PART IV – Conclusion

PART I – Introduction

In light of a number of concerns brought to the attention of the Chief Returning Officer and the UBCSUO Executive General Manager, the UBCSUO Executive Committee was motivated to conduct a secondary review of the 2016 UBC Okanagan Student Election. In the course of preparing this report, legal counsel was consulted. Further, the review was conducted with the principle purpose being to present recommendations to the UBCSUO Board of Directors to assist in guiding changes and improving future electoral processes at UBC Okanagan.

PART II – Concerns Summary

Issue: location

Perhaps one of the concerns that has been raised the most was the fact that the election was held outdoors in the courtyard. In the last referendum for the UPASS in November, the UBCSUO noticed a very large increase in participation and diversity in the voter turn out. The primary reason for this was thought to be that the polling station was located in a central outside area. For that reason, polling was held outside with the view that there would be an increase in participation. However, weather, sound, and space, were all factors that played a role in making the polling process less comfortable. Nevertheless, this election achieved a historically high turnout, so we see no basis to conclude that the location impacted the outcome of the election by preventing students from voting.

Issue: missing names on ballots

Missing names on ballots has been something that has happened in the past. With deadlines being fast moving and names of candidates who have dropped out changing up until the day of the election, there can sometimes be a name left off a ballot. In this case, there was one ballot where a name was not present, however, that candidate was running unopposed and faced a “yes or no” vote. The problem of the missing name was quickly rectified on the first day of voting. This candidate was successful in achieving a “yes” vote. Given that this was an unopposed race and that the problem was rectified quickly, we feel that this error is not capable of materially affecting the outcome of the election.

Issue: extra ballots

The issue of extra ballots being given out to a few students is something that has been reported to the Chief Returning Officer and a Deputy Returning Officer. This error was caused by a defect in ballot printing a few of the ballots were stuck together. This was reported to have happened 3 times on the first day of voting. In each of these instances, the person who received the extra ballot immediately gave that ballot back. There is no evidence that any voter took advantage of having received an additional ballot in error. The Deputy Returning Officers remain confident that all ballots were casted correctly. In light of the evidence of a limited number of occurrences and that election officials became aware of the problem early on and rectified the issue as soon as they became aware of it, it is unlikely that this error could materially impact the outcome of the election.

Issue: identification not shown

A question has arisen as to whether students were showing proper identification when voting. We are not aware of any evidence supporting this claim. All Deputy Returning Officers were directed to check ID of students as they voted. Verification of student number was also mandatory.

Issue: privacy

One of the primary concerns brought to the attention of the Chief Returning Officer during the election was that some students felt that they were not granted enough privacy when voting. This primarily had to do with the fact that, again, the voting area was held in the central courtyard and the weather did not cooperate. Cardboard dividers were provided, however, overwhelmingly, voters chose to vote at one of the tables that did not have any dividers out of convenience. The vast majority of students expressed no issue with the set up. However, it was also reported that there were simply not enough dividers and they were not spread out properly on the tables. That said, there were also no reports of a voter giving back their ballot or refusing to vote based on the condition of the polling station or that they could not vote in private. Any student who wished to vote privately could have done so albeit, with some effort.

PART III – Moving Forward

While we have concluded that the concerns raised did not materially impact or interfere with the results of the election, there are steps that can be taken to improve UBCSUO's election processes. It is recommended that the UBCSUO Board of Directors take the following actions:

- Strike an Ad-Hoc Committee as soon as possible, inclusive of Board Members and interested students, to oversee a review of the electoral process as a whole for the UBCSUO with the goal of preparing an elections procedure handbook.
- The committee may also recommend amendments to the Elections & Referendum Regulations if it concludes amendments would be desirable.
- The Committee should be required to consult with students, including preparing and conducting a survey in the fall, to learn more about how students would like to see elections administered. For example, a survey could determine whether students wish to move to an online balloting system, which would require amendments to the Election & Referendum Regulation.
- The Committee should consult with senior UBC Okanagan administration about the possibility of reaching an agreement to implement an online voting system, should the survey indicate that preference by students.
- The Committee should also solicit any suggestions from senior UBC Okanagan administration that they may have with respect to improving the UBCSUO electoral process.

PART IV – Conclusion

Almost every election will have some problems, but that does not mean that an election is automatically invalid. While there have been concerns regarding the 2016 UBCSUO Student Election, our view is that the issues raised have not materially impacted the outcome of the vote. We can learn from our mistakes and should use this election as an opportunity to improve our electoral processes. We feel that the recommendations put forward in this report will build on our democratic processes at UBCSUO. We urge the Board of Directors to formally adopt our recommendations as soon as possible so that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee can commence without delay.