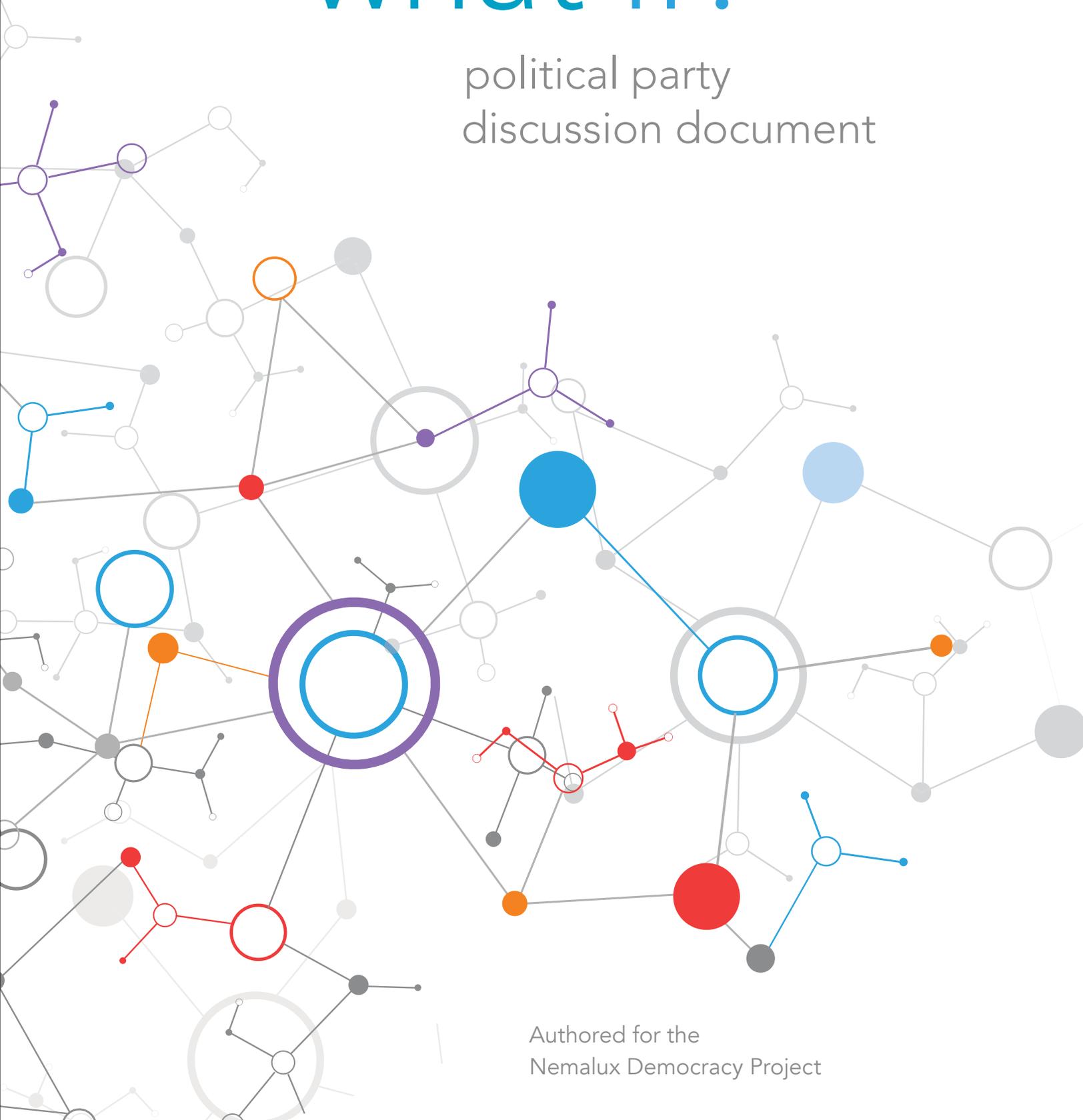
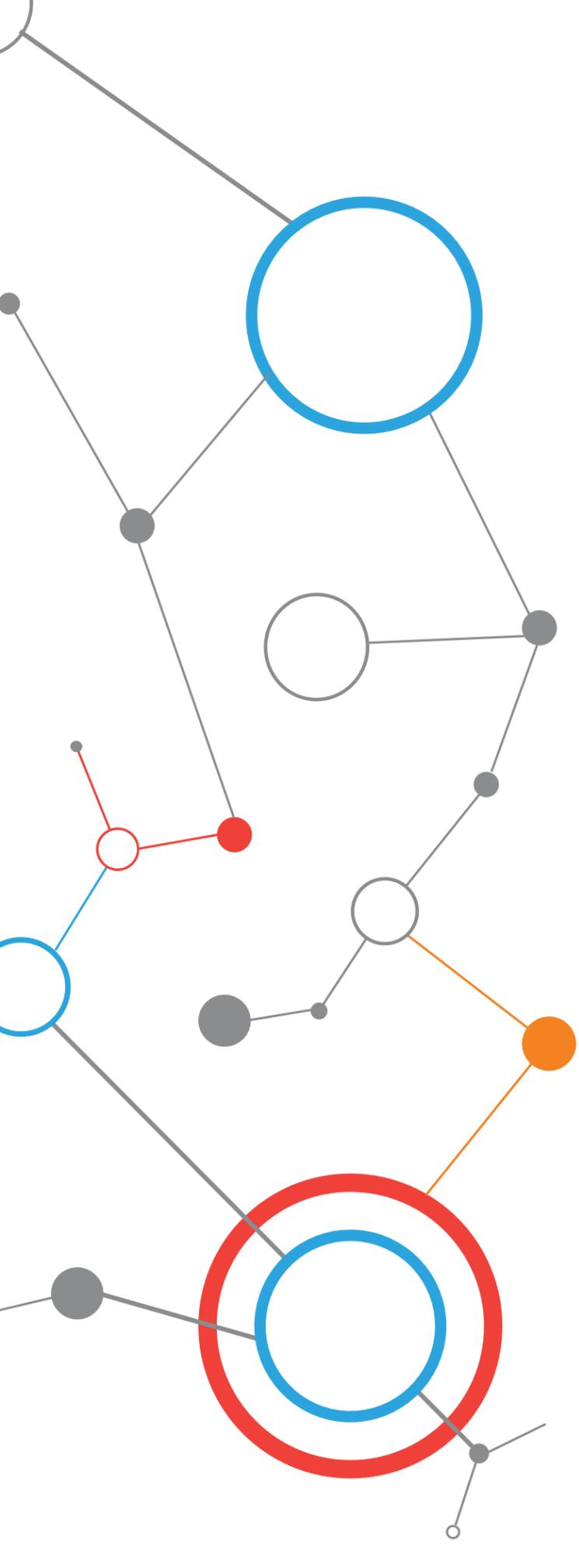


# what if?

political party  
discussion document

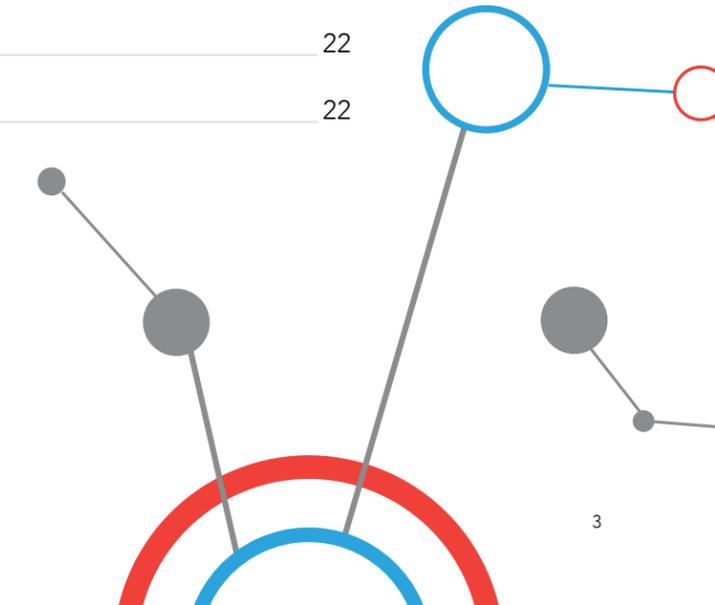


Authored for the  
Nemalux Democracy Project



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## The question: To be a party or not to be a (political) party?

The initial, and in many ways, most difficult decision is to determine whether or not a new political party is needed. Initiating and launching a new political entity is an enormous task and once embarked upon, not easily abandoned because it has a self-fulfilling logic all of its own. Political parties are many-sided organizations whose ultimate aim is the attainment of power.

Some people confuse political parties with interest groups or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Espousing and articulating public policy can be done outside the ambit of parties. It is not uncommon for non-party actors in Canadian civil society to exert influence on political actors that results in the attainment of long-held public policy objectives. For instance, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, first begun in 1973, was able to exert pressure and influence on parliamentarians to amend the criminal code to increase sentences and generally have law institutions take spousal abuse more seriously. The main point here is that non-party actors typically resort to persuasion, pressure and influence to bring about change while political parties seek power to enact legislation deemed desirable by their membership and others. The attempt to form the Feminist Party of Canada in the 1980s revealed that while some might desire a more focused political agenda, other parties can and do have the potential to absorb those narrowly focused interests within their ranks, seemingly obviating the need for new political entities.

When posing the question 'is a new political party needed?' a number of factors should be considered. First among them is a sober

assessment of whether existing parties could enact the policy and or practices objective (s) of the group in question. In our particular case, we have to ask whether or not intensive outreach to existing parliamentary and legislative political entities might achieve our goal of widening the participation of people in our democratic institutions through delegative democracy (proxy voting). Could such a concerted outreach program alter these institutions without the need of creating a new political entity? Furthermore, if the option of outreach were to be pursued, would it be advisable to initially preference one order of government over another (i.e. – municipal over provincial and federal)?

The case for going the route of direct outreach with existing political entities is strengthened when one sees the pathway those seeking voting system change have taken in a system that has benefited the two dominant federal parties disproportionately. In order for voting system change to be a matter of serious debate and its adaptation likely, one of the two main parties have to subscribe to it. The Liberal Party of Canada had an internal party survey that asked its members which voting system they preferred. Over 400,000 respondents answered in favour of a proportional representative model, a decisive change from the current winner take all first-past-the-post system. Previously, one of the chief obstacles to voting system change was the Liberal Party. A significant portion of its non-parliamentary membership want a change to PR (proportional representation), illustrating a major internal shift.

Such changes in policy did not arise from thin air. Rather, it was sustained pressure and

influence exerted by individuals and groups in Canadian civil society that paved the way for this evident sea change in the way the Liberal membership (as differentiated from its hierarchy and leadership) came to view voting system change. The parliamentary committee on voting system change has a deadline of December 1, 2016 to make its recommendation to Parliament.

*Though it would require immediate action, it is just possible that we could put in place a non-governmental organization that could piggy-back on this process, engage groups in civil society and political parties with a view to advocating and implementing delegative democracy at some future point. It could be viewed as an opportunity for our entry point into Canadian political discourse.*

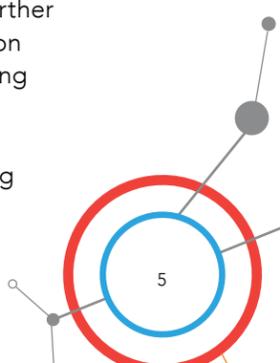
Such a plan could be appreciably easier than initiating a political party. This is so namely because the scope of people and decision-makers to be educated, engaged with and pressured would be more narrow, at least initially, than that of the wider expanse of those found in electoral politics. The potential downside of attempting to piggy-back on the reform process lies in the possibility that parliamentary committee members and parties may disavow any interest in more deeply changing Canadian democracy. Instead, their mandate to alter the voting system could predominate at the expense of all other ideas. If our delegative democracy model was couched as voting system change, then a way into the current process could yet be possible.

Another reason to reflect on whether or not to proceed with a political party that partakes in the formal political system is to come to a determination of whether or not there are committed adherents. By this, I mean that in order to be viable, a political party requires a base amount of support in civil society that is willing to participate in its initiation and eventual electoral success. Political parties need leaders, members, foot soldiers, staff people, and an assortment of other

personnel that comprise its human resource base. If that base does not already exist, is there sufficient civic literacy to enable it to take shape in a relatively reasonable time frame? Conversely, are resources available to embark upon a recruiting campaign that would see the nascent party acquire its core activists, a national and or provincial executive (s), leaders and other volunteers?

If the answer is negative to the last question posed, a plan must be conceived to recruit people who desire to widen political participation and decision-making in Canada. Such a plan must provide for the low level of civic literacy, even among prospective recruits. Lists of prospective participants and members must be formulated and direct outreach initiated. The expansive geographic nature and the regional character of the Canadian federation present unique challenges to new parties but history teaches us that it is possible. It might be helpful to array some criteria that would comprise the core key values of the party (i.e. – participatory democracy, community sustainability, holistic bridge-building, etc.) and the use that as a guidepost as to who would be potentially interested in such an undertaking.

A more detailed and specific recruiting plan must be formulated before serious party planning could occur, although if the political party option is the preferred choice, I would recommend that an initial steering committee be formed, comprising of no more than five persons initially. The steering committee would be charged with the responsibility of bringing the party into existence. The scope and mandate of the steering committee would have to be arrived at (one is suggested further along in this document). In addition to a recruiting function, the steering committee would be in place to meet the legal and logistical demands that such an undertaking entails (please see below).



## Brief history of federal political parties

As daunting a task as starting a political party appears, solace may be derived from the fact that it has been done. The Progressive Party, an entity that emanated from agrarian and social democratic populism, was a federal party that was founded in 1914 and dissolved in 1930 when some of its elements were absorbed by the newly renamed Progressive Conservative Party. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) arose in the dirty thirties in the midst of The Great Depression as an answer to the worst economic and social depredations of the 1930s. The CCF is known as the forerunner to the current NDP (New Democratic Party).

The two preceding examples are instructive. The Progressive Party's dissolution could be seen as a victory for the Conservative Party who benefited from the injection of new blood and the discontinuation of a political opponent. While it is true that the Progressive Party spawned imitators at the provincial level that won government, its presence on the federal stage was more temporal. By contrast, the CCF, after puttering along and achieving some policy victories and limited electoral gains (at least federally), morphed into NDP in 1961. The relative staying power of the latter party may be attributed to a variety of factors that enabled its relative longevity; the most obvious is its ability to integrate itself into Canadian society.

In the modern era two parties emerged in the 1990s – Reform and the Bloc Quebecois. Both emphasized regional grievances in their policy programs and thrived in large part due to the first-past-the-post voting

system. The Green Party, founded in 1983, attained a national profile in the 2004 federal general election when it ran a full slate of 308 candidates. A truly national party, its electoral success has been checked by the current voting system.

All of the foregoing is meant to demonstrate that there are varying outcomes to the establishment of political parties at the federal level. Currently, 23 parties are recognized by Elections Canada.

In lieu of the foregoing, another pertinent question before proceeding, is there a way to expand the policy expanse that would permit a wider potential appeal for the party. While essential if our democracy is to evolve, is delegative democracy in of itself enough to justify the establishment and to facilitate the success of a new party? Furthermore, what constitutes success? Would the purpose be geared to changing Canadian democratic institutions away from strictly representative bodies into a more shared form of governance? If so, I would assert that, ironically enough, success within the representative model system would be necessary to make the necessary changes. Again, this observation is predicated on the decision to form a political party, as opposed to a non-governmental organization (NGO).

Given the nature of the voting system, soon to change, the federal political system in Canada tends to favour parties that have a wide array of public policy prescriptions. Nonetheless, Canadian political history also demonstrates that niche parties can and will continue to make important contributions to Canadian society.

## Brief history of provincial political parties

Just as the federal order of government has perpetrated the emergence of new parties so too has the provincial order in Canada's federal system. The most successful of these parties have arisen as a result of a widely-recognized need or the existence of a perceived vacuum. Regarding the latter, the Saskatchewan Party came into existence in part because key office holders of the former Progressive Conservative government were successfully prosecuted for crimes committed while they were in public office. Similarly, the current Liberal Party in British Columbia bloomed after the demise of the Social Credit Party with the latter also roundly discredited as a result of corruption within its ranks.

Unlike the federal arena, the provincial one has not seen the successful emergence of single issue or narrow parties. The Confederation of Regions Party in New Brunswick once formed official opposition but its reason for being expanded from a group of Anglos alienated by the province's adaptation of official bilingualism to a

more broad-based classic right wing critique against "big government." Using the same province as an example, the *Parti Acadien* did not succeed in electoral politics, largely because the chief grievances from its main adherents were met by the Liberal and PC parties in the province with official bilingualism becoming entrenched, along with the enactment of measures to protect and nurture the Acadian culture.

Once again, it is important to define what constitutes success: is it gaining seats in legislative bodies and being able to exert direct electoral pressure on the others parties and the system? Or, is it predicated more along the lines of the model of the *Parti Acadien*, where the party itself had a short shelf life but helped to entrench Acadian rights in New Brunswick? My initial thought is that this may change. We might start out with the intent of being a full player in electoral politics, inhabiting the halls of power as a full-fledged political entity. This could conceivably give way to a type of political advocacy from within, whereby we bring about systemic change that is enacted by other political actors. Or it could be the complete opposite with us starting and evolving in the opposing directions.



## Where does the Proxy Party fit in the political spectrum?

By announcing its reason for being as linked to a particular strain of democratic reform the Proxy Party would occupy a unique place in the political spectrum. There has not been a federal political party solely dedicated to expanding the participation of citizens. True, the Green Party and the former Reform Party, place emphasis on democratic reform, but it would be appreciably different having a party that is dedicated to proxy voting and delegative democracy. Given the relative enormity of such a political project, inherent weaknesses and advantages present themselves. Some of them are delineated below.

### PROBLEMS

The Canadian populace has had a **general suspicion of one issue parties**. The classic example is the Marijuana Party who has struggled to be taken seriously by the majority of federal voters. By not having a broad-based policy platform, political parties seem like vanity projects as opposed to entities that would serve the broader public good. A challenge for the Proxy Party would be to meet that perception head-on and evolve from both programmatic and perceptual standpoints.

While it is true that voters are frequently encouraged or herded to vote according to a 'ballot question' that has been dominate in political discourse, people generally identify with parties as their philosophical and policy home. This party tends to become their default electoral choice and they must be persuaded to abandon it. The task of the Proxy Party is to create a broad enough public policy program to ensure a large enough number of supporters can be created and maintained, minimizing the chances that the party can be easily dismissed as a 'one issue party.'

### Has the concept been road-tested?

Another initial weakness is the reality that the concept has not been diffuse in Canadian society or tested to allow widespread concurrence that such an approach is a natural stepping stone in our common democratic journey. Political institutions at the provincial and federal orders of government are exclusively in the mould of Westminster parliamentary models that the country was initially forged in.

The lack of a working model of a political institution (beyond political parties themselves) that practices proxy voting is an impediment because voters in Canada generally opt for change in incremental doses. Once there are models that can claim success with proxy voting the road will be easier to travel.

### Initially, limited amount of adherents to the concept

If they thought hard enough, most people who took introductory courses in Political Science at university could recall something about the concept of proxy voting. Likely they would remember something about a limited amount of people that would transfer their vote because of their physical inability to attend important political leadership conventions or in general elections. Few would know that it is a concept that could transform the body politic to expand the participation of people in democratic institutions that have remained remarkably unchanged since Confederation.

This conceptual challenge should not be minimized. That is because it will be

*"What are we passing down to the next generation? Are we passing down our cultural wealth? Or are we passing down our liabilities?"* JANE ROLAND MARTIN

necessary to recognize that there will be a limited amount of supporters and adherents in the beginning. All parties need to recruit new members and supporters on an ongoing basis. The Proxy Party will need to do this even before it is an officially registered party.

### Proxy voting has been outside the discussion of democratic reform.

Because of its tendency to produce falsified majorities and falsified minorities in parliaments and legislatures, voting system change has been on the radar screen of democratic reformists in Canada, the United Kingdom and to some extent, the United States (that uses a congressional system of governance). This focus succeeded the victory of virtual universal suffrage at the ballot box. That particular struggle consumed democratic reformists for more than a century.

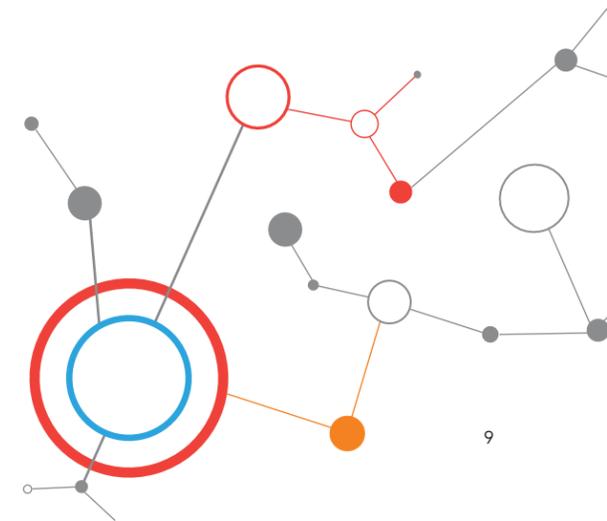
The foregoing is meant to imply that it will take some doing to turn public discourse to the point where proxy voting is deemed desirable by a significant portion of the populous. With the striking of a parliamentary committee charged with the responsibility of making a suggestion to parliament to change the voting system, democratic reformists, who are members of political parties, interest groups, and members of civil society at large, are beginning to sense that their life's ambition may about to be realized. It would be the task of the Proxy Party to remind these activists that our institutions need change beyond the longstanding representative model of governance, if only gradually.

### ADVANTAGES & OPPORTUNITIES

#### Democratic reform is on the table

Thanks to the outcome of the 2015 federal general election, each federal parliamentary party has to come to grips with democratic reform, more specifically changing the voting system. As suggested in the initial portion of this document, the current state of affairs presents an opportunity for the Proxy Party. The issue of how people vote and the democratic ramifications of the various options are now part of public discourse and parties are being influenced by voters, the media, party members and each other.

In the definitional sense, the voting system is a political institution and it is being changed. Whether it is changed to become more democratic is an open question. Regardless, the opportunity is that after this process concludes, in April 2017, there will be momentum that is built up in Canadian civil society for democratic reform that was absent until



now. While it is true that referendums on voting system change have occurred in Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, and Ontario, this is the first time in our lifetime that the governing party has pledged to alter the system.

At this moment the Proxy Party is a paper construct and therefore not ready to enter the cut and thrust of the debate on this issue immediately. However, it is reasonable to suggest that civic literacy will rise and a heightened sense of awareness about democratic reform will pervade the political landscape in Canada after the current reform process runs its course. This will present the Proxy Party with an opportunity to enter public discourse with a better chance of gaining support from voters who are not satisfied at merely changing the way their representatives are selected. A deeper discussion and dialogue would be possible.

#### Our opponents are wedded to representative democracy which is more than a simple convention

Wrapped as they are in Westminster parliamentary democracy, representative legislatures and the parties that participate in its processes are utterly bound-up in concepts that revolve in that world. Their primary concern is trying to attain public office through whatever voting system they are confronted with. A very secondary concern is altering institutions like the legislative branch or the Senate, for instance.

This state of affairs optimally opens the door for a political party that is dedicated to expanding the definition of citizen participation and de-emphasizing representation. In other words, because the other parties are wedded to representative democracy there is a vacuum permitting space for an entity such as the Proxy Party to exist.

#### The other parties, even the ones that pay rhetorical attention to the idea of participatory democracy do little to nothing to animate voters between elections.

In contrast, we wish to change institutions to accommodate and promote wider participation and multiply social capital. Whether it is in the conduct of crown corporations and or legislative committees, or the House of Commons at large, our party desires a greater and expanded role for citizens.

In order to mobilize support for such fundamental changes to Canadian democracy, between elections citizen engagement must occur. Such an approach would capitalize on the relative laziness and election-only orientation of the other parties. The between elections period allows the Proxy Party to lessen the newness or "alien" nature of the concept and the political manifestation that gives formal articulation to it.

#### The existing parties often try to be all things to all people

How many times have political commentators remarked on the familiar refrain from voters that "they're all alike!" While much of these pronouncements have their root in a lack of civic literacy and inability to perform basic research on public policy there is some kernel of truth to be found.

Political parties often purposeful blur their policies, especially on economic policy, so as to minimize the chance of being accused of amateurish or 'not ready for prime time.' While this approach may be smart in terms of a given election campaign, it feeds the impression that policies of the parties are inner-twinning, reducing choice. By adopting a distinctive, visionary set of policies aimed at altering the way political institutions are governed, the Proxy Party could help voters by providing a more vivid and particular choice at the ballot box.

*"Total revolution of consciousness and our entire social, political and economic system is what interests me, but that's not on the ballot"* RUSSELL BRAND



## Legal requirements: Federal and by province and territory

Each jurisdiction in Canada has specific requirements for the registering of political parties. Both Nunavut and The North West Territories do not have official political parties.

### CANADA

The *Canada Elections Act* sets out the requirements that must be met to ensure registration of political parties in Canada. Below are a number of extractions from the criteria laid forth by Elections Canada, the entity charged with regulating the election process. Incidentally, federal parties first appeared on the ballot in 1970 and began to be officially registered in 1974. Elections Canada does not concern itself with the formation and the internal structural governance of parties.

The Act uses the following terms:

- *Eligible party*: A party that has applied for registration under the Act, and that has met all of the legal requirements to be registered (including having at least 250 members who are electors), other than running a candidate at a general election or by-election.
- *Registered party*: A party is registered under the Act if it succeeds in endorsing one or more confirmed candidates in a general election or a by-election after it has become eligible for registration.
- *Deregistered party*: A registered party that has been deregistered by the Chief Electoral Officer for failing to endorse a confirmed candidate in at least one electoral district, for failing to have three

*officers in addition to its leader, for failing to have at least 250 members who are electors, or for failing to file documents specified by the Act. A registered party may also be deregistered by the Chief Electoral Officer by the order of a competent court on the application of the Commissioner of Canada Elections, if the party does not meet the Act's definition of a political party. A party may deregister voluntarily.*

So, to extrapolate from the above, new parties require at least three officers in addition to its Leader, 250 members who are electors and contest elections. More specifically, the registration criteria for a successful process are laid out below:

### APPLYING FOR REGISTRATION

A political party that wishes to participate in a federal general election or by-election must apply to register with the Chief Electoral Officer. The application for registration must be signed by the party leader and include:

- the full name of the political party
- either the party's short-form name or the abbreviation of the party's name, if any, which will appear on election documents such as the ballot
- the party's logo, if any
- the name and address of the party's leader, and a copy of the party's resolution to appoint its leader that is certified by the leader and another officer of the party

- the address of the party's office where records are kept and to which communications may be addressed
- the names and addresses of the party's officers and their signed consent to act (minimum of three officers)
- the name and address of the party's auditor and the auditor's signed consent to act as auditor
- the name and address of the party's chief agent and his or her signed consent to act as chief agent
- the names, addresses and signatures of 250 electors and their declarations in the prescribed form that they are members of the party and support the party's application for registration
- the leader's declaration in the prescribed form that having considered all the factors relevant to determining the party's purposes, one of the party's fundamental purposes is to participate in public affairs by endorsing one or more of its members as candidates and supporting their election

It is important to understand that the entire process (including Elections Canada approval) must be completed 60 days prior to the drop of the writ. There are a series of specific guidelines that must be adhered to when it comes to appointing an auditor, chief financial agent, and party membership declarations. It would be the task of the aforementioned steering committee to set in motion processes that would satisfy the requirements for Elections Canada. There are 23 federal parties registered in Canada.

### ALBERTA

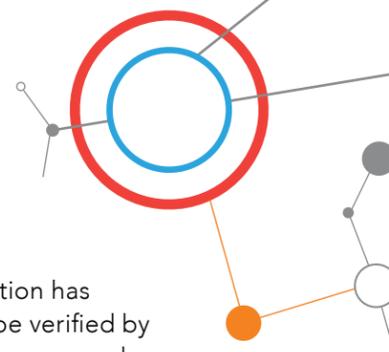
The requirements for registering a political party in Alberta may not be numerous by they are fairly steep. Unlike their federal brethren, Elections Alberta places a premium on petitioning electors at large. Roughly 7900 signatures are required. The other option is to run candidates in half of the province's ridings. Currently, there are 87 electoral districts. The following has been excised from the Elections Alberta regulations governing new party registration:

*If you wish to register a political party, you must first contact the Chief Electoral Officer, in writing, and request that the party name you have selected is held while you meet the requirements identified in the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. The Chief Electoral Officer will contact you, in writing, to confirm approval of the name as long as it is appropriate and not easily confused with an existing party or another party name that is being held pending registration. Along with the approval you will receive an information package and specific instructions to assist you in the registration process.*

The Chief Electoral Officer address is:

Elections Alberta  
Attn: Chief Electoral Officer  
Suite 100, 11510 Kingsway NW  
Edmonton, AB T5G 2Y5

*One of the primary requirements for registration of a political party is completion of a petition in accordance with section 6(2)(d) of the EFCDA. This section requires that the number of names appearing on the petition represent three tenths of one percent of the number of electors eligible to vote at the*



last general election. In that the number of persons eligible to vote at the May 5, 2015 General Election was 2,615,052 electors, three-tenths of one per cent would require a minimum of 7,845 acceptable signatures, in support of a new party registration.

You may also register a political party by endorsing candidates in at least half of the electoral divisions in the province at the next provincial general election.

Further information regarding the rights and responsibilities of registered political parties is contained in the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act which is available from the Queen's Printer Bookstore. The Act will be provided to you by the Chief Electoral Officer if you submit a written request to register a political party.

As is the case with every jurisdiction in Canada, financial disclosure is paramount. Parties, leadership contests, constituency associations, candidates, and third party advertising must be revealed. There are currently 10 officially-registered parties in Alberta.



### BRITISH COLUMBIA

The westernmost province has the loosest regulations pertaining to registering political parties. In fact, there are no thresholds in signatures or numbers of members or petitioning that must be undertaken to overcome on the way to achieving registered party status. There are other requirements, however, and they explained below:

#### Policy

In addition to the solemn declaration of primary purpose, evidence to verify the primary purpose test will be required for registration.

Acceptable evidence could include:

- a published platform, political theme, or message or party constitution that indicates the organization's commitment to field candidates in future provincial elections; or
- if the organization is affiliated with a federal political party that is registered under the Canada Elections Act, a letter of endorsement from the registered federal party, indicating that the provincial party is being established to field candidates in provincial elections.

British Columbia is an exception to the rule when it comes to qualifications needed to attain party registration. The threshold is very low which may explain why there are 25 registered parties in the province, two more than are on the books federally! Once a party is established, they need to conform to an array of filing and financial disclosure requirements.

### MANITOBA

In addition to supplying the Chief Electoral Officer with the names and contact information of the Leader, Financial Officer, President and Chief Auditor, Manitoba has a challenging petition requirement, as delineated below:

Conditions for becoming a registered party include:

- holding four or more seats in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba outside an election period or immediately before an election is announced, or;
- endorsing five or more candidates during a general election, or;
- parties that do not hold seats in the legislature before an election may also apply for registration with a petition (Form 906B) signed by at least 2,500 people who were eligible voters in the most recent general election (a petition cannot be submitted or approved after an election call).

Applications for registration are made to Elections Manitoba and should include the following information

- Party Name
- name or abbreviation to be used on the ballot
- Party Contacts
  - The names and contact information of the party's leader, financial officer and president.
  - The name and contact information for the party's auditor and the auditor's signed consent to act in that capacity.
- An audited financial statement, including a statement of assets and liabilities, of the political party as of a date no more than 60 days before the date of the application for registration.

If a Petition for Registration has been submitted, it will be verified by contacting some of the persons who signed the petition to ensure that they are eligible voters and that they did sign the petition. The Chief Electoral Officer publishes the notice of registration of a political party in the Manitoba Gazette. The detailed process for registering a political party with the Chief Electoral Officer is found in sections 4-16 of The Election Financing Act.

Petitioning is once again the chief barrier on the road to official party registration in Manitoba. With a 2500-strong verifiable signature requirement, it is obvious a considerable amount of effort would have to be expended to achieve official party status. There are currently only six official parties in Manitoba.

### NEW BRUNSWICK

This province's methods for registering new political parties does not hinge on a petition-style approval from voters nor a pre-arranged amount of members. Rather, the main requirement is the establishment of 10 district associations.

#### Prerequisites to Register a New Party

Under paragraph 131 (d) of the Elections Act, to register a new political party, the following requirements must first be met:

- The new party must have district associations in at least ten electoral districts;
- The new party must undertake to present official candidates in at least ten electoral districts at the next general election; and
- The new party must have its leader be elected by a convention.

Each of the requirements has precise stipulations that must be adhered to, although the definition of convention is left up to the parties to determine. In addition to the above, the Leader of the party must submit an affidavit that asserts the amounts of assets held by the party at the time of its registration. There are five officially registered political parties in New Brunswick.

*“The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift.” ALBERT EINSTEIN*

#### NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Strangely enough, Elections Newfoundland and Labrador does not publish the criteria needed for commencing new parties on their public website. There are currently three officially registered parties in the province.

#### NOVA SCOTIA

The pathway to gaining registered party status in this jurisdiction is straight-forward: in addition to copious amounts of forms, all parties must have a Leader and Official Agent in place. Additionally, the aspiring political party must gather the signatures of 25 electors in 10 electoral districts. The registration of new parties is covered under Section 180 of the Elections Act, which is available below:

##### REGISTRATION OF A POLITICAL PARTY

###### *Application for registration 180*

1. In this Section and Section 181, “political party” means a group of individuals that has

as its primary purpose the fielding of candidates for election as members of the House of Assembly.

2. An application for registration of a political party must be in the prescribed form and include

- a. the proposed registered name of the political party;
- b. subject to clause 88(2)(b), the name of the political party, or abbreviation of the name, if any, that is to be used as the name of the political party on a ballot;
- c. the abbreviation of the political party name to be used in official publications of Elections Nova Scotia, if different from the name referred to in clause (b);
- d. the political party logo, if any;
- e. the name, residential address and telephone number of the leader and two principal officers of the political party and the 2011, c. 5 elections 103 MAY 10, 2013 address to which communications intended for the political party may be addressed;
- f. the name, residential address, and telephone number of the political party’s official agents;
- g. the address where the books, records and accounts, including those pertaining to contributions and expenditures by the political party, are maintained;
- h. the name, address and telephone number of the political party’s auditor;
- i. the financial institution and account number of all accounts held by the political party and the identification of accounts into which all money is to be deposited;
- j. a written statement that the political party’s primary purpose is to field candidates for election as members of the House of Assembly; and

k. any other information of an administrative nature required by the Chief Electoral Officer.

3. The application in subsection (2) must include an audited financial statement of the political party as of a date not more than sixty days before the date of the application for registration.

4. An application for registration pursuant to this Section must be accompanied by a complete and accurate petition in the prescribed form, signed by no fewer than twenty-five electors in each of ten different electoral districts, requesting registration of the political party.

5. An application for registration pursuant to this Section must be signed by the leader of the political party.

6. Where the Chief Electoral Officer requires further information to clarify or verify any information contained in the application for registration, audited financial statement or petition for registration of a political party, the political party shall file such further information with the Chief Electoral Officer.

There are currently four officially registered parties in Nova Scotia but an effort is underway to register a fifth, entitled The Atlantica Party.

#### ONTARIO

Canada’s most populous province is currently in the middle of alterations to its election finance regime for political parties. The chief threshold to attain party status during the non-election period is via petition. Given the population base, the 1000 signature requirement is a relatively light task. The Election Ontario criteria are given in more detail below:

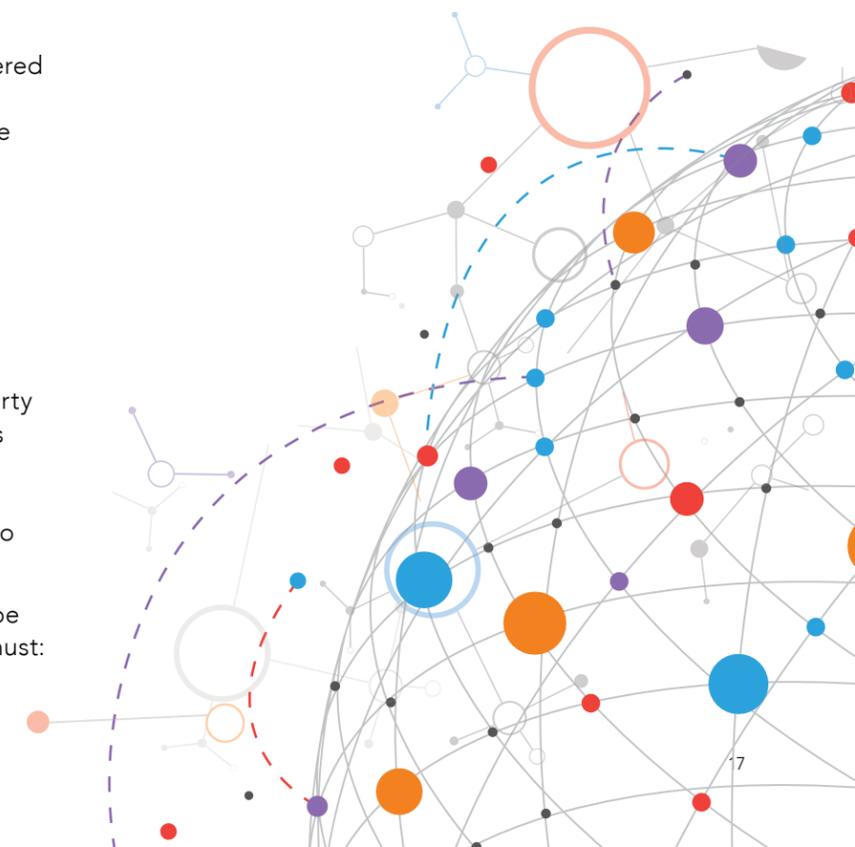
- Before a political party can apply to be registered with Elections Ontario it must:

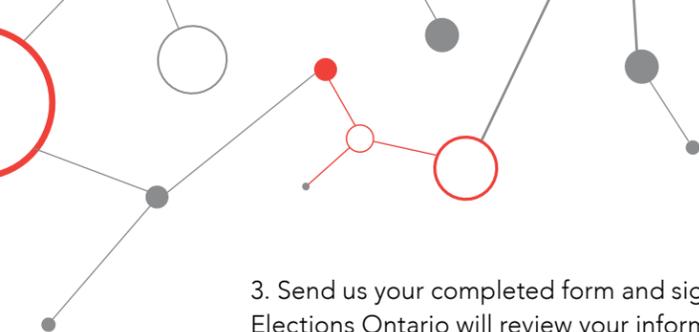
- reserve the party name with Elections Ontario
- appoint a chief financial officer (CFO) appoint an auditor

After you have reserved your party name, you can follow the steps here to register your party outside of a campaign period:

1. Complete Form P-4: Petition to Register a Political Party.
2. Collect a minimum of 1,000 signatures from electors and include the signatures with your registration.

- These signatures must be collected within the one-year period during which the party name has been reserved.
- At the end of that year, the signatures cannot be used with your registration.





3. Send us your completed form and signatures. Elections Ontario will review your information and contact a random sample of people who have signed your form for verification.

- To allow for the assessment, all forms and signatures must be submitted a minimum of two months before a political campaign.

Ontario's regime for the registration encourages meticulous attention to the requisite paperwork but from an organizing standpoint, the attainment of 1000 signatures should not be foreboding. Currently, the province has 18 parties that are officially registered.

## QUEBEC

This province most closely mirrors that of the federal regime for registering political parties inasmuch as a number of confirmed party members are the main requisite for party registration. The official number of members needed is 100.

### Two-month waiting period

*We would like to draw your attention to the fact that it takes about two months for an application for authorization to be processed. The authorization can be issued when 100 electors have confirmed to us that they are members of the party.*

*Quebec currently has 17 officially registered parties. Interestingly, there are also nine parties in the formation stage as their names have been formally reserved with Elections Quebec.*

## SASKATCHEWAN

The province to our immediate east has a fairly difficult threshold for party registration. Elections Saskatchewan requires groups seeking to form parties gather no less than 2500 signatures in a province that does not have a large population base. Furthermore, at least 1000 of the signatures must be derived from 10 different constituencies with 100 signatures compiled each in those of those districts.

## How do I register a political party?

*You need the signatures of 2,500 voters, 1,000 of whom must reside in at least 10 different constituencies (minimum of 100 electors in each)*

*Once registered under the Act, a political party is entitled to incur expenses, solicit and receive contributions, participate in the Province's political contributions tax credit regime, and to field candidates for election to the Legislative Assembly.*

*Registered political parties in an election/by-election year are also entitled, where eligible, to receive reimbursement of a portion of lawfully incurred election expenses.*

The effort expended to gain official party status in Saskatchewan would be considerable. There are currently six registered parties existent in the province.

## YUKON

Given its relative sparse and spread-out population, this territory may be the most difficult of Canada's jurisdictions at starting a new political party. Elections Yukon requires that 100 party members (who are also electors) be verified before registration can proceed.

## How can I register a political party?

*You should contact Elections Yukon and ask for forms and information you need to register the party. A registration also needs the signatures of at least 100 party members who are qualified to vote in an election.*

Logistically, gaining registration in the Yukon would be quite difficult to pull off. Nonetheless, five parties are officially registered and eligible to contest elections at present.

## Party Name

The best course of action when naming a political party is to embody simplicity itself. A short, easily understandable name that can not be misinterpreted (or worse, readily mocked!) is desirable.

Something like The Proxy Party would cut to the chase and indicate to people what the main intent of the entity is. What one does not wish to do is emulate the unfortunate Canadian Reform Alliance Party (CRAP), one of the forerunners to today's federal Conservative Party.

### SUGGESTED PROCESS

The steering committee canvasses interested people to submit their ideas for a name of the yet to be named party. Those on the committee vote via the method of ranked choice balloting and that is the name that the party is henceforth known as.

## Party Logo

Initially, one of the first impressions formed of the new party will be the party logo. Once again, simplicity is more meritorious than extravagance when it comes to visual images. Paramount is the consideration that the logo will be reproduced on a plethora of materials and media including, but not limited to lawn signs, literature, the party's website, etc. etc.

### SUGGESTED PROCESS

That the steering committee charged with guiding the party's initial existence through to its founding convention canvass party members and interested persons to submit designs (via graphic electronic files) for consideration and voting at the party's initial convention. In the event that there are numerous submissions the steering committee should narrow the field down to eight choices that the party membership decides on.

## Party Website

Political party websites should be functional and visually appealing. Also, given the Proxy Party's emphasis of heightened participation, one could posit that it should be highly interactive. In addition to those features, the website should also be one of the means of disseminating information (media releases, policy statements, policy resolutions, party leadership, riding associations, etc).

### SUGGESTED PROCESS

The steering committee should initiate a temporary website that encapsulates the needs of the party in its pre-registration stage. Once formal registration is achieved, the functioning executive, staff and or leadership of the party can determine the website format and design best reflecting the needs of the then nascent party.

## Steering Committee

Broadly put, the steering committee needs to be fairly small (consisting of 3-5-7 people) who will guide the party to its founding convention.

In addition to the mentions above pertaining to name, logo, and website, the committee shall plan and carry out components of the registration drive, set in motion processes that produce formal political leadership of the party, a party constitution and an executive. Additionally, the steering committee will decide on matters of communication, both internally and external, in the pre-registration period.

The committee will meet regularly and devise plans for the afore-mentioned objectives. These plans will include timelines whereby actions must be carried out in a timely way.

The steering committee will dissolve the moment the gavel goes down to signify the opening of the founding convention.

## Party Constitution

Political parties are not legal entities in that there are literally no rules that can be imposed that govern the internal workings of parties. Where formal legalities enter the scene are when entities such as Elections Canada and Elections Alberta regulate the conduct of parties' actions vis-à-vis filing of financial records, limits to fundraising, and increasingly, financial transactions concerning leadership races.

When it comes to the party's constitution, these entities take an arms length approach. An examination of political party constitutions in Canada indicates that there are diverse array of subjects that are covered. As a rule, party constitutions should stick to setting forth the terms of engagement which members, party officers, and leadership adhere to. Policies and by-laws have no place in party constitutions because they are geared to encompass more day-to-day eventualities.

### SUGGESTED PROCESS:

The Steering Committee should pick a sub-committee whose sole purpose is to survey and examine political party constitution, pulling aspects that best reflect the values and desired practices of a party that values participatory democracy, social capital, and enlightened political leadership. This sub-committee would have the task of putting a proposed constitution before the membership of the founding convention with the members free to suggest amendments before determining the overall fate of the proposed party constitution. The sub-committee will report to the steering committee on their progress at regular intervals.

## Leadership Structure

There are many ways that political leadership can take shape within an institution such as a political party. For instance, some Green parties around the globe stipulate that party leadership reflect their penchant and desire for equality and social justice by dividing leadership along gender lines. To wit: they have a male Co-Leader and a Female Co-Leader.

Some political parties that have not experienced electoral success have a designation of Deputy Leader who can share the responsibility with the Leader for promoting the party far and wide. Beyond defining the responsibilities of leader, there is the manner in which they are selected. Should it be open to the entire party membership? Should it be delegates who decide (which would be a throw back to the 1990's and before in the Canadian context)?

### SUGGESTED PROCESS:

The first step in the process could encompass a brain-storming session with the involvement of interested persons. These sessions may be a day-long affair. One session for the terms of reference for leadership; one to delineate the number and structure of party leadership; and a last session dedicated to the manner of the leadership's election. Such a format would permit for the voicing of possible innovative leadership concepts to be manifest in the party's leadership processes.

The best ideas from the brain-storming sessions would be carried forward to the steering committee where a leadership contest with terms and timelines would be settled upon.

## Party Executive

Political parties largely benefit by having elected officers oversee the administration of their organizations. While encouraged not to micro-manage they do provide needed oversight and are accountable to the membership of a party.

### SUGGESTED PROCESS:

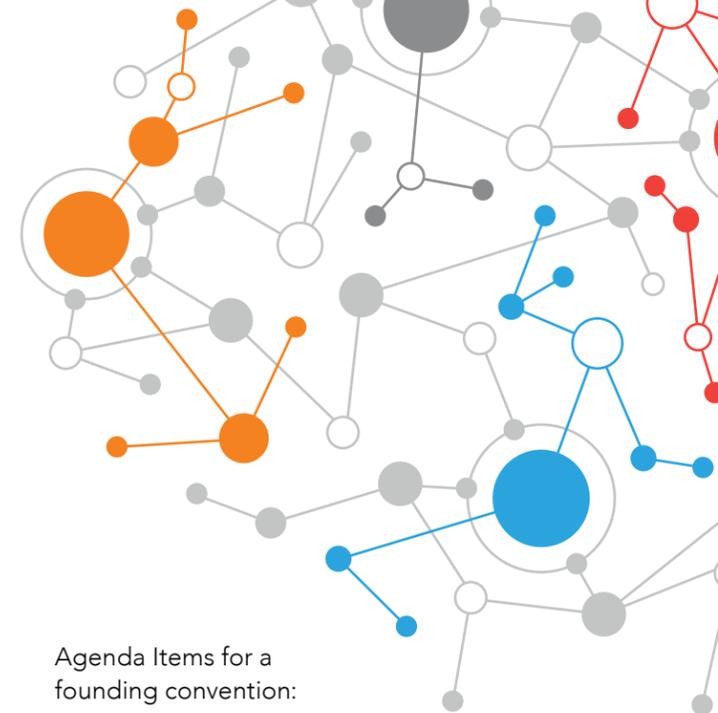
The steering committee investigates what governance structure would work best for the Proxy Party given its values and aspirations. Is there a way in which delegative democracy can be brought about in the internal governance of the party, serving as a model for how other organizations (partisan political and otherwise) could conduct themselves?

I would suggest that the steering committee design the structure of the executive with a view to incorporating the party ideals into its essence. This sounds open-ended and it is intended to be so.

## Founding Convention

Conventions are opportunities for the membership of political parties to assert itself in the form of decision-making. Whereas officers and party leadership tend to carry out the day-to-day administrative and public aspects of the party, conventions are a time for members to use their power. In the Proxy Party, our members would have a more on-going role to play in terms of their relationship to political institutions, but it is at convention that their maximum effect can be realized.

If the above is true in general, it is most certainly true at a founding convention.



Agenda Items for a founding convention:

- Party constitution;
- Leadership election;
- Executive election;
- Party logo selection;
- Keynote speaker;
- Initial policy plenary;
- Initial by-law plenary.

The entity charged with determining the timing of the founding convention is the steering committee. It may be advisable to strike a sub-committee charged with the responsibility of organizing and promoting the founding convention. The timing of the convention would have to take into account the progress and speed at which party registration is unfolding.

Also, it may be necessary for the steering committee to appoint an Interim Leader as part of the registration process with that person voluntarily stepping down at the opening of the founding convention.

Ideally, the founding convention would constitute the party's official entry into the world of electoral politics and core organizational competencies could be demonstrated at that time that would set the tone for its nascent stage.

## Election Planning

The incoming leadership and executive, and possibly staff would have to come to some understanding as to what the initial electoral objectives would be for the party. My suggestion would be to strike an election preparedness committee that reports back to the leadership of the party.

In addition to the Election Preparedness Committee, local riding associations (EDAs, known as Electoral District Associations federally and CAs, known as Constituency Associations federally), would also be orienting themselves to the task of readying the party for its initial general election. There would also have to be decisions made as to whether or not to contest by-elections that would most certainly arise in the intervening time period.

## Communications

The steering committee would be charged with the responsibility of party communications until the founding convention convenes. Then it becomes the responsibility of the executive and party leadership.

### SUGGESTION PROCESS

An interim communications strategy should be conceived and executed at a brainstorming session with two or three key questions driving the discussion. From that event would flow a concise communications strategy aimed at giving the pre-party presence in the mainstream media, social media and the pre-party's own internal mediums (website, newsletter, emails, etc.).

## Budget Considerations

Before the party comes into being, it will be necessary for the steering committee to embark upon activities that need supporting through professional services, materials, and travel. The totals allocated below are intended to be projections and would fluctuate in accordance with the expansion or shrinking of timelines.

### BASED ON A 6 MONTH TIME FRAME

**Professional services** Defined as someone who is hired to coordinate the registration process including the signing up of new members as per Elections Canada's requirement, offer professional communications services, and other responsibilities as deemed applicable.

\$24,000.00

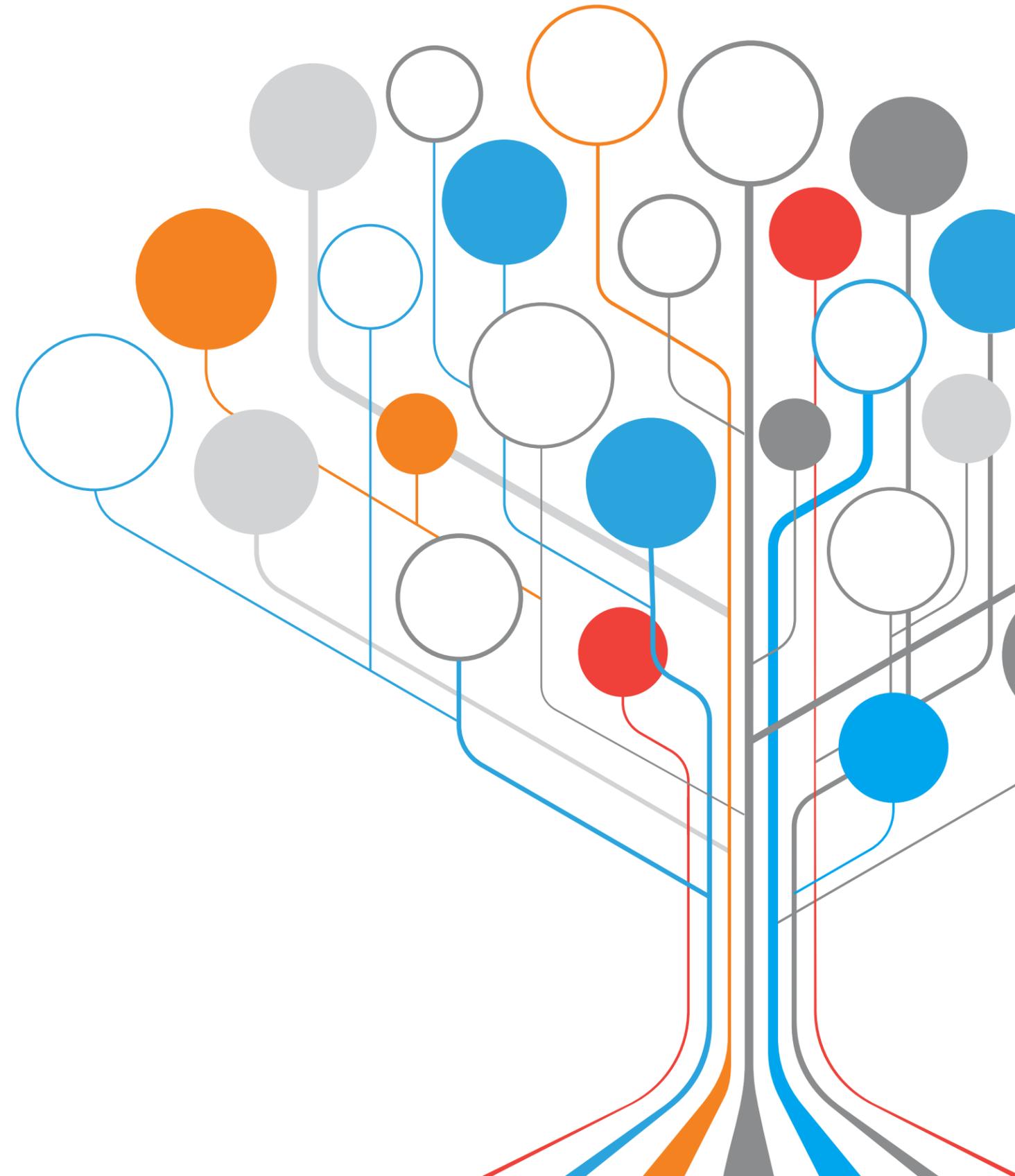
**Materials** Includes the establishment of a physical mailing address/office, dedicated phone line, bare bones website, and promotional materials, media contact lists, etc.

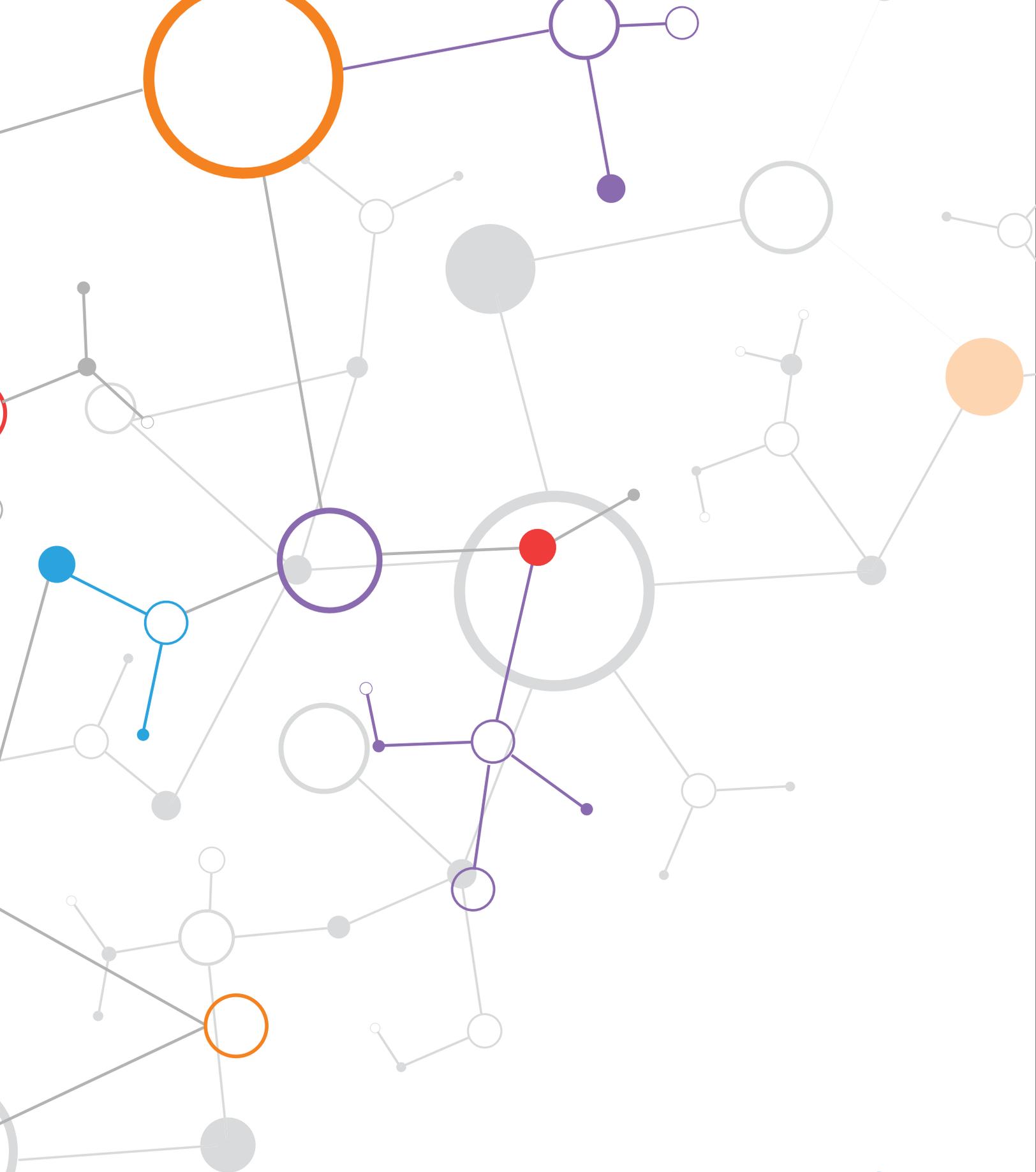
\$10,000.00

**Travel costs** In the event that members of the steering committee need to travel to address applicable conferences or events. Also to be considered if the steering committee deems a press conference needed in Ottawa or covering the need for face-to-face interactions with Elections Canada officials or organizers of the party's founding convention.

\$5,000.00

**TOTAL PROJECTED COST: \$39,000**





what if?