

RULES FOR GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING DURING PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTIONS IN ALBERTA



WHAT IS 'GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING'?

- In very broad terms, advertising is the process of drawing attention to an event, product, service or idea in a public medium
- Government advertising usually consists of informational and educational messages about government programs and policies that are paid for with taxpayer funds

WHEN DO THE RESTRICTIONS ON GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING OCCUR?

- Legal restrictions on government advertising are effective during the 28-day 'election period'
- The election period starts when the writs of election are officially issued and ends on Election Day



WHY IS GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING RESTRICTED DURING AN ELECTION?

- Government advertising can be considered political when it promotes the governing party or criticizes opposing parties, either directly or indirectly
- Government advertising during elections should not contain messages crediting the government for its achievements – when it is permitted it should provide useful information without promoting the government party
- Political parties, candidates and third party election advertisers are all required to adhere to strict spending limits during provincial elections
- Electoral fairness requires that public money not be spent on government advertising that provides the governing party with a partisan advantage during an election



ENFORCEMENT OF THE RESTRICTION RULES

- The Election Commissioner can require a department or provincial corporation to immediately remove or discontinue an advertisement or publication if it contravenes election period restrictions
- The Election Commissioner can also publish the particulars of each violation on the Commission's website
- The Election Commissioner will include a description of each government advertising violation in an annual report following the election



RESTRICTIONS & EXCEPTIONS

- During an election period, government departments and provincial corporations are not permitted to advertise or publish information about their program and activities, except when it is:
 - 1 – required by law
 - 2 – required to obtain timely contract tenders or employment applications
 - 3 – required because it relates to important matters of public health or public safety
 - 4 – a continuation of earlier publications or advertisements and is required for ongoing programs



WHO HAS RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT ELECTION PERIOD GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING RESTRICTIONS ARE BEING ADHERED TO?

- Each department of the government, and each provincial corporation, has an administrative head (e.g. deputy minister) who is responsible to ensure that election period advertising restrictions are followed
- Coordinating efforts across government in such matters are usually provided by the executive council office
- Any person who believes government advertising restriction rules are being violated may file a complaint with the Election Commissioner at: www.albertaelectioncommissioner.ca

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

See Sections 134.1 and 134.2 of the *Election Act*, which is available online at: www.elections.ab.ca