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RCMP says its hands are tied over allegations of election lawbreaking

Complaint about municipal campaign donations was filed too late, police say

The RCMP said Monday it cannot investigate whether Summerland mayor and city councillors breached the Local Government Act during the 2008 election.

In a statement released Monday, Cpl. Dan Moskaluk said a complaint in the case was filed too late, meaning police lack the authority to investigate.

"The statute of limitation on matters of this nature is a period of six months from the time of the occurrence of the alleged offence," said Moskaluk.

Moskaluk added that while police cannot pursue the matter any further, he said investigators still addressed the issue in a "thorough and properly documented manner."

In December 2009, a group of citizens filed a complaint alleging Summerland's mayor and city councillors had accepted anonymous donations of newspaper advertising, pamphlets and cards during the 2008 election.

Under the Local Government Act, it is illegal to both give and receive anonymous contributions valued at more than \$50.

The penalty for candidates who are found to have breached the act is disqualification from holding office and from running again until after the next general election. The penalty for donors is disqualification from participating until after the next general election.

The complaint comes as a group is meeting to make recommendations on potential changes to the Local Government Act.

Led jointly by Minister of Community and Rural Development Bill Bennett and Harry Nyce, president of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, the task force will make recommendations to the province no later than May 30.

The province has said it hopes to introduce legislation to change the act in time for the 2011 local government elections.

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