Politics in British Columbia

What do we want ?

What do we want?

- *What do we have now?*

- 1   Adversarial politics
- 2   Government dominance
- 3   Geographic representation
- 4   Votes ≠ Seats
- 5   Simple choices

1 *Adversarial politics*

- Government vs. Opposition
- Voters decide
- Clear accountability
- Winning majorities vs. creating consensus
- Assumes 2-sided world

- An Alternative ?   *Consensual Politics*

Consensual Politics

- Multiple participants

- Representing views not winning contests

- Elections indicate preferences not make choices

- Accountability blurred in coalitions

No political system is likely to be completely adversarial or consensual – it will have some features of each.

Different electoral systems will push our politics in one direction or the other. Which do we prefer?

2   *Government dominance*

- Parliamentary theory turned upside down

- Party discipline means cabinet decides

- Opposition ignored

- The "friendly dictatorship"

- An Alternative   *Legislative Authority*

Restored Legislative Authority

- Weaken basis for cabinet control
  - *party majorities*
  - *strong party discipline*

- Legislature, not election chooses government

- Party bargaining becomes major dynamic of system

Majority governments and their easy control over the legislature are one of the products of our electoral system.

Do we want to try and change this?

What would be the consequence for our politics?

3   Geographic Representation

- Citizens have specific representatives
- Communities have advocates
- Ties politicians to voters

  BUT

- MLAs vote party line not constituents' views

- *Is there an alternative basis for choosing MLAs?*

Electoral systems that do not rely on local representatives allow other criteria to come forward.

Would that be a good thing?

Would voters lose anything of importance if they did not have a single, identifiable local representative in the legislature?

4   Votes ≠ Seats

- No systematic relationship

- Winners can be losers & *vice versa*

- Exaggerated majorities; weakened oppositions

- Small parties shut out

+	-
■ Encourages clear 2 party competition	■ *Unfair to unrepresented voters and parties*
■ Keeps nuisance groups out	■ *Legislature doesn't encompass all views in province*
■ Focuses elections on choice of government	■ *Weakens government accountability to legislature*

A Proportional Alternative

- Vote shares to determine seat shares

Proportional Representation

- Requires abandoning exclusive use of single-member constituencies

- Elections centred on political parties, not individual representatives

Do we want a system of elections that will produce a legislature mirroring voters' opinions, or do we want one to choose a majority government?

Would a more proportional system be better?   Why?
How proportional might it be?

5 *Simple choices*

- The current system allows only a choice among a small number of names

- Is that good enough?   Do we need more choice?
  - *among candidates and parties*
  - *among candidates of same party*
  - *to indicate preference ranking*

- Is this an issue?

What do we want?

- **Is our adversarial politics good ?**

- **Should MLAs have more influence over the government ?**

- **Do we really need local representatives ?**

- **Is the vote-seat imbalance a real problem ?**

- **Do voters get to make the kinds of choices they want ?**