

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Dear Representatives,

I would be grateful if you would consider the needs of British Columbians, rather than those of political parties when deliberating the future of our legislature. The last thing we need is more politicians representing their parties. Yet that's what we'll have if a system of proportional representation is implemented. I would like my MLA to represent *me*.

What we need is accountability of lawmakers to their constituents. Most of us recognize that the present system of "first past the post" is the worst possible scenario. I think we can make it better if we consider the following:

1. Voters should be able to cast their ballots as a two step process. If the first choice listed is running third, the vote would be cast for the voter's second choice. In this way, we can minimize vote splitting among two left or right leaning parties. The Conservative Party of Canada held its leadership race using this type of ballot.
2. Political parties would not be allowed to run candidates. They would become organizations for the formation of policy alternatives.
3. Party discipline should be abolished. MLAs must be accountable only to their constituents.
4. The premier should be selected not by a political party but by a vote of all MLAs. He or she would have to be reconfirmed at mid term. The same would hold true for the cabinet ministers. Hopefully this would promote government by consultation, instead of our present system of popularly elected dictatorships.
5. MLAs would be elected in stages, with half the house being elected two years after the first half. This would be a moderating influence on an unpopular government. Implementing this for the first time could be done by having half the MLAs elected for a two year term only.

I doubt that there is a government anywhere in the world that is run according to those five principles. It would be sure to be a messy system, and would probably be inefficient. It would also be more representative of the views of our citizens than the present system.

I'd also like to make the point that you get what you pay for. Our present system of paying MLAs by forcing them to vote for their own pay raises is obsolete. This should be replaced by a tribunal that would be convened every three years to review the compensation of elected officials.

Thank you for your attention. Please make sure that our elected officials are accountable only to the individual citizens of the province, not to their parties.

Sincerely,

Jon Slater MD FRCPC AGDM
May 6, 2004