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BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Dear Assembly members,

I am asking you to consider a few points while you decide whether to recommend a new electoral system in BC and, if so, what type it ought to be. First, though, I want to say that I am pleased and amazed that our present government would create such an assembly and raise the question in the first place. Second, I also think that the chances of exceeding the threshold of agreement throughout the province is slim enough that the present government can be reasonably confident that nothing will change, should you recommend change. Third, I just want to indicate that I have a small amount of knowledge on the topic: I have a BA in Political Science (1999 at UVic); I was a volunteer signature-gatherer for Adriane Carr's initiative to establish a PR electoral system in BC; and I helped develop the Proportional Representation plank of the Green Party of Canada's 2004 election platform.

The points that I am asking you to consider are these:

I advocate a **Mixed Proportional Representation** (MPR) electoral system comprising an Alternative Vote System and Proportional Representation with open party lists. Why?

1. Because candidates with the highest aggregate vote wins, **every vote counts**. This would not be the case if particular candidates were elected by the first-past-the-post (FPP) method, for the constituency portion of the MPR ballot. Ranked votes ensure that every vote counts.
2. The desire for constituency representation is still met.
3. Open party lists, in addition to their being subject to public scrutiny, facilitate **transparency** of the electoral process.
4. The criticism that two kinds of MPs are created is an error. It is *better* to have two kinds of MPs. In a country as large and multicultural as Canada and in an increasingly globalized world, MPs are needed who can be more focussed on overarching issues such as climate change, global environment and ecology, foreign affairs, trade, and defense.
5. The criticism that having minority and/or coalition governments is less desirable because they are unstable is also an error. It is true that minority

and/or coalition governments are inherently less stable than majority governments. However, stable governments indicate the dominance of one set of values and practices over all other sets of values and practices. Stability denotes oppression. Instability, on the other hand, reflects the continuously changing and overlapping views and information and beliefs that exist in society. Instability denotes a live, dynamic process, however unpleasant that might sometimes be.

6. By way of an example of the unfairness of FPP and the fairness of a PR system, here are some figures comparing the application of the two systems as applied to the June 28 federal election:

party	seats won	% of vote	(not shown in the paper) % of seats	(approx.)* seats won if under a PR system
Liberals	135	36.8	43.8	113
Conservatives	99	29.5	32.1	91
Bloc Quebecois	54	12.5	17.5	39
New Democrats	19	15.6	6.2	48
Greens	0	4.3	0	13
Independents	1	.4	.3	1

*Figures don't add to 308 due to rounding and possible inaccuracy of Times-Colonist's figures (due to election returns not completed at press time), but the point is made.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Reed