

Study examines dark side of Canadian elections

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FAIR VOTE CANADA

Fair Vote Canada today released a study of federal elections from 1980 to 2000, documenting how Canada has become a "dubious democracy".

"The data in this report puts a spotlight on the dirty little secrets of Canada's electoral system," said Fair Vote Canada executive director and report author Larry Gordon. "What we say at the ballot box is not what we get. What we think and where we live determines whether our votes count. With a system like that, it's not surprising 40% of us are not voting - it's surprising that 60% still are."

The 15-page Dubious Democracy Report [available on request] provides data and commentary on wasted votes (nationally, and by province, riding and party), distorted outcomes (nationally and by province), phony majority governments, poor representation for women, and declining voter turnout. The report also includes a Letterman-style top-ten list of low points in Canadian elections. Among the findings:

Canadian election results are among the most distorted in established democracies (ranking 35th out of 37).

On average, six million Canadians cast wasted votes in federal elections.

Over the past two decades, Tory voters were treated more unfairly by the voting system than supporters of any other party.

In federal elections, PEI, Alberta and Ontario have had the most distorted results.

In 1997, our voting system produced a "majority government" that received less than 38.5% of the popular vote.

Canada ranks 109 among nations in voter turnout - slightly behind Lebanon, in a dead heat with Benin and just ahead of Fiji.

In 1984, 37% of eligible voters voted for the winning party and 25% didn't vote.

In 2000, it was the reverse: 25% voted for the winning party and 39% didn't vote.

"Is it time to adopt a fair voting system based on proportional representation like most other major democracies?" Asked Gordon. "The data speaks for itself."