

REVIEW OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM, PROPOSED CHANGES/IMPROVEMENTS

This submission is respectfully forwarded for inclusion during your deliberation phase. It is my hope that some ideas will merit your consideration and perhaps be of value to incorporate or influence the difficult thoughtful choices you face.

The ideas and recommendations you have received during this process will allow for a variety of approaches to the serious and enormous task of running the affairs of our beloved province to the long-term benefit of its people and its blessed and beautiful environment. The present government is to be complimented for throwing open the doors and windows to clean house and rearrange the furniture making the residents more welcome, more comfortable, more in control, safer, and more at home.

Openness to change and improvements while preserving the best of our foundations, our heritage, our tried and true traditions along with our present proved and approved procedures/practices augurs well for a bright future.

***** RIDINGS *****

Decide on a combination of geographical size and population.

Develop a formula by consensus?

(You probably already have had lots of suggestions about this.)

Consult local jurisdictions as to their preference to vote for a single, two, or several representatives.

One size does not fit all.

***** ELECTIONS *****

For maximum flexibility and freedom of choice, DO NOT impose fixed elections or term limits.

Any party who wins can promise fixed elections and term limits and get elected on that basis but the public should not be automatically deprived of the services and expertise valuable provincial govt representative. Let the people decide.

With our system now, there's nothing stopping a govt from having fixed elections -- as you know, our present govt has chosen to have a fixed election date. That's fine, but don't make it mandatory. Same for length of service.

***** VOTING/RESULTS *****

THE BALLOT

Add two boxes/choices at the bottom:

1

none of the above

(someone who chooses not to vote has chosen 'any of the above')

Most people do not get involved in selection of the candidate for the party and are often faced with not wanting to put their trust in any of the candidates even if they have a party preference.

2

write in

This gives maximum freedom for a voter to record his choice.

3

Mark ballot 1, 2, 3 -- it's as easy as 1, 2, 3! -- in preferential order.

4

Count the No 1 choices.

If not over 50%, count the No 2 choices,

If adding the 1s and the 2s is not over 50%, then add the 3s.

In the very unlikely event that there is still not a candidate with over 50%, then ridings (prior to the vote of course) should decide whether they wish to hold another election with all candidates or maybe with only the top two or three.

The intent is not to be prescriptive but to give local voters a choice in how to break an uncertain result.

With ridings choosing various solutions, the advantages and disadvantages will become evident for local people to evaluate -- and maybe even change or amend its system.

Please note that I am opposed to proportional representation by party and would advocate thorough analysis of 'slates' provided by parties. As you see above, I also do not agree with 'First Past the Post'. In the first case, from my observation, it often results in instability and through coalitions governs sometimes bringing in radical policies advocated by a small group (but the one needed for a majority) that are not shared by the general population. Examples are Italy and Israel. The tail often wags the dog.

One of the benefits of FPTP is touted as diminishing the power of the extreme because it usually results in larger groupings or political parties. Disadvantages include the tendency to be winnowed to only two choices (cf USA) often not saying anything much different or anything that might offend anyone, and to have a governing party when it only received one third of the votes -- ie twice as many voted against the party than for it but its (unpopular/unsupported) platform will be govt policy. Think of Nader resulting in Bush's election when most preferred another candidate.

The 1-2-3 is closer to consensus and more widespread acceptance.

And no, do not give inordinate power to those who voted for the least supported candidate.

Make sure the one elected gets over 50%, the top preferences.

***** REPRESENTATION *****

As an example for simplicity's sake, let's choose 100.

And have two bodies.

Give geographical ridings 80 seats (it might be advisable for large ridings to be multi-member) which would form the Legislature (MLAs elected as above)
and

have another body of 20 of sober second thought and a spectrum of attitudes/backgrounds to provide further input before being returned to the Legislature for final approval.

Perhaps it would not be returned until two-thirds agreement in upper chamber for version with or without amendments.

Or maybe returned with requirement for Legislature to reply as to how the various issues will be dealt with and an impact report.

The aspects, ramifications, implications, and so on from this small but diverse body ought to be well covered by the media -- the public's reaction will be a gauge for the legislators to consider.

Senate? House of Law(d)s? Second Assembly? Upper Chamber?

Haven't come up with a name for those selected. How about: (Provincial) Senators, (Govt) Counsellors, Bicameral Councillors, Provincial Members, (Upper) Chamberlains,

COMPOSITION of Second Chamber

Representatives appointed, elected, or chosen by the interest or special groups themselves, ie not general election and not under party politics.

Each would report how it would affect their group, that part of the society.

No one ignored or disregarded, suffering because of thoughtless or insensitive measures making things more difficult and not as successful or with the consequences hoped for.

The intent is to make legislation comprehensive.

Perhaps one (or two, depending on categories and if split changed to 75/25) each, not in priority order, from:

- = youth
- = families
- = seniors
- = sports
- = arts

- = small business
- = employees
- = immigrants
- = transportation
- = environment

- = education (curriculum and institutions); language and life-time learning
- = health (promotion of)
- = sustainability (of resources)
- = economic viability
- = international trade

- = urban needs
- = agricultural matters
- = municipal issues
- = investment
- = cultural identity, expression, development

- = (citizens') rights
- = (citizens') responsibilities (never the first without this, the second, and other side of the coin)
- = volunteerism
- = spirituality
- = Amerindian/Aboriginal Nations

Report from each on proposed legislation; repercussions and effect.

maybe also:

govt accountability studies/reports/examinations:

- planning (maybe not the seven generations of some Amerindian tribes, look at likely effect in five, ten, 15, 20, 200 years)
- effectiveness of programs
- timeliness of programs
- estimate of completion
- evaluation of major projects
- budget targets (success, failure)
- fairness/objectivity
- 'Devil's Advocate' -- designated but others can play the role, someone who can throw out as many problems as possible the legislators are forced to address before finalizing the legislation.
- quality of daily life
- professional bodies
- provision for the disabled

*** REFERENDA ***

Another nut much harder to crack is the fact that no one agrees entirely with any party. Provisions must be made for holding a referendum on an issue that crosses party lines. Of course this means a committee (or Citizens' Assembly :-)) ought to devise a basis for topics that would qualify for a referendum to be held.

And then a percentage of voters requesting one.

This cuts the Gordian knot of demanding total commitment to concrete policies.

Not all changes need be made at once. Indeed, few societies can accommodate sudden great change. Government ought to grow and adapt, responding to the people's needs,

hopes, fulfilment, and aspirations. This has to be based on commitment to the universal qualities of honesty, decency, work, self-reliance, mutual respect and consideration, justice/fairness, and all this ideally topped with kindness to others.

No one can legislate love.

Your Citizens' Assembly possibly already has a general feeling as to what changes it will propose. **The main change I would urge at this initial stage to respond to voters' desires, is the ballot -- 1, 2, 3, plus none-of-the-above and write-in.** This would represent a major step forward toward better representation.

As to my background, I did take Political Science with Pauline Jewett at Carleton University (third year on a NFCUS scholarship but graduated from UBC and also had courses/exchange at the University of Moncton and Keio University in Japan). Canada was to have the best of the UK's unitary govt and the USA's federal system. Some of the principles may have started out working as intended but others have been perverted by interpretations and unexpected manipulation/conduct by politicians (most of whom would prefer to rule as a dictator) and the bureaucracy, as well as egotism, greed, and selfishness of both representatives and the populace.

During my travels and work abroad I have visited over 100 countries over about 20 years living outside Canada (but born in Vancouver, as was my father). No country or system has the magic recipe. What we can expect and work toward is continual improvement. That alone is a laudable achievement. The (govtal) system(s) should be reviewed every five to ten years for evaluation as well as with the intent to allow a mechanism for new functionality or methods to address the rapid fluid unpredictable developments/pace of life in the 21st century oiled by information technology.

Back in Canada, I've taught at a college, run a consulting business and a software company. I have been very active in my community not just as a member but also serving and having served on the executive of many groups for the past 15 years, among them: ratepayer/resident, streamkeepers, marketing professional services, heritage/historical organizations, monarchist league, WV Municipal Council (elected), Lighthouse Park Preservation, and others.

In my humble opinion, the system is not as important as an informed electorate that has ability/expertise, is objective, and considers the community as a whole while looking to the future. If apathy continues and under 30% vote so the proportion of the voters with strong personal or selfish views is high, public discontent will continue -- especially if voters do not research the topics, examine/know the character and reputation of the candidates. When residents complain about politicians, smile sweetly and ask who chose them. It is their responsibility and it was their choice but they will shoot you, the messenger, if you remind them.

Cynicism is growing. Something must be done to turn around the perception. Good capable people are reluctant to enter the political arena not wanting to lose the respect of

their friends or to expose themselves and their families to the spotlight and the microscope, however they are sorely needed. At this time it is undervalued, underpaid, and the sacrifice underestimated. The Golden Hundred given the obligation to govern our beloved province must play a positive role in provincial life, exemplify the best of our wishes and dreams, and be appreciated for their sincere unbiased judgements.

As the ancient Chinese texts on government indicate, the good prince deserves the good people and the good people deserve the good prince. It's a two-way street. We must work together amicably and without fear or favour. This is a significant opportunity to try to bring out the best in our people and our representatives in a spirit of cooperation and commitment to improved responsive governance.

Thank you for offering your time, talents, and efforts.

Thank you for your valuable work.

Thank you for your kind consideration.