



## BC's Democracy: Join in the Discussion

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### **Bring the Citizens' Assembly into your Classroom**

A piece of BC's history is unfolding right now! The Citizens' Assembly recommends that British Columbia make a change in its democracy and adopt a new voting system – known as BC-STV.

Now, the people of the province will decide in a May 17 referendum if we should adopt BC-STV as our electoral system. The process for choosing this system was unique; never has such a representative group of citizens played such a vital role in shaping the electoral process.

Capture this opportunity – while it is in progress and in the news – to teach about:

- The upcoming referendum on 17 May 2005
- Our current electoral system and the recommended BC-STV system
- Civic participation

### **Learn**

The May 17 referendum is a truly outstanding chance to learn about democracy while this exciting issue unfolds. By learning about and discussing BC-STV, your students can shape the political climate of our province. Use the resources on the Assembly website [www.citizensassembly.bc.ca](http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca) to find out about electoral systems.

### **Develop Opinions**

What qualities should BC's electoral system have? Which electoral system best meets those values? Students can use Citizens' Assembly materials – such as animations and fact sheets posted on our website – to compare BC-STV and our current electoral system. Recordings of the Assembly's fourth deliberation weekend – found online – are a great example of the thought and emotion that goes into deciding on the “best” electoral system for BC.

### **Get Involved**

Bring the Citizens' Assembly and its recommendation of BC-STV into your classroom by:

- following ongoing media coverage and writing letters to the editor
- inviting an “alumni” Assembly member to speak to your students by contacting [speakers@caalumni.ca](mailto:speakers@caalumni.ca)
- having students interview their parents about what they think is needed in an electoral system
- holding a model referendum or model Assembly at your school

### **Prescribed Learning Outcomes**

Bringing the Citizens' Assembly into your classroom contributes to prescribed learning outcomes. Visit the Assembly website for a list of related prescribed learning outcomes in Grades 5 and 8-12. For example, in Grade 11 Political Issues, “it is expected that students will:

- identify the structure and operation of Canada's federal, provincial, and municipal governments
- explain Canada's political system and contrast it with other political systems”

### **For the Classroom**

Visit the online *Learning Resources – Educational Resources* section on our website for:

- animated presentations that explain BC-STV and our current electoral system
- a customized lesson aid package for exploring the Assembly's work and its recommendation – *Assessing Electoral Systems: opportunities for political education and active citizenship*
- short videos about BC-STV and electoral system families (for streaming and downloading)
- lesson plans – “What makes a ‘good’ electoral system?” and “Should the electoral system be reformed?”
- Citizens' Assembly Final Report

Knowledge Network will broadcast a documentary about the Citizens' Assembly on January 27, 2005 at 9 pm.

**[www.citizensassembly.bc.ca](http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca)**

# BC-STV and the Citizens' Assembly

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## What is BC-STV?

BC-STV stands for **B**ritish **C**olumbia **S**ingle **T**ransferable **V**ote and it's the system recommended by the Citizens' Assembly as the "best electoral system for our province".

## What is the Citizens' Assembly?

The Citizens' Assembly was an independent, non-partisan group of 160 British Columbians randomly selected from communities around the province to review the way we elect our political representatives to the provincial legislature. The Assembly disbanded in December 2004.

## A new voting system

Members of the Citizens' Assembly have recommended our province adopt a new voting system—a system that is fair and proportional, easy to use and gives more power to voters.

The BC-STV system was custom-designed by members to meet British Columbia's specific needs. This made-in-BC electoral system was selected over all the competitors because it best addresses three over-riding values: proportionality, local representation and voter choice.

## Unique and historic

The Citizens' Assembly is not only unique, but historic – both in Canada, and in the world. Never have randomly selected citizens been given so much power to develop and recommend public policy. For the first time, the voters were entrusted with the task of recommending how our representatives will be elected to the Legislature. Now, the voters of the province have the power to approve or reject this recommended change to BC-STV.

## Why think about change?

Democracy is at the heart of our society and elections are at the heart of our democracy. A thoughtful examination of which electoral system is best for British Columbia is an important contribution to our province.

Members of the Citizens' Assembly believe – and heard from many people in the province – that our current system can produce unfair results. For example, in the 1996 BC election, the party winning enough seats to gain a majority actually won *fewer votes* than another party. And, in the 2001 election, one party won 58% of the vote but gained 97% of the seats in the Legislature. The Assembly believes that BC-STV will provide better and more proportional results, greater voter choice and effective local representation.

## Referendum – May 17, 2005

The Assembly's recommendation of BC-STV will be put directly to the BC voters in a referendum on May 17, 2005 – the date of the next provincial election. The question voters will decide on is: *Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform? Yes / No*

If British Columbians choose to endorse the Assembly's recommendation, the government will introduce legislation for the new electoral system to come into effect for the 2009 election.

## Get informed

Check out the *Learning Resources* on our website: [www.citizensassembly.bc.ca](http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca)

- Animations, video and audio recordings about electoral systems and of the Assembly sessions
- Information, presentations, readings and glossary on electoral systems
- Assembly members, history and process
- News stories and photo gallery

**[www.citizensassembly.bc.ca](http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca)**