

# BC Electoral Experiments & Reform Initiatives and Impulses

Weekend 2 : Session 3

# BC Electoral Experiments

*An electoral system is more than just an electoral formula*

- The franchise (who is eligible to vote)
- The way the list of voters is compiled
- The way electoral district boundaries are drawn
- The design of the ballot paper
- The regulation of campaigning

# BC Electoral Experiments

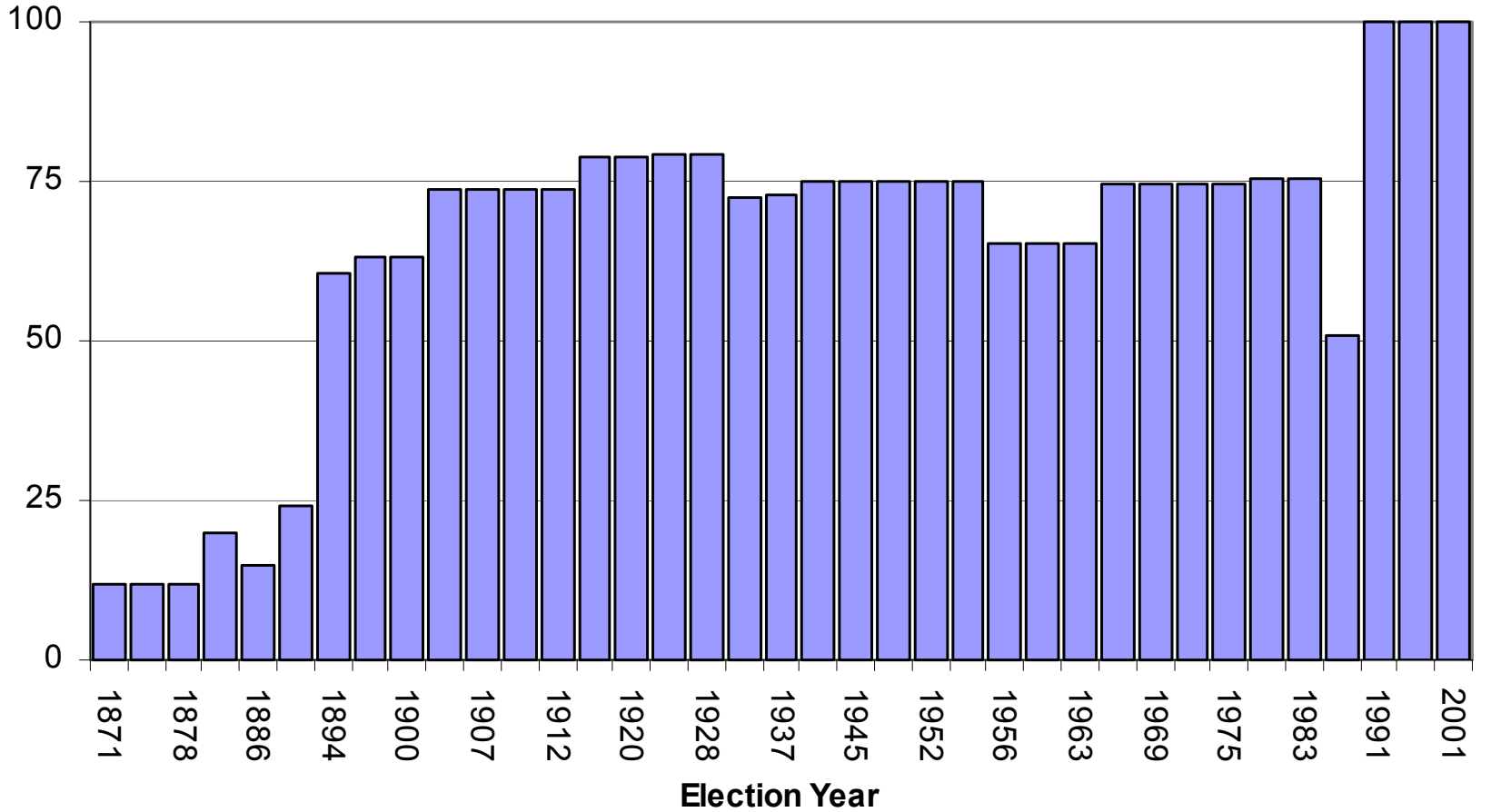
*Two experiments are of interest to the Citizens' Assembly*

- The use of multimember districts from 1871 until the general election in 1991
- The use of the alternative vote (AV) for the general elections of 1952 and 1953

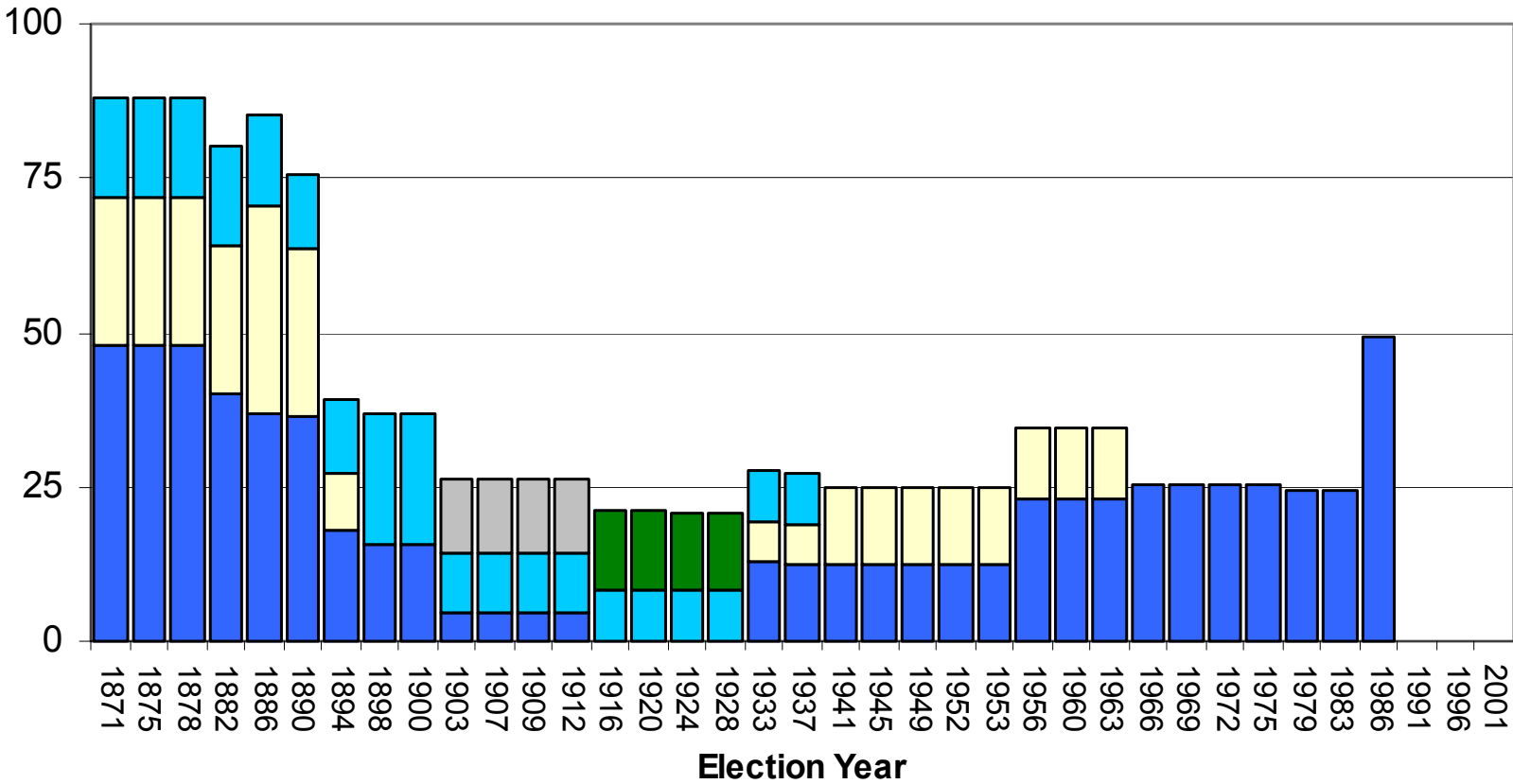
# Multimember districts

- The BC Legislative Assembly has always had single member districts but, from 1871 until the 1991 general election they were supplemented with a variety of 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 member districts
- The multimember districts with the most members were used for Vancouver and Victoria

**Proportion of BC Legislative Assembly members elected from single member districts, general elections 1871-2001 (percent)**



### Proportion of BC Legislative Assembly members elected from multimember districts, general elections 1871-2001 (percent)



■ 2 member  
 ■ 3 member  
 ■ 4 member  
 ■ 5 member  
 ■ 6 member

# The alternative vote (AV)

*(AV will be discussed in detail at next weekend's meeting)*

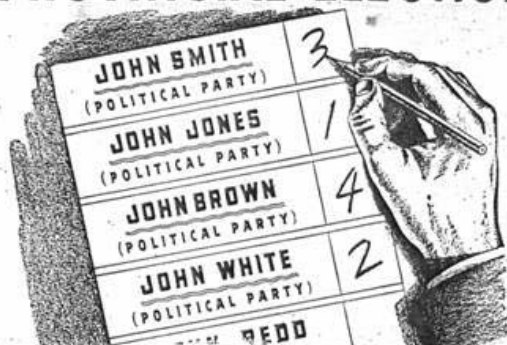
- Requires a preferential ballot
- Voters must rank candidates
- Where no candidate gains a majority of first preferences, the least successful candidate is eliminated and his/her second preferences are transferred



# ALTERNATIVE VOTING

WILL BE USED IN THE COMING

## PROVINCIAL ELECTION



### HERE'S WHY THE NEW SYSTEM IS BEING USED

The Voting system has been changed to enable every voter to cast his ballot for more than one candidate in order of his preference.

When you vote under the Alternative Vote system YOU GET MORE THAN ONE CHOICE. This will prevent any candidate being elected on a minority vote as has happened in the past. The candidate so elected in each riding will have received an absolute majority over all other candidates combined.

**IT'S FAIR!**

### HERE'S HOW YOU VOTE WITH ALTERNATIVE VOTING

The Alternative Vote is as simple as the voting system used before only, instead of marking an X against your one choice only, you can mark 1-2-3-4 with your first choice as number one, your second choice as number two and so forth in order of your preference.

**IT'S EASY!**

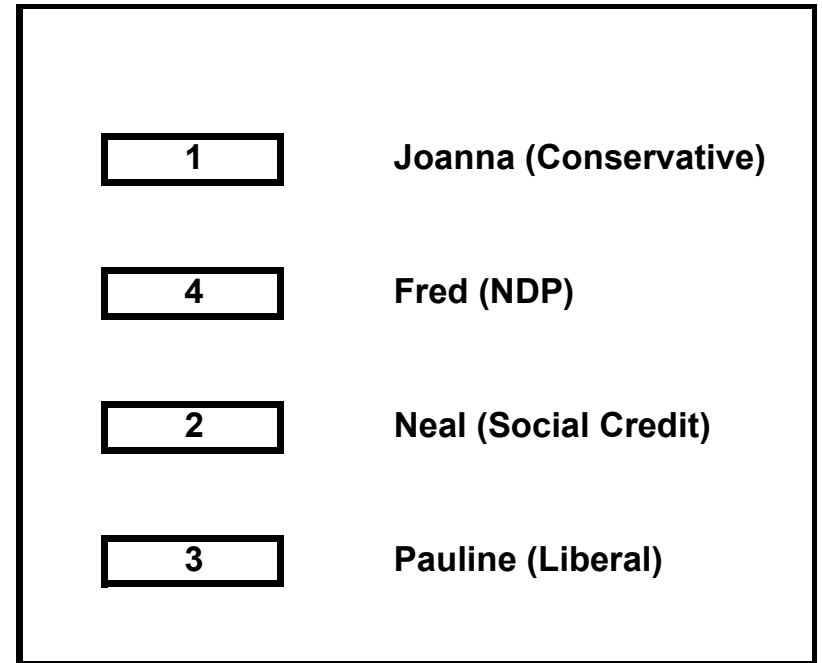
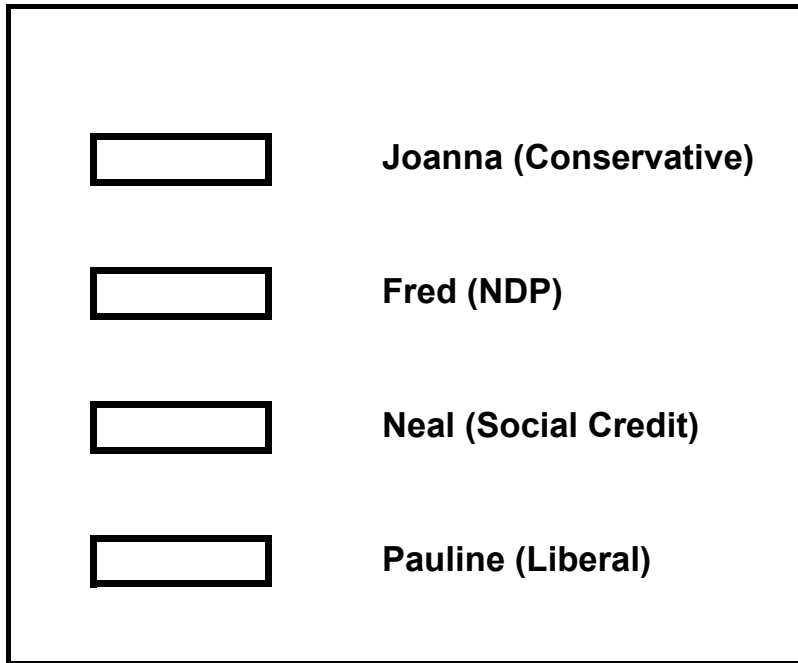
Further messages will appear in your daily and weekly newspapers explaining the Alternative Vote. Watch for them.

Fred H. Hurley . . . Chief Electoral Officer

**PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**



# Diagram of the ballot used for the AV electoral system for the BC general elections of 1952 and 1953



# An example of electoral engineering?

*Yes but, depending on one's view, it backfired on the parties which introduced it*

- Social Credit formed a minority government after the 1952 election
- Once Social Credit had won a majority government at the 1953 general election, it reintroduced plurality voting

# Alberta

*Alberta has been the most adventurous province in adopting electoral systems. From 1926 until 1955, general elections used preferential voting*

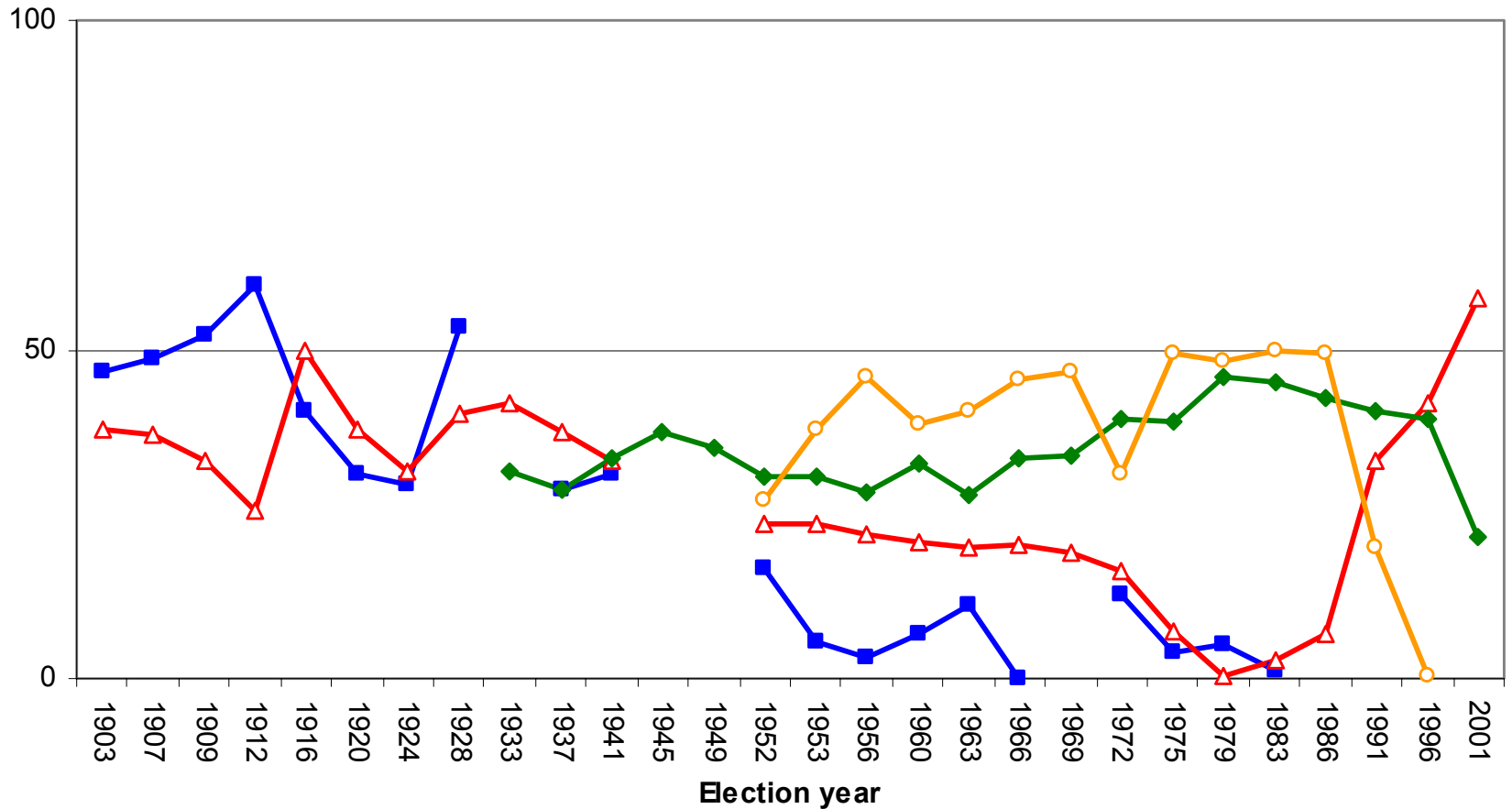
- AV in single member districts outside Calgary and Edmonton
- PR-STV for multimember districts in Calgary and Edmonton

# Political rather than electoral change

*There have been only few electoral changes in BC,  
but there has been a lot of political change*

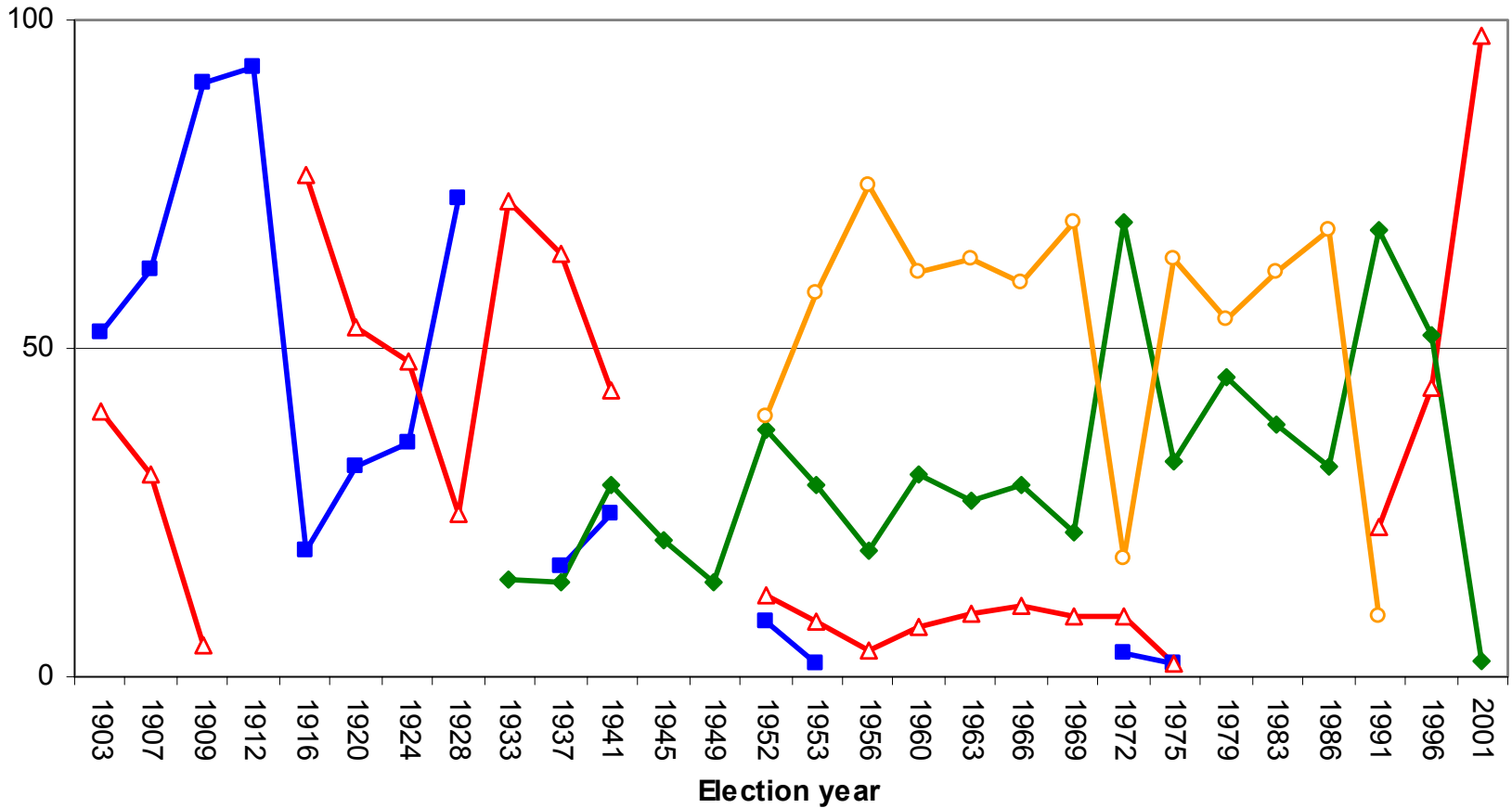
*The electoral system shapes the way political  
change is reflected in the Legislative Assembly*

**BC Legislative Assembly: Vote share (%) of Conservatives, Liberals, CCF/NDP, & Social Credit, General Elections 1903-2001**



■ Conservative Party   
 ▲ Liberal Party   
 ◆ CCF/ NDP   
 ○ Social Credit

**BC Legislative Assembly: Seat share (%) of Conservatives, Liberals, CCF/NDP, & Social Credit, General Elections 1903-2001**



■ Conservative Party    ▲ Liberal Party    ◆ CCF/ NDP    ○ Social Credit

# Reform Initiatives & Impulses

- Equal Votes
- Artificial Majorities
- Wrong Winners
- Oversized Governments
- Under-representation
- Reform Initiatives

# Equal Votes: *(Mal)Apportionment*

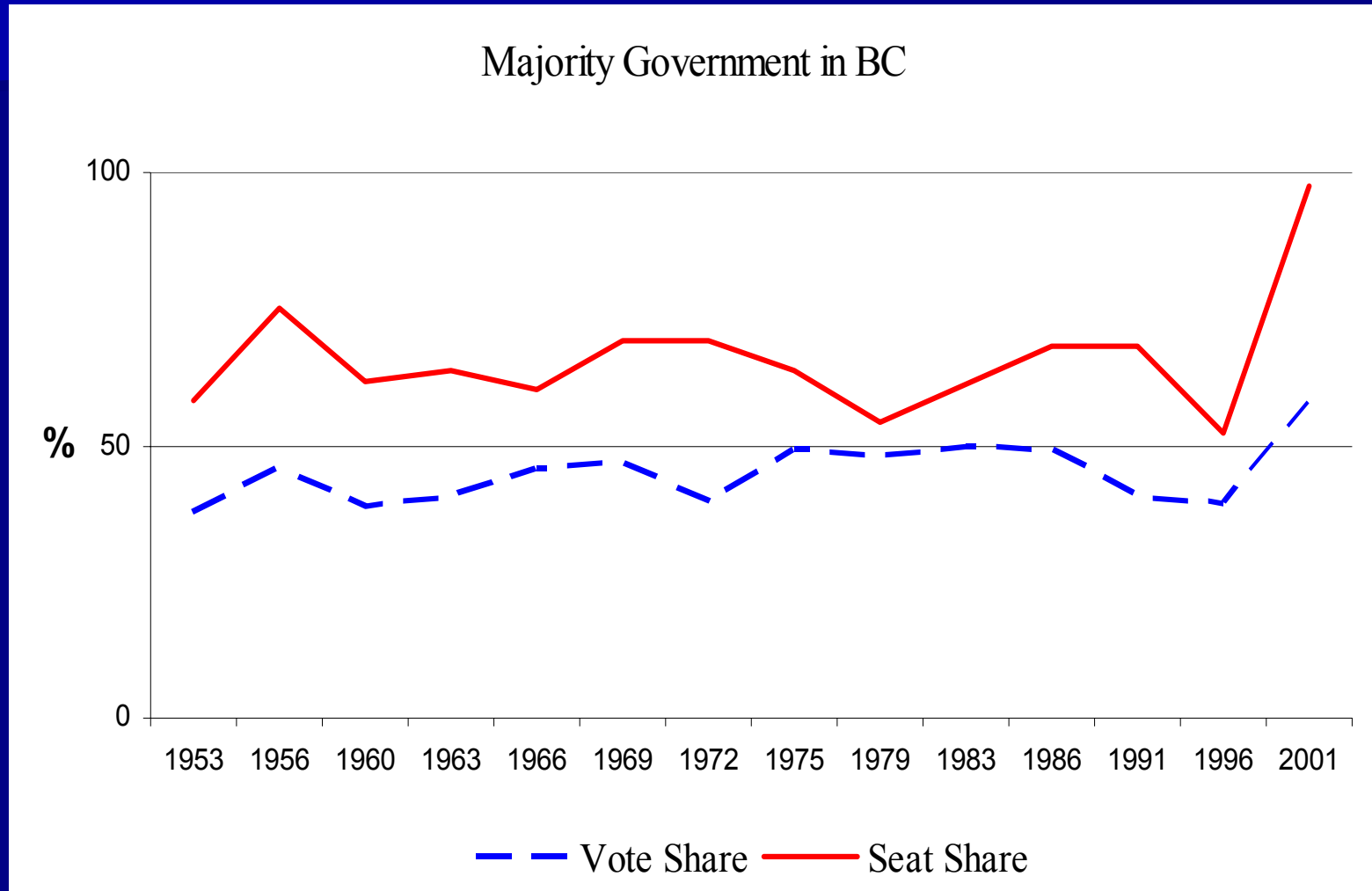
<i>District</i>	<i># voters</i>	<i>Winner (Party)</i>	<i>Winner's vote</i>	<i>Loser's vote</i>
Atlin	4,195	Al Passarell (NDP)	1,587	1,208
Surrey (2)	56,576 (103,152)	Rita Johnston (SC)	38,081	34,082



# Equal Votes ??

- 1983      Atlin : Surrey  
              12   -   1
  
- 2001      Peace River S : Saanich & Islands  
                  2.3        -        1
  
- *What difference is acceptable?*

# Artificial Majorities



# Artificial Majorities

- Few Governments ever win the majority of the votes of the population
- ***PRO*** Artificial majorities produce stable 1-party governments we would not otherwise have
- ***CON*** Governments have false legitimacy to impose policies that do not have majority support

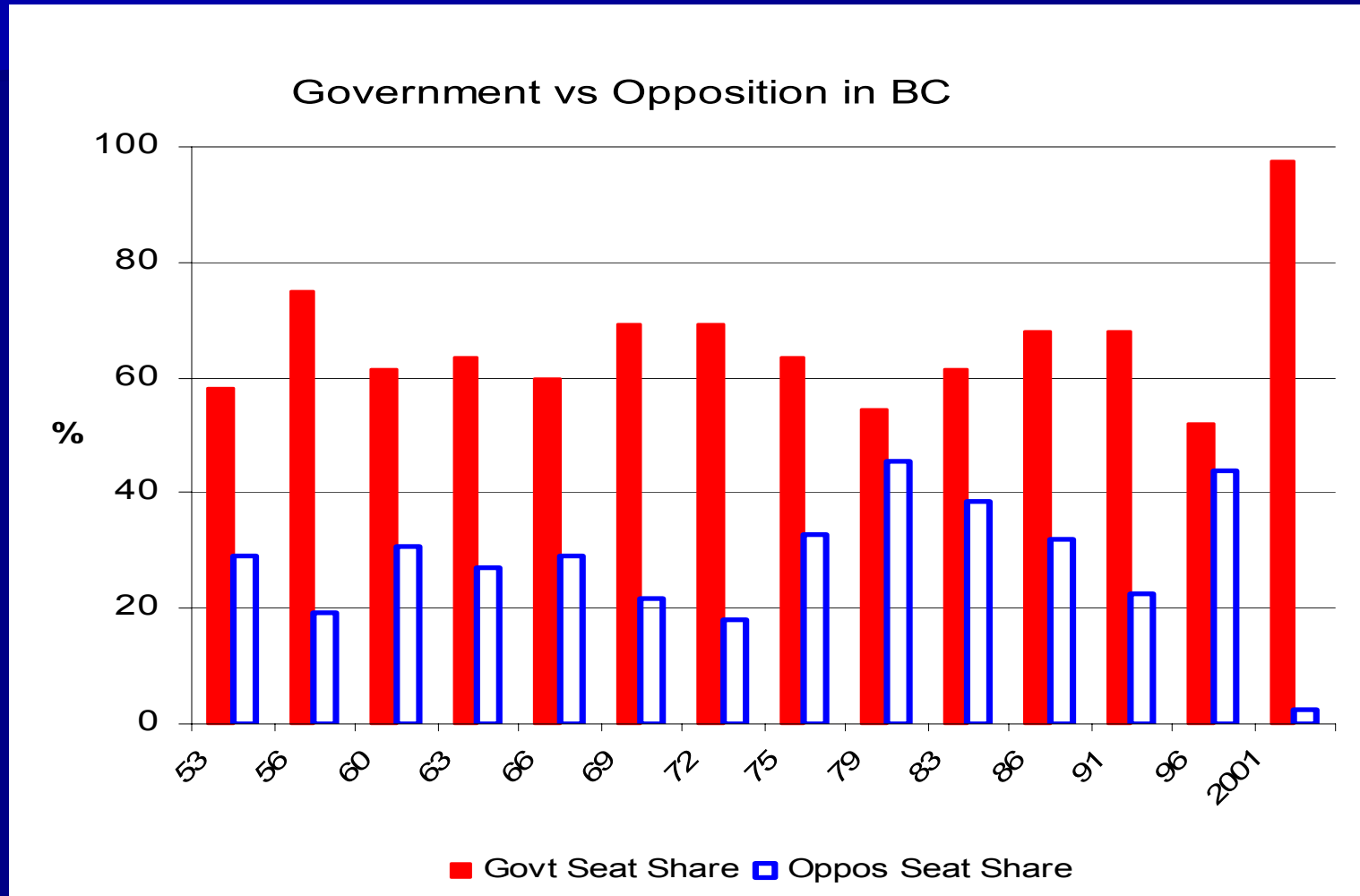
# Wrong Winners

<b><i>District</i></b>	<b><i>NDP</i></b>	<b><i>LIB</i></b>	<b><i>NDP</i></b>	<b><i>LIB</i></b>
<i>Burrard</i>	10646	7975	<b>X</b>	
<i>Fraserview</i>	8774	8394	<b>X</b>	
<i>Hastings</i>	9894	6345	<b>X</b>	
<i>Kensington</i>	9496	7608	<b>X</b>	
<i>Kingsway</i>	10525	6997	<b>X</b>	
<i>Langara</i>	5515	11038		<b>X</b>
<i>Little Mountain</i>	9390	12036		<b>X</b>
<i>Mount Pleasant</i>	11155	4243	<b>X</b>	
<i>Point Grey</i>	11074	12637		<b>X</b>
<i>Quilchena</i>	4977	15509		<b>X</b>
<b>ALL</b>	<b>91446</b>	<b>92782</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>

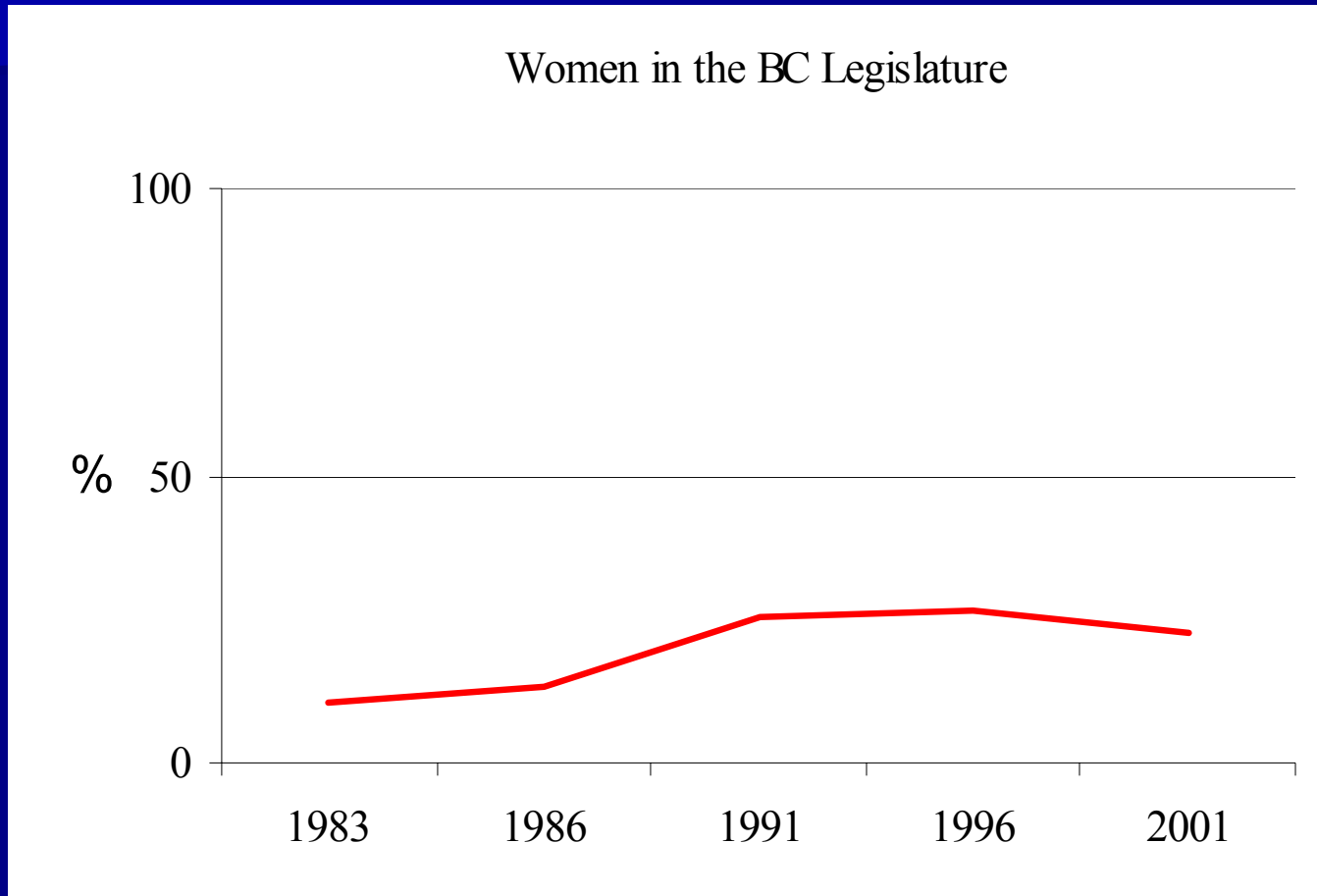
# Wrong Winners

- Newfoundland 1989
- Nova Scotia 1970
- New Brunswick 1974
- Quebec 1966, 1998
- Ontario 1985
- Manitoba 1945
- Saskatchewan 1986, 1999
- *British Columbia* 1996
- CANADA 1957, 1979

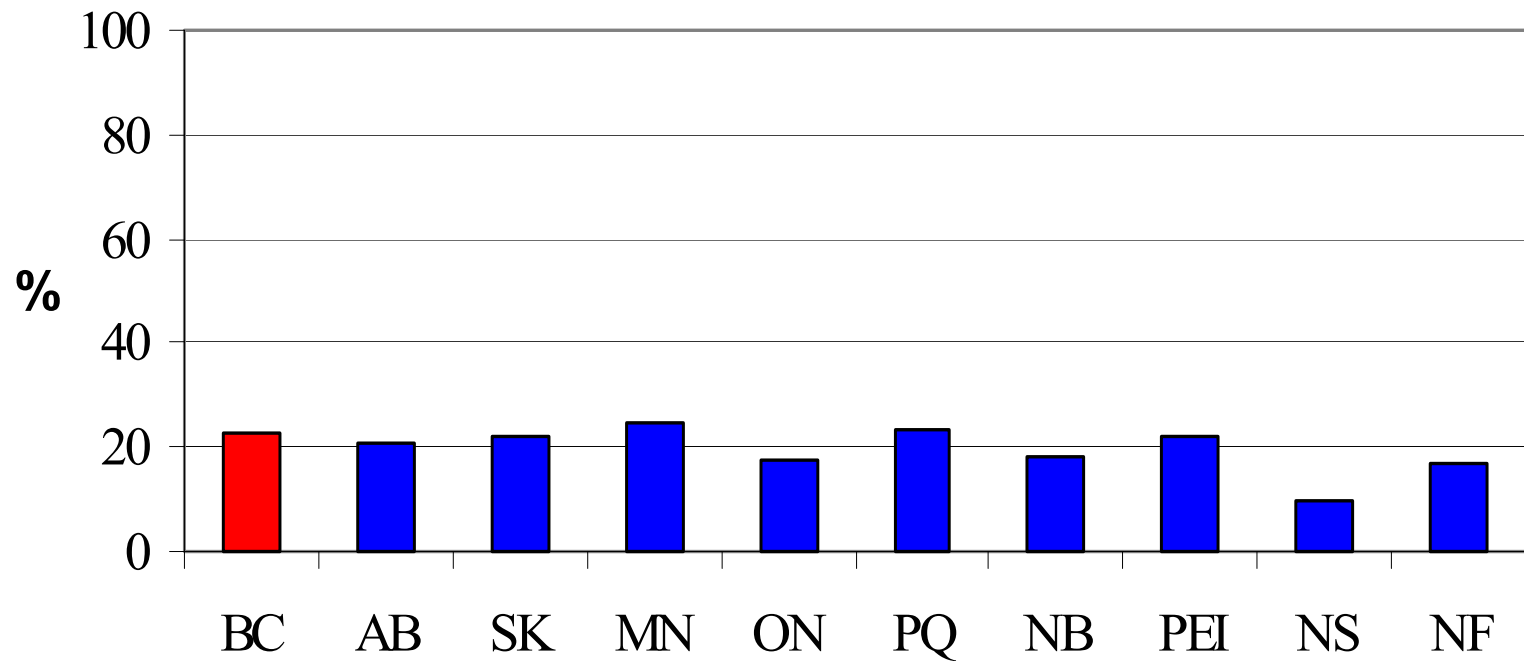
# Oversized Governments : Weak Oppositions



# Under-representation of Women

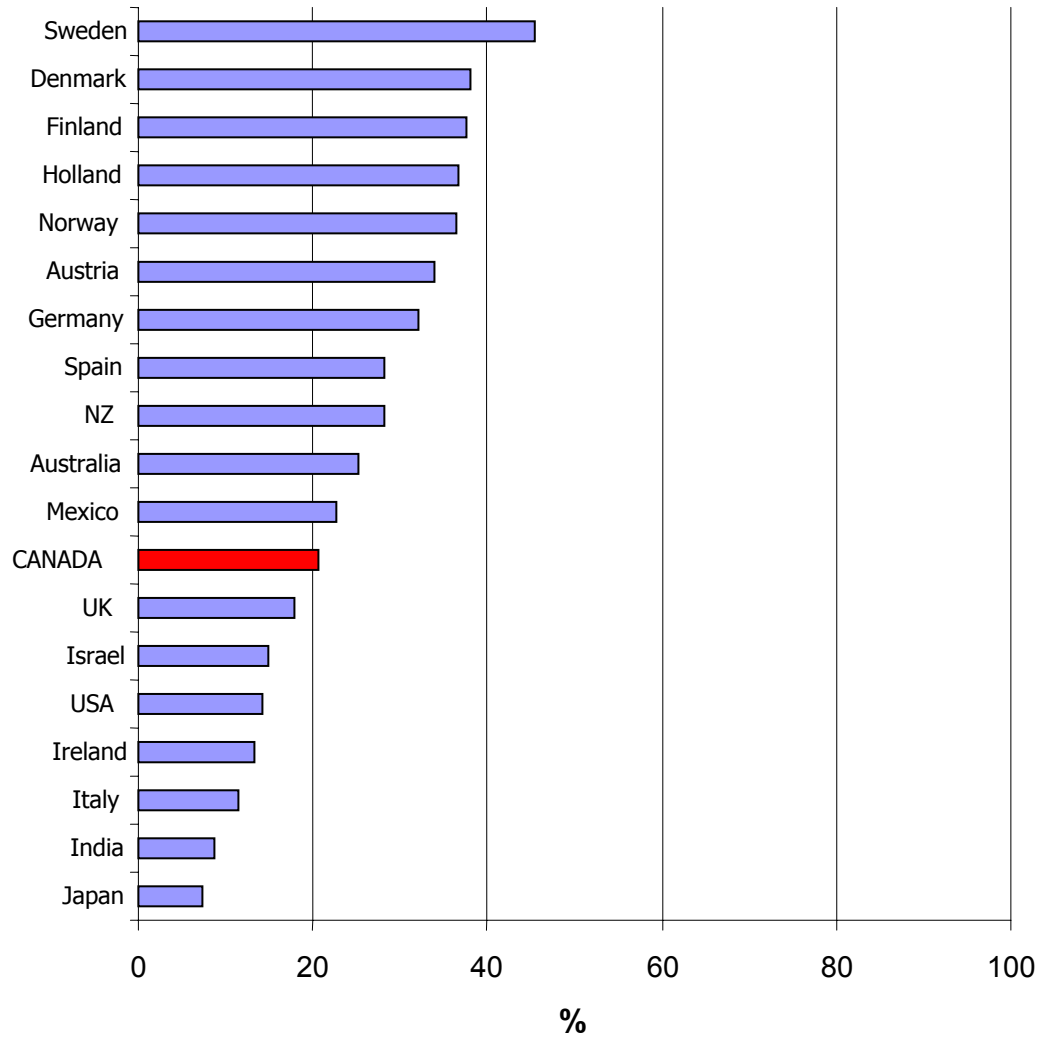


## Women in Provincial Legislatures (2002)





## Women in National Legislatures



<i>electoral system</i>	<i>% women in national legislature</i>
Plurality / Majority	16.9
Mixed: constituency-proportional	19.4
Proportional Representation (list)	29.5

# Reform Initiatives

PEI – Judge recommends change and BC-style citizens' assembly!

NB – Traditional commission with mandate for proportionality and local representation

PQ – Government to introduce Bill

ON – Planning 'citizen juries' and possibly a referendum

YUK – Watching us

# Some questions

1. What lessons should we take from BC's electoral history?
2. Is vote equality an issue? How equal is equal?
3. Are artificial majorities really bad?
4. If a party wins the most districts are they really wrong winners?
5. Is the under representation of women, or other groups, an issue if members all vote the party line once elected?
6. Should there be proportional representation for social groups? If so which ones?