



BC's Citizens' Assembly

British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

The Citizens' Assembly is an independent, non-partisan, diverse group of British Columbians with a unique and important job – reviewing BC's electoral system. This process is unique in Canadian history. Never have randomly selected citizens played such a vital role in shaping the democratic process.

The Citizens' Assembly comprises 160 British Columbians – 80 men and 80 women – plus the Chair, Dr. Jack Blaney. These members were randomly chosen from the provincial voters list to:

- ensure the member-selection process was as fair and unbiased as possible
- create a Citizens' Assembly that is reasonably representative of British Columbians
- reflect the gender, age and regional make-up of the province

The Citizens' Assembly was launched in May 2003 by the Government of British Columbia with the unanimous support of the BC Legislature. It was created in response to a concern voiced by some British Columbians that our provincial electoral system needed a review.

The Citizens' Assembly met from January to March 2004 to learn about electoral systems – the way democracies elect their political representatives. They then listened to British Columbians in a series of 50 public hearings held throughout the province in May and June. As well, they carefully reviewed 1603 submissions from members of the public. Finally, from September through November, the Assembly deliberated, considered the alternatives, and came to a decision on the best electoral system for British Columbia.

Learning	Public Hearings	Deliberation	Final Recommendation
Jan – Mar 2004	May – June 2004	Sept – Nov 2004	Dec 2004
Six weekends of meetings in Vancouver studying and examining electoral systems used in democracies around the world.	50 hearings throughout BC followed by a full Assembly meeting in Prince George to review and discuss what members heard from British Columbians.	A further six weekends of meetings in Vancouver considering submissions, discussing options and deciding on the best electoral system for British Columbia.	Citizens' Assembly members submit a report of their recommendation on British Columbia's electoral system.

The electoral system Assembly members believe is best suited to BC's needs is Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote (often abbreviated PR-STV or STV). The Assembly has branded its made-in-BC system **BC-STV**.

The Citizens' Assembly issues a full report on its recommendation of BC-STV to the people of British Columbia and to the Attorney General in December 2004. This *Final Report* of the Citizens' Assembly describes the pros and cons of both our current electoral system and the recommended system and explains why the Assembly advocates BC-STV.

Recommended electoral system: BC-STV

British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommends our province adopt a new voting system – a system that is fair, easy to use and gives more power to voters. That system is **BC-STV**.

BC-STV is **fair**. Each party's share of seats in the Legislature reflects its share of voter support. This means voters' views are fairly represented.

BC-STV is **easy to use** and gives voters more choice. Voters rank the candidates in the order of their preference – 1, 2, 3, etc. Candidates are elected based on voters' rankings.

BC-STV gives more **power to voters**. Voters have more choice on the ballot; they can select and rank candidates from any or all parties, including independents. Since voters decide which of a party's candidates are elected, all candidates must work hard to earn voter support.

BC-STV achieves **effective local representation** and fair results by combining several ridings, with each new riding electing several MLAs. **Fair. Easy to use. More power to voters.**

Referendum

The Assembly's recommendation of BC-STV will be put directly to the voters of BC 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 so the new electoral system could come into effect for the 2009 election.

Get informed

The Citizens' Assembly website, www.citizensassembly.bc.ca, contains a wealth of useful information and helpful links.

General information – The website offers such information as names and brief biographies of all members, information on staff, an overview of the process, records from every meeting, answers to frequently asked questions, and documentation related to the mandate and founding of the Assembly.

Electoral system materials – In addition to information on BC-STV, you'll find learning and educational materials provided to Assembly members posted on the website – as well as video and audio recordings from each of the Assembly's plenary sessions. There's also a list of recommended readings and links to relevant websites.

Submissions and public hearings – A complete list of all 1603 submissions made to the Assembly, together with abstracts, is also available on the website – as are summaries of all public hearing presentations.

News – Media releases, newsletters and a photo gallery can also be found on the website.

Make your vote count

The May 17, 2005 referendum is British Columbians' chance to help shape our political and electoral future. Be ready to make an informed choice.

NOTE: For information on the Assembly's recommended electoral system, BC-STV, see the Assembly website. The website also offers details on the Assembly process and on electoral systems.

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