

To: The Citizens Assembly
From: Chad Bester
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Subject: BC Electoral Bill of Rights

BC Citizens Electoral Bill of Rights

The most important aspect of any democracy is how the vote is counted. A citizens vote is only as good as the process that counts it, and a citizens vote is only as relevant as the accountability of the counting process.

I would like to address my concerns about the counting process and try to articulate the only process I can see that is 100% verifiable while still respecting the right to a private vote. Anything less is simply not acceptable. I would also like to mention a suggestion for the citizens right to a clean and non biased forum in which voting eligible citizens can exchange their perspectives.

#1 A Verifiable Vote

- Each voting eligible citizen **should have an assigned voter registration number**. This number is not used to identify a citizens vote, but is used to identify this citizen for their participation in a perspective forum should they chose to share their views on politics.
- Each voting citizen with a voters registration number will be given **on election day a random paper ballot after signing for their voter registration number**. Each random paper ballot will have a serial number on both halves of the ballot. One half will be cast to be counted, and the other half is retained by the voter for future verification of their vote as per the matching serial numbers.
- When the votes are counted each vote is matched to the serial number of the ballot and the corresponding vote count is then posted on the internet to be verified by the voters.
- **Once the election results are in, we should have all votes posted on the internet with a serial number for each corresponding ballot. This allows for verification by the individual citizen who cast his own vote.**
- Accounting would take place to ensure that the random ballots that are cast are equal to the eligible registered citizens that have signed their voter registration card on voting day.
- Any discrepancies between the voters serial number from their ballot stub and the officially posted vote results could then be addressed. **Each voter would be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of their own vote with the tools to verify their own vote.**
- Citizens as a whole could then count the official results for an independent verification of the overall count.

#2 A Citizens Political Perspective Forum

- Each citizen should be registered with a voter registration number in order to participate in the political discussion process. Only the voter registration number would be required for access to the perspective threads and not the name, or any other information, of the citizen voter

- Each registered voter can then post one perspective of 1000 words or less on each political discussion thread, and a further 250 word response at any time of their choosing for that same discussion thread.
- Between elections only elected members of the legislature as a whole can forward topics of public research polling through the Elections BC Citizens Perspective Forum.
- At election time each riding or region would have its own perspective board of threaded issues which are presented only by the candidates in that riding or region.
- At election time only the voters registered in the contested riding will be able to participate in that ridings perspective threads. This is critical for rural residents.

It is important that each vote respects the privacy of the citizen and the vote is also verifiably accountable for each citizen. It is also important that those who share their political views in an effort to convince others of their opinion in the political arena will have equal opportunity, but no more than equal opportunity as equal citizens.

The political research forums can only be run as a non biased, fair, and citizen-policed forum if it is part of the Elections BC mandate as part of the BC electoral process. Each citizen is limited to an initial position and a response to each topic thread, and therefore no manipulative interests can spam an issue, or intimidate others who wish to share their views to a newly informed electorate that becomes accepting towards all points of view.

My vision would see larger numbers of people that would put together well thought out points of view as a result of the moderation in the debate through limited submission access to each topic. In addition to this the fact everyone is identifiable on the voluntary perspective threads that results in a self policing aspect. This would encourage an informed and participatory critical mass that gives a voice to the voting citizens before during and after elections. This in some ways could leave a more powerful and lasting expression then the one day in a voting booth every four years.

This is our democracy and our rights, but these rights can only be used to protect our democracy if we have a free voice, and the ability to express that voice through an unbiased and impartial medium. Our elections are for the decision of citizens and not foreigners, corporations, special interest groups, or unions. This should be of the highest priority for every single one of us who stands for a government of the people and for the people.

I appreciate your time to recognize and address my concerns. I look forward to your attention to this very critical matter to ensure a “Citizens Electoral Bill of Rights” for future generations. This will be the most critical aspect of your decision making process for electoral reform. I welcome any feedback on the issue at thermobc@shaw.ca

 PS Anyone that questions the need to be critical of the vote counting process should look into Bev Harris of Black Box Voting, which has exposed the back doors and voter manipulation by the two largest suppliers of voting machines in the United States and Canada. Both Diabold and Sequoia Voting Systems are run by two brothers, and control 85% of the voting machine market in the US. The California government recently banned Diabold voting machines from the upcoming US elections in November after Diabold machines were found with back door Trojan horse programs in their voting machines at the last Democratic Presidential nominations earlier this year. The voting machine software allowed for the changing of votes through back door programming that was not detectable through any paper recount or any other method of vote verifications. Please be aware that this is the greatest threat to our democracy in the future.