

Submission to the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Change is Needed

Change to our electoral system is needed to address the distortions and unfair results produced by our current system. Some of the problems with our current system are:

- Majority governments are usually elected by a minority of those who choose to vote – sometimes not even by the largest minority.
- The makeup of the legislature frequently does not come even close to reflecting the popular vote.
- Significant minority viewpoints have no voice in the legislature because their support is spread evenly across the province, rather than being concentrated geographically.
- Regional interests can be favoured over the common interest because representation is based on geography.
- The distortions and unfair election results, and the sense that an individual's vote doesn't count, are causing increasing numbers of electors to see no point in voting.

Mixed Member Proportional Representation is the Best System for BC

The problems stated above, and many others, can be addressed by a system of mixed member proportional representation (MMP), such is already in use and proven in many parts of the world. MMP results in fairer results:

- The number of members of the legislature closely reflects the popular vote.
- Significant minority viewpoints gain a voice in the legislature.
- Geographical representation is maintained, but not at the expense of the common will of the electorate being reflected in the legislature.
- Since electors to vote for both a party and a person, they can choose the best person to represent them and choose the party platform that best reflects their will for the province.
- Every vote is a vote that makes a difference. Higher voter participation rates will result.

It is unfortunate that the Assembly's mandate does not allow it to propose a solution that increases the number of members of the legislature, as that would make it easier to implement an optimal MMP system. However, even with this constraint, MMP is the best solution for BC. Increases in the size of constituencies are a small price to pay for a fairer system. There would still be the same number of MLAs, and the party list MLAs, although not formally tied to a constituency, could and in most cases would provide representation for a geographic area.

Single Transferable Vote Systems are Flawed

Another type of system under consideration is the Single Transferable Vote system (STV). This system is inferior in many ways to MMP and should not be adopted. Some of the problems with STV are:

- Different regions of the province would have different numbers of MLAs per constituency, resulting in differing levels of proportionality.
- The system is difficult to understand and therefore not transparent to the average voter.
- STV would likely not increase the representation of minority viewpoints in the legislature
- The degree of proportionality that is introduced by STV is a by-product of the system, not its goal. STV would result in less proportionality than MMP and differing amounts in different regions.
- With STV, strategy based on knowledge of how to work the system is a very important component of the approach parties and candidates must take in their campaigns. MMP is

simpler, more transparent, and would result in more discussion of issues and less gamesmanship.

- STV is not understood or supported by large numbers of the electorate, whereas MMP has broad support and appeals to a greater range of people. A proposal for an MMP system has a greater likelihood of being accepted by the electorate.

Please put forward a proposal for positive change. BC is ready for mixed member proportional representation.

Sincerely,

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