

## BC-STV: Improved Fairness, Local Representation & Choice

### Is BC-STV a proportional electoral system and why is this important?

Yes. With proportional systems, like BC-STV, the percentage of seats a party gets would be close to the percentage of votes it received. Policies will better reflect voter desires. With non-proportional systems like FPTP, the percentages of seats and votes often differ greatly.

### Which other countries use proportional systems & do they prosper?

14 of the top 20 countries of the United Nations Human Development Index have proportional systems and include: Iceland, Norway, Ireland (uses STV), Sweden, Switzerland, Netherlands, Finland, Spain, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, New Zealand, & Italy. Since WWII, there has been a worldwide movement to adopt proportional systems because they provide consensual and stable government.

**Women & Diversity:** In FPTP's single-member districts, the party candidate selection process often discriminates against women and diversity (only one candidate can be put forward and that is usually a middle-aged white male). In BC-STV's multi-member districts, major parties can put forward a mix: more women and more diversity.

### How will BC-STV affect the delivery of constituency services?

- **Voters:** Go to the MLA(s) who make the most sense for your concerns or issues.
- **MLAs:** Can share responsibilities and therefore provide better services.

### How will candidates have to change their campaign strategies?

- **Inter-Party Competition:** Next preferences are often needed to win, so candidates can't afford to offend supporters of other candidates and parties. Negativity should decline.
- **Intra-Party Competition:** Candidates won't be able to take the voters for granted. In multi-member districts, parties will typically put forward one more candidate than they feel they'll win. Candidates from the same party will be running against each other. This eliminates "Safe Seats" for candidates and improves accountability. Voters will make the final choice of which candidates from a party will be elected.

## FPTP: These serious problems will re-occur in future elections

**Wrong Winners:** In 1996, under FPTP, the party with the most votes lost the election and the second place party formed a majority government. (Other instances of the wrong winner: Sask. '86 & '99, Que. '98, NB '06, Federal '57, '62, & '79)

**Exaggerated Majorities:** In 2001, under FPTP, the winning party got 57.6% of the vote and received 97.5% of the seats, leaving only 2 opposition members to keep the government accountable. In every FPTP election, the winning party gets more seats than it deserves. These false mandates lead to uncontrolled & wide policy swings.

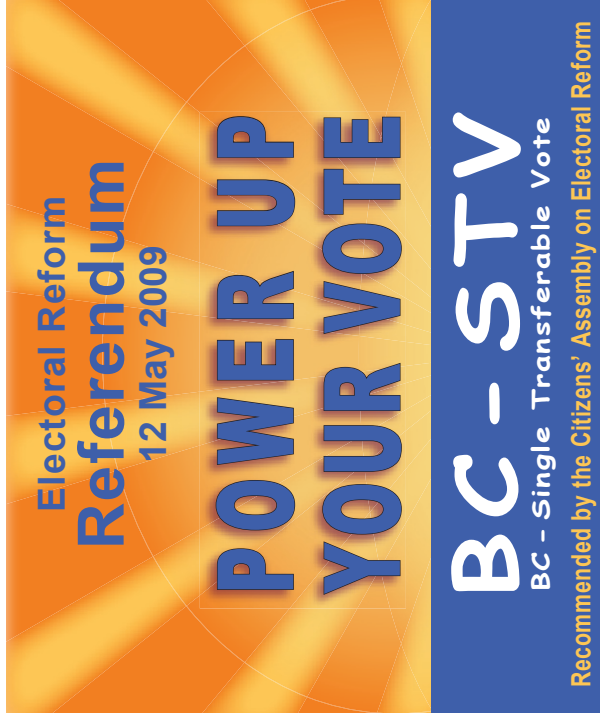
**False Majorities:** When 40% of the vote becomes 60% of the seats, governments receive false mandates and can implement policies most voters don't want, and cause wide policy swings.

**Unequal Representation:** In 2001, under FPTP, each of the two opposition MLAs represented 171,000 voters while each government MLA represented 12,000 voters provincially. 197,000 people who voted for a third party were left totally unrepresented.

**50% of Voters Don't Get a Local Representative:** With FPTP, if you don't vote for the winning candidate, you won't get an MLA to represent your local point of view in Victoria. FPTP isn't designed to give everyone a representative. On average, about 50% of voters in each district, and in every election, don't vote for the winner and don't get local representation.

For more information, to watch animations of how BC-STV works, or to help with the campaign, please visit: [www.STV.ca](http://www.STV.ca) or [www.STVinfo.ca](http://www.STVinfo.ca). This pamphlet was prepared by Craig Henschel, a member of the BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. A

**Save a Tree:** Please pass this pamphlet on to a friend. We can sure use your help. **Thanks.**



## Designed by Voters, for Voters

### Referendum Basics: How should we elect our provincial MLAs?

On May 12th, there will be a referendum to choose between our current provincial voting system, called First-Past-the-Post (FPTP), or a much fairer voting system, called BC-Single Transferable Vote (BC-STV) as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly.

This is a repeat of the 2005 referendum in which 58% of voters supported BC-STV. The Legislature had set 60% as the pass level. Because it was so close, voters will again have a chance to determine how we elect our provincial politicians.

### About the: BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

After very undemocratic election results in 1996 (party with most votes lost) & 2001 (no official opposition), the Provincial Legislature unanimously created the Citizens' Assembly to find a better electoral system. Our MLAs thought that voters should do this work, not politicians. 160 ordinary, non-partisan voters were randomly selected from the Voters List to serve on the Assembly. The Assembly's 11 month process included:

- **Extensive Learning:** About electoral systems throughout the world.
- **Public Consultation:** 50 public hearings & 1,603 written public submissions.
- **Deliberation & Recommendation:** The Assembly recommended, with a 95% consensus, that British Columbians adopt the BC-STV voting system.

The Citizens' Assembly worked on behalf of voters. Political insiders were kept out of the process. The Assembly found an electoral system which gives more power to BC's voters.

Prepared by **Craig Henschel in 2009** **Craig Henschel @ VoterEquality.org**

# FPTP

Our current "All-or-Nothing" electoral system, the favourite of political insiders

## Description A flawed system

With FPTP, the province is divided into 85 single-member districts. In each district, the candidate with the most votes wins and becomes an MLA. When the results of these 85 single-member elections are added together, strange things happen (see details page 4):

- **Wrong Winners:** Party with the most votes loses the election. 4 years of wrong gov't.
- **Exaggerated Majorities:** 58% of votes can translate into 97% of the seats.
- **False Majorities:** 40% votes → 60% seats.
- **Unequal Representation:** Number of voters per MLA varies dramatically. Unfair.

**With FPTP, the Legislature we get is not the Legislature we voted for. Public policies don't reflect voters' desires.**

Equally disturbing is what happens to the idea of Local Representation in each district.

## Local Representation is Limited (50% of voters don't even get a Local Rep.)

**Who gets a local MLA?** People who voted for the winner get a local MLA to represent their local point of view about policy in Victoria.

**Who doesn't get a local MLA?** On average, in every election and in each district, 50% of voters don't vote for the winner. Their local points of view about health care, taxes, resources, education, etc., aren't represented in Victoria.

## Safe Seats for Politicians & Parties

In some areas, the same party usually wins. The party's candidate selection process, not the general election, is where the election is won.

**Weak Accountability** Safe seats, and only one choice per party, limits accountability.

**Strategic Voting** Not very effective.

**Wide Policy Swings** FPTP leads to a two party system which results in wide policy swings, creates uncertainty, scares away investment, wastes tax dollars and harms voters.

**Unfair Counting System** FPTP isn't designed to provide everyone with a representative. It just determines winners and losers, in as simplistic a manner as possible.

# BC-STV

The "Voters' Choice" system recommended by the BC Citizens' Assembly, 2004

## Description A better system

### Multi-Member Districts

85 MLAs grouped into 20 Multi-Member Districts  
**Local Representation Improves:** More than one point of view in each district can be represented. BC-STV provides Local Representation to 80% - 95% of voters instead of the 50%, on average, who get it with FPTP.

### Preferential Voting (1, 2, 3, etc)

- **No Strategic Voting:** With preferences, honest voting works best. Positive voting.
- **Accountability Improves:** Voters can rank candidates from one or several parties.
- **No "Safe Seats" for Candidates:** Voters have the final say, not the parties.
- **No "Safe Districts" for Parties:** Every district is a "Swing District", and can't be ignored by government or opposition.

### Fair Counting System

**Tries to get your most preferred candidates elected, in the order you specify.** Each voter gets a single vote which can be transferred, if needed, to your next preferences. Each MLA represents about the same number of voters. This makes the system fair for both voters and parties. "Wasted Votes" are minimized.

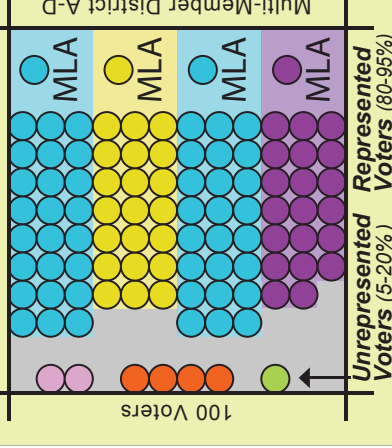
## Multi-Member Districts

BC-STV groups 2-7 adjacent single-member electoral districts into one multi-member district keeping the 2-7 MLAs. Parties gain seats in proportion to their local support.

**Rural Areas:** 2-4 MLAs **Urban Areas:** 4-7 MLAs  
Each district will likely be represented by at least one MLA in government & at least one MLA in opposition. **Multiple MLAs, from the same and other, during their term of office, to serve local concerns and maintain voter support.**

### e.g. 1 Four-Member District

20%+1 votes needed to win



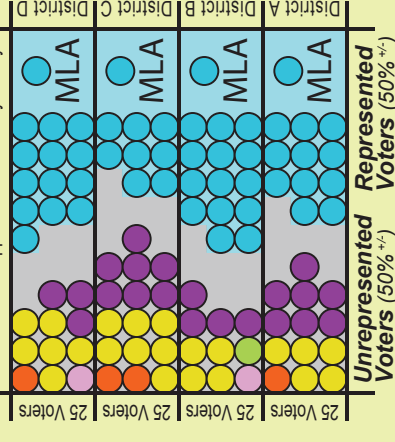
# First-Past-the-Post

## Single-Member Districts

FPTP is based on the assumption that a single MLA can represent the policy perspectives of all voters including those who support other parties. Is this really possible? **Can a community prospered if only one point of view is represented?**

### e.g. 4 Single-Member Districts

Candidate with most votes in single-member district wins. Support for MLAs vary widely.



## One-Choice Ballot

### Little Choice, No Choice in Safe Seats

This ballot is designed to find a winning candidate for the District, not to find every voter an MLA to represent their viewpoint.

In a practical sense, it asks if you are right, left, or willing to waste your vote.

If your favorite party only offers an imperfect candidate, like Party C below, what do you do? Abandon your party or vote for Lazy Len?

### Instructions:

Mark an "X" beside the single candidate of your choice.

- \_\_\_ Doctor Dan, Party B
- X Lazy Len, Party C
- \_\_\_ Mayor Mika, Independent
- \_\_\_ Teacher Tom, Party A

## Preferential Ballot

### More Choice & Better Accountability

- You can vote along party lines. Ranking your party's candidates, keeps them accountable.
- You can vote across party lines and support candidates whose policies you like.
- Through our voting preferences, voters help shape the policy direction of parties.
- Independents have a real chance of winning. This reduces party power over MLAs.
- The best incumbents can be kept and ineffective MLAs can be replaced.

### Instructions:

Write number "1" beside your first preference & then show as many other preferences as you wish. Number candidates in order of your preference (1, 2, 3, etc).

- |                      |                |                      |                     |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Party A</b>       | <b>Party B</b> | <b>Party C</b>       | <b>Independents</b> |
| <u>5</u> Teacher Tom | ___ Doctor Dan | <u>1</u> Prof. Pete  | <u>4</u> Mayor Mika |
| ___ Nutty Norm       | ___ Smart Sue  | ___ Lazy Len         | ___ Foolish Fred    |
| <u>3</u> Wise Wendy  |                | <u>2</u> Perfect Pam |                     |