



# Electoral Justice Now!

Liberating Democracy from an unjust electoral system, to better reflect and serve the 'Will of the People'

## *Electoral Justice: Why Democracy needs PR!*

To: **DRAFT**

From: *Jeff & Diana Jewell*, Mission BC

### 1. Summary

1. **Electoral Reform is about Electoral Justice**. Specifically, the rights of all Citizens to have a voting system that ensures election results which are always a *true* reflection of the '*Will of the People*'.
2. **Electoral Justice is impossible under the Westminster electoral system, 'First-Past-The-Post'**: (1) FPTP coercively discourages '*honest*' voting; (2) FPTP typically '*wastes*' about half of all votes cast; (3) FPTP always produces seriously distorted results by party and by region. Hence, **FPTP ought to be declared unjust**, anti-democratic and unacceptable for future elections.
3. FPTP, with its long history of electoral distortion and dysfunctional outcomes, was responsible for all of the problems arising from the BC2017 election.
4. In a Democracy, **every Citizen ought to have the right to a vote that is always counted in the election of their government, under the principle of 'majority rule'**. In fact, **NO Citizen is given a vote that actually counts in the election of any government under FPTP**—which, by convention, grants this right only to the body of elected representatives, which is always a distorted misrepresentation of the '*Will of the People*' (with about half of all Citizens' votes having NO representation).
5. As a fundamental right of every Citizen, **it should not be possible for any group (not even a majority) or government to deprive any Citizens of the right to have a vote that is counted in the election of the government**. Hence, there should be **NO referendum on Electoral Reform**—if its defeat would violate the inalienable right of every Citizen to have a vote that's always counted in the election of their government.
6. Every legislature ought to affirm such democratic rights, and enshrine them in their governing laws and/or constitutions.
7. The goal of Proportional Representation (PR) is Electoral Justice—with each party's voting power in Parliament being approximately proportional to their share of Citizens' votes.
8. **PerfectPR** is a new and better way to do PR—with **each party's voting power in Parliament being derived directly from (hence exactly equal to) their total number of Citizens' votes**.
9. It's believed that **PerfectPR** could be implemented directly through an act of the legislature (*n.b.*: when the original version **PPR123** was presented to the ERRE Committee, no concerns were expressed regarding any potential constitutional issues). If so, this could be a major advantage to BC and this Government: **PerfectPR would be the only form of PR that might be implemented without waiting for another election**—and which would ensure political stability by precisely offsetting FPTP's distortions of the BC2017 election!
10. **PerfectPR** includes an option of **regional 'top-up' seats**—providing **balanced representation** to offset inevitable imbalances (such as the regional distortions in the BC2017 election).

## 2. Recommendations

1. Form a "**PR Implementation Committee**" (with membership proportional to party vote-share) with an explicit mandate:
  - to determine and recommend the best form of PR;
  - to develop an appropriate implementation plan;
  - to identify required ER legislation.
2. **Enact legislation to adopt PR** as soon as possible, **without a referendum**.
3. **If PerfectPR is chosen, it should be implemented as soon as possible as the voting method within the BC Legislature, to correct the distortions of the 2017 election and thereby to provide stability, while also liberating all members to be free to vote their conscience.** [If implementation is delayed for some reason, **Parliamentary voting records should be revised to include both the seat counts and the Proxy vote counts.**; this would raise public awareness of the distortions of FPTP and the importance of PR. Also, consideration should be given to requiring that non-confidence votes should have a 'double-majority'—i.e. both seat counts and Proxy vote counts—as this would reduce the risks of instability of a minority government.]
4. **If PerfectPR is chosen, consideration should be given to adding an appropriate number of regional 'top-up' members to provide more balanced representation** by party, region, gender and demographics.

*[It being noted that the exceptionally close results in total votes and seat counts was marred by extremely distorted regional imbalances for the two major parties (even though both won about 40% of their votes in regions dominated by the other party), along with gross under-representation of the third party.]*

Based upon the number of '**wasted votes**' (i.e. for defeated candidates) for each party (Liberal: **319,013**; NDP: **313,352**; Green: **290,880**), it's suggested that reasonable numbers of regional '**top-up**' representatives might be 6 each for Liberal and NDP, and 5 for the Green Party. These additional seats should be allocated regionally where each party was most under-represented, and filled by their defeated candidates with the most votes, with consideration for gender balance.

[N.B.: **under PerfectPR, the flexible addition of any number of regional representatives would not change the Parliamentary voting power of any party**—as all votes for defeated candidates would be reassigned such that every representative would be entrusted with an equal share of the Citizens' votes for their party.]

### 3. BC's 2017 Election! *Are these results a true reflection of the 'Will of the People'???*

This analysis clearly shows **the huge magnitude and undemocratic impact of FPTP distortions**, which would not have occurred under PR, and **could be perfectly rectified by PerfectPR.**

<b>BC2017 Election Results</b>	<b>LIB</b>	<b>NDP</b>	<b>GP</b>	<b>NDP+GP</b>
<b>Number of Elected Members (Seats)</b>	<b>43</b>	41	3	<b>44</b>
Votes for Elected Members ( <i>non-wasted</i> )	477,759	481,754	41,507	523,261
Votes for Defeated Candidates (' <b>Wasted</b> ')	<b>319,013</b>	<b>313,352</b>	<b>290,880</b>	<b>604,232</b>
<b>Total Citizens' Votes</b>	<b>796,772</b>	795,106	332,387	<b>1,127,493</b>
Percent of votes ' <i>Wasted</i> '	40.0%	39.4%	<b>87.5%</b>	
<b>Average votes per Elected Member</b>	<b>18,530</b>	<b>19,393</b>	<b>110,796</b>	
Equivalent Seats (based on PR)	36.02	35.95	15.03	50.98
Over or ( <b>Under</b> ) Representation	6.98	5.05	<b>(12.03)</b>	<b>(6.98)</b>
<i>Suggested 'Top-up' for <b>Balanced Representation</b></i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Avg. votes per 'Top-up' seat (based on 'Wasted' votes)</i>	<i>53,169</i>	<i>52,225</i>	<i>58,176</i>	
<i>Suggested Total Seats (with regional 'Top-up')</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Avg. votes per seat with 'Top-up' seats</i>	<i>16,261</i>	<i>16,917</i>	<i>41,548</i>	

In particular:

- Whereas the NDP+Green combo was elected with a margin of just one seat (**44 to 43**) over the Liberals, becoming a margin of zero with the appointment of a Speaker, **the electoral margin was actually quite substantial—one-third of a million Citizens' votes (1,127,493 to 796,772).**
- With the Liberal leader's retirement, the NDP+Green margin became two seats (**44 to 42**)—pending a future byelection—and a workable margin of one with the appointment of a Speaker. But there remains an abnormally high (and democratically unjustified) risk of instability.
- FPTP distortions produced **greatly exaggerated rural/urban polarization**, even though both major parties won about 40% of the votes in regions where they were decimated.
- The greatest injustice was that **87.5% of the Green votes were 'wasted'** (as compared to about 40% for the Liberals and NDP).
- **Under PR, the Liberals and NDP would have each won 36 seats and the Greens would have 15.** Those results would have produced a stable Government with a comfortable margin of 15 seats over the Opposition, which would liberate representatives to '*vote their conscience*' (or allow them to be sick or delayed by a traffic accident etc.) without precipitating a governmental crisis.
- **PerfectPR, with each party having the parliamentary voting power exactly equal to their total number of Citizens' votes (i.e. Perfect PR), could be achieved very simply by assigning each party's "Average votes per Elected Member" to every elected member!**

## 4. What is “PerfectPR”?

### (1) Summary of PerfectPR principles and features:

- Founded on the principle of ‘*the primacy of the Citizen’s vote*’ [much more democratic than the ‘*primacy of the representative’s seat*’, which is implicit in FPTP].
- Makes every vote count—always and equally!
- Ensures that each party has parliamentary voting power that is exactly equal to its share of Citizens’ votes (i.e. *perfect* Proportional Representation).
- Eliminates all of the anti-democratic defects of FPTP:
  - ‘*strategic voting*’
  - ‘*vote splitting*’
  - ‘*false majority*’ governments
  - ‘*wrongful*’ governments
  - ‘*blow-out*’ elections that fail to produce an Official Opposition
  - fragile minority governments
  - risk of tie votes in Parliament
- The amazing power and flexibility of proxy voting
  - PerfectPR is the only form of PR that could provide relief now—when it’s needed most.
  - Proxy vote reassignment could also be used to cover the absence of a representative.
  - BC needs to become the leader—because there’s no really good electoral system to copy.
  - Our goal is to show the way for others to follow to achieve their own electoral emancipation!

### (2) Outline explaining how PerfectPR works, and new options that it makes possible:

- a) **PerfectPR** evolved from **PPR123** ( [Perfect Proportional Representation](#) ), which was [presented to ERRE Committee](#) in Vancouver on 2016/09/28.
- A preferential ballot is a recommended option (although a single-choice ballot could be used—along with a vote for preferred Party). This would ensure that each elected representative is the ‘*rightful*’ winner with true ‘*democratic legitimacy*’, by applying the fundamental democratic principle of *majority rule*.
    - Voters could rank any number of candidates (or suggested limit of three).
    - Votes would be scored according to the iterative process of elimination (i.e. ‘*Instant Runoff Voting*’, also known as ‘*Alternative Vote*’) until the winner is elected with a majority (i.e. true ‘*democratic legitimacy*’). **IRV ensures that the 1<sup>st</sup>-choice is a true vote** (i.e. no need for ‘*strategic voting*’)
  - **Proxy voting in Parliament, with each party casting all Citizen’s 1<sup>st</sup>-choice votes** they received. Votes for defeated candidates are retained by the party, and equitably reassigned amongst their members.
  - Parliamentary voting would be tallied by computer, automatically converting each Representative’s vote into their assigned number of Citizens’ proxy votes.
  - Some representation should be provided for independent votes and small parties that achieve a specified threshold (e.g. 3%) but fail to elect a member.

- b) **PPR123+** ( [Perfect Proportional Representation + Balanced Representation](#) ) was the first major enhancement to PPR123.
- Inspired by concerns expressed by the ERRE Committee, stressing that an important goal of ER is that it should provide more **balanced representation**.
  - With proxy voting in Parliament based on the 1<sup>st</sup>-choice votes of all Citizens, which requires the reassignment of all votes for defeated candidates, [PPR123+ is uniquely capable of adding any reasonable number of 'top-up' members](#)—for the sole purpose of providing more balanced representation—without changing the voting power of the parties in Parliament!
  - Balanced representation can easily be achieved (with no adverse impact) by party, by region, by gender and other demographic factors.
- c) **“Voter’s Choice”** was proposed as a politically viable alternative for implementing [ER with no need for a referendum](#).
- Inspired by the dilemma faced by the ERRE Committee, with intransigent partisan positions on the need for/against a referendum.
  - With proxy voting ensuring perfect proportional representation, the choice between a preferential ballot (IRV) or single choice (FPTP) could be democratically decided within each riding—and without either system being imposed against the ‘will of the People’ in any region.

**(3) A cursory review of potential constitutional issues, and defining characteristics of the Westminster system.**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster\\_system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_system)

A Westminster system of government may include some of the following features:

- A [sovereign](#) or [head of state](#) who functions as the nominal or legal and constitutional holder of executive power ...
- A [head of government](#) (or head of the executive), known as the [prime minister](#) (PM), [premier](#), or [first minister](#). While the head of state appoints the head of government, constitutional **convention suggests that a majority of elected Members of Parliament must support the person appointed**.
- A parliamentary opposition (in a multi-party system) with an official Opposition Leader.
- A **legislature ... usually elected by district in First-Past-The-Post elections** (as opposed to country-wide proportional representation). **Exceptions** to this include **New Zealand**, which changed in 1993 to use mixed-member proportional representation; Israel, which has always used country wide proportional representation; and **Australia**, which uses preferential voting.
- [A legislature with] an ability to dismiss a government by "withholding supply" (rejecting a budget), or passing a motion of *“no confidence”*. **The Westminster system enables a government to be defeated or forced into a general election independently.**

Several key points follow from the above:

- The monarch (or her representative) holds the power to appoint the first minister (i.e. the party to form Government). It's merely *convention* that *suggests* this appointment *should be supported by a majority of the legislature*—presumably to ensure political viability and democratic control—which could be achieved as effectively and more democratically based upon a **majority of Citizens' votes** (e.g. PerfectPR) rather than a **majority of party seats**.
- FPTP has been replaced in various countries by different forms of PR.
- The Westminster system enables a government to be defeated *without* necessarily forcing a snap election.

**(4) Based on this, it's recommended that:**

- **PerfectPR** should be adopted as the new electoral system.
- Proxy voting should be adopted as the new Parliamentary voting system, with each party casting all of the Citizens' 1<sup>st</sup>-choice votes (i.e. by reassigning votes for defeated candidates).
- The Westminster convention of '*confidence votes*' forcing snap elections should either be eliminated or require a '*double-majority*' (i.e. based on both Proxy votes and seat count) should be required.
  - This practice usually arises from *political opportunism*, magnified by *FPTP distortions*.
  - This ability gives a minority party too much power to extract concessions that may not be in the public interest.
  - Many countries have shown that democracy can work quite well without snap elections.
  - Removing this ability should induce more cooperation in the legislature, and liberate representatives to vote their conscience.



## **FPTP is so thoroughly anti-democratic that it ought to be abolished.**

- FPTP fails all of the identified criteria for electoral justice (pg.11).
- All political parties have intrinsically acknowledged that FPTP is not democratically acceptable— by not using FPTP to elect their leader. Rather, they instead use an iterative process of elimination until the winner obtains the support of a majority—essentially equivalent to a preferential ballot with Instant Runoff Voting. This is demonstrable validation of the importance of ‘*democratic legitimacy*’ by *majority rule*—the fundamental standard of Democracy.
- Given that this is the democratically ‘right way’ to elect party leaders, it could hardly be argued that IRV would not also be the best way to elect all representatives. Alas parties on the extremes always oppose this—on the argument that it would tend to give an advantage to parties of the centre. Beyond the objection that this contention is too simplistic, and that most voters are probably more concerned with the choice between *change vs continuity* and perceived strengths and charisma of party leaders (rather than *left-right* ideology), it’s difficult to argue against electing the candidate most acceptable to a majority of voters.
- If IRV might result in over-representation of the political centre, this would be automatically corrected by **PerfectPR**—as the voting power of each party in Parliament is based on their total number of Citizens’ **1<sup>st</sup>-choice votes only** (i.e. completely unaffected by secondary votes). Hence, with a preferential ballot, **PerfectPR** ensures the true ‘*democratic legitimacy*’ of every elected representative with majority support—and, because the 1<sup>st</sup>-choice is an uncoerced vote for each voter’s true preference (i.e. no need for so-called ‘*strategic voting*’), **PerfectPR** also ensures **PerfectPR** with no advantage to any party anywhere on the political spectrum, and without any voting or riding complications or undesirable consequences).
- Proxy voting is of course completely validated and accepted everywhere as the foundation of corporate shareholder democracy—with one vote per voting share, cast as a proxy vote by a designated representative. In a political democracy, every Citizen is effectively a ‘*shareholder*’—entitled to one equal voting share—which, with **PerfectPR** would be cast as a proxy vote in Parliament by a designated representative.
- **PerfectPR** fulfills all of the identified criteria for electoral justice (pg.11).

## 5. “Electoral Justice”? *Isn't that a basic principle of Democracy?*

### (1) Context:

- Public confidence in Democracy seems to be declining everywhere—along with the People’s trust in governments and political leaders.
- The ‘democratic disconnect’ seems to be increasing with each younger generation.
- The Digital Age has changed how People live in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. But our Democracy remains tethered to the processes and limitations of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

### (2) FPTP's anti-democratic record of distortions in BC's last 7 elections:

If there are any doubts about the need and justification for Electoral Reform, an examination of BC’s last seven elections (1991-2017) reveals that every election under FPTP results in gross injustice—to Citizens, Parties, and indeed to Democracy itself:

- **Five of the last seven elections produced a ‘false majority’ Government**—a pseudo-dictatorship with the winner holding 100% of the power based on less than 50% vote-share—and, in each case, with their majority being entirely due to FPTP distortions.
- Over these seven elections, FPTP distortions gave the Government an average bonus of 14.4 seats, and the Official Opposition an average handicap of 9.8 seats (i.e. the spread was on average 24.2 seats more than it would have been under PR).
- The **1996 election produced the ‘Wrong Winner’ with a ‘false majority’ Government**—FPTP’s most disgusting distortion; the winning NDP won 39 seats with just **39.5%** vote-share—whereas the losing Liberals won only 33 seats with **41.8%** vote-share.
- The **2001 election produced a ‘blow-out’**, due to FPTP distortions, as the Liberals took 77 of 79 seats (**97%**) on **57.6%** vote-share. FPTP distortions gave the winners an unearned bonus of 31.5 seats, by taking 31.5 earned seats from the losers. **Even though 42% voted for an opposition party, FPTP distortions gave them only 2 seats and produced a Government without an Official Opposition**—the antithesis of Parliamentary Democracy.
- The exceptionally close 2017 election produced a **“hung Parliament”** (i.e. with no party holding a majority). While FPTP distortions were smaller than usual (over-representation of about 7 seats for the Liberals and 5 seats for the NDP), the impact was vastly greater because of the fragility of the *Minority Government*—due to the fact that **FPTP under-represented the Greens by about 12 seats.**

There are many more reasons and detailed analyses that form an indisputable case against FPTP. Indeed, the only reason some parties want to block ER and retain FPTP is that they are the regular beneficiaries of its distortions.



### (3) What makes FPTP inherently unjust, anti-democratic and unacceptable for future elections?:

The Westminster system of parliamentary rule and the ‘First-Past-The-Post’ electoral system were implanted in Canada as a British colony (as also in Australia, New Zealand and others that have since liberated themselves from FPTP). From its origins, the British system was never intended to provide *real* democracy—but merely a modicum of democratic process to facilitate perpetual rule by the dominant class (i.e. [The Establishment](#): originally the aristocracy and land owners—now the masters of financial and corporate power). Despite free elections, the process is inherently anti-democratic, and its results are invariably distorted.

- The deplorable reality of FPTP is that all votes for losing local candidates have NO value—and NO impact on the balance of power in Parliament; such ‘wasted’ votes (and voters) are effectively thrown into the garbage can by FPTP. This is systemic disenfranchisement by design, typically depriving about half of all voters of their fundamental Democratic rights—to have equal and effective participation in electing their Government—and to have their vote count in Parliament. This problem is compounded by the fact that typically more than half the ridings are so-called ‘safe seats’ under FPTP in which only one party has a realistic chance of winning (often with less than 50% vote-share), meaning that there’s essentially no freedom of democratic choice for all Citizens in such ridings.
- For most voters, their primary concern is not the election of their local representative—rather that their vote should count in electing the government. By usurping this democratic right from about half of all voters, FPTP contributes to public disillusionment with the political system, as reflected by the many Citizens who don’t care enough to vote (typically 30% to 40%).
- Even worse, FPTP is a coercive system that severely distorts the expression of the true ‘Will of the People’. To avoid having their vote ‘wasted’ (by the FPTP voting system), a large percentage of Citizens are driven into so-called ‘strategic voting’ against their will (Broadbent Institute 2015 report: “46% have voted for a party that was not their first choice, in order to prevent another party from winning”).
- Beyond having about one-third of Citizens believing that voting has no value, then throwing away about half the votes cast, while also forcing a large percent of voters to vote against their best interests, FPTP has numerous other seriously anti-democratic defects:
  - The ‘two party system’, is a defining characteristic of FPTP. Any number of parties can run, but only two parties have any recognized and realistic chance of winning—and lesser parties are doomed to the role of ‘spoilers’—the inevitable consequences of ‘strategic voting’. This syndrome severely constrains voters’ freedom of choice, causing a serious degradation of democracy.
  - Citizen’s votes have unequal value. Whether they have any value depends on how others vote in their riding. And the relative value of votes is also dependent on the population differences between ridings.
  - The values of Citizens’ votes to each party are also unequal (as reflected by the great disparities in “Average votes per seat”). Voting concentrations that are too low (or too high) are under-represented.

- The ‘*vote splitting*’ problem between two similar parties competing for the same voting segment can be very unfair to those parties (and Citizens who support them)—usually leading to their mutual defeat (and often gifting victory to a mutual opponent on the opposite side of the political spectrum). Again, the degree of inequality depends on the vote concentrations of each party.
- The ‘slicing and dicing’ of voters into regions and ridings inevitably leads to anomalous results that can be seriously undemocratic, including: the ‘*wrong*’ winner (BC1996); no Official Opposition (BC2001); an extremely fragile minority government with grossly distorted regional polarization (BC2017).
- A ‘*false majority*’ government is a routine result of FPTP distortion, with the winning party holding 100% of the power (a quasi-dictatorship of the Leader’s office) with less than 50% vote-share.
- FPTP’s unequal treatment of votes and geographic concentrations have often been exploited to political advantage through “gerrymandering”. [Wikipedia: “*Two principal tactics are used in gerrymandering: "cracking" (i.e. diluting the voting power of the opposing party's supporters across many districts) and "packing" (concentrating the opposing party's voting power in one district to reduce their voting power in other districts).*”]
- The fundamental flaws of FPTP have long been recognized by political scientists and advocates of democratic reform. England’s Electoral Reform Society was founded in 1884; its 2017 vision statement is: “*The Electoral Reform Society operates on a simple premise - that politics can be better than it is. We campaign for a better democracy. Our vision is of a democracy fit for the 21st century, where every voice is heard, every vote is valued equally, and every citizen is empowered to take part.*”
- While there have been many significant achievements of Electoral Reform, ER is always strongly opposed (often surreptitiously) by those who are the major beneficiaries of its distortions—typically backroom operators of the major parties and their dance partners (patrons and corporate lobbyists).
- A partial list of countries that have replaced FPTP:
  - [Australia](#) (replaced by [IRV](#) in 1918)
  - [Belgium](#) (replaced by Party list PR in 1899)
  - [Denmark](#) (replaced by PR in 1920)
  - [Hong Kong](#) (replaced by List PR in 1998)
  - [Netherlands](#) (replaced by Party list PR in 1917)<sup>[27]</sup>
  - [New Zealand](#) (replaced by [MMP](#) in 1996)
  - [Scotland](#) (replaced by [Party list PR](#) in 1999)
  - [South Africa](#) (replaced by [Party list PR](#) in 1996)

#### (4) What are appropriate **criteria for Electoral Justice?**

Ideally, Electoral Justice would be best served by a new electoral system that eliminated all of the anti-democratic defects of FPTP, which also empowered voters with new possibilities to achieve *true* Democracy, and enhancements to minimize inevitable imbalances:

1. Make every vote count—always and equally—in the election of each representative as well as the government.
2. Empower voters to elect their own government (i.e. reclaim this power from their representatives).
3. Ensure each elected representative has true '*democratic legitimacy*' (i.e. the support of a majority of voters).
4. Eliminate the electoral injustices of '*false majority*' governments, '*wrong winners*', and lack of an Official Opposition.
5. Ensure that the Government has the support of a majority of Citizens.
6. Ensure that all legislation has the support of a majority of Citizens.
7. Give every Citizen a positive reason to vote—assuring that their vote will always count equally—regardless of riding boundaries, population sizes, and how others vote.
8. Empower voters to vote for their *true* preference—by eliminating the coercion that leads to '*strategic voting*', and by ensuring that every vote counts in Parliament (even for defeated candidates or parties).
9. Ensure equitability for all voters and all political parties by eliminating the '*vote splitting*' problem.
10. Eliminate the potential of political advantage based on riding boundaries and concentration of votes—hence eliminate the '*gerrymandering*' effect (intentional or unintentional).
11. Ensure that the parliamentary voting power of each party is always (and automatically) proportional to their share of Citizens' votes (i.e. some form of PR).
12. Minimize the possibility of tie votes in Parliament (i.e. due to electoral system distortions).
13. Provide a capability to achieve more balanced representation—by party, by region, by gender and demographics.
14. Provide a capability for representation of independent candidates if and as appropriate.
15. Provide a capability for voters to constructively express dissent.
16. Provide a better way to engage young voters.
17. Provide a better way for Citizens to hold their Government accountable.
18. Ensure that the electoral system is guaranteed to provide Electoral Justice by design, while also being as simple and easy to understand as possible.

#### **N.B.:**

- **FPTP** fails all of the above criteria for electoral justice.
- **PerfectPR** fulfills all of the above criteria for electoral justice.

## 6. Appendix: What are the Lessons from the Tragedy of BC-STV?

- “ [Lessons from the Tragedy of BC-STV](#) ”: MP3 audio file of a documentary produced by Jeff Jewell in 2009 for Vancouver Co-Op Radio.
- BC-STV was strongly recommended by the BC Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform (2005).
- This was an exceptionally thorough and well supported study by 160 BC Citizens, randomly selected. They short-listed MMP and STV. They chose STV over MMP by 80% to 20%. They chose STV over FPTP by 93% to 7%.
- STV was chosen because it gave more power and more choice to Citizens, whereas MMP gave more power to the political parties. Unfortunately, STV was comparatively much more complex.
- The 2005 referendum on **BC-STV was approved by 57.8% of BC voters**, with a majority in 97% of the ridings. The BC Government (Liberal) arbitrarily set the undemocratic requirement of 60% (despite the fact that a 50%+1 majority was recognized as sufficient for a referendum on Quebec independence which almost broke up our country).
- The 2009 referendum on BC-STV, with ER by then an issue forgotten by most voters, was approved by only 39%. This provided a textbook example of how to exploit apathy and anxiety to delude the majority into voting against ER and the public interest.
- The opponents of ER have all the experience and means to run another successful negative campaign to dupe the disinterested majority into voting against their own interests to defeat ER.
- **The plan of BC’s new NDP government to hold a referendum on PR is dubious and/or misguided.**
- Unless the leaders of the NDP and Green parties provide strong principled leadership to champion the cause and inform Citizens about the importance of ER, their planned referendum seems doomed to defeat by a negative campaign of disinformation professionally run by political partisans.
- STV is a highly regarded form of ER, but it’s not true PR and it’s rather too complex for most voters.
- "[Rural-Urban PR](#)" would be a better alternative than STV or MMP.
- “**PerfectPR**” would be the best alternative, for many reasons.

## 7. Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions about Electoral Reform

### 1. What do BC Greens need to know about PR?

- With Proportional Representation (PR), the Greens would become a politically viable party, with a future potential to form government.
- Without PR, the Greens would remain doomed as a fringe party, with little or no chance to play a significant role and achieve its objectives, and would be seen by a majority of Citizens as *'spoilers'* taking votes away from the major parties (as would objectively remain true).
- With PR, the Greens (and other small parties, and voters) have so much to gain—whereas the two dominant parties have even more to lose—as they would lose their shared stranglehold on government, usually with a *'false majority'* (i.e. 100% of the power based on less than 50% of the votes), as the beneficiaries of *'strategic voting'* (by voters who *'hold their nose'* and vote for the *'lesser of evils'*, in a desperate attempt to avoid their vote being wasted by FPTP) which effectively controls election outcomes (i.e. based on the shared belief of many voters that only those parties can possibly win, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy).

### 2. What do BC Greens need to do about the expected referendum on PR in 2018?

- The BC Greens must seize the moment and take ownership of this issue. The major parties have vested interests that put them on the *'wrong'* side of this issue—i.e. against the People's interests and against Electoral Justice.
- PR is very unlikely to be achieved unless the BC Greens make it happen.
- Expect obstruction and no favours from the other parties.

### 3. What should be the guiding principle for the BC Greens advocacy of PR?

- It should *not* be focused on explaining technical details of the alternative forms of PR.
- It should be focused on Electoral Justice (not nebulous Electoral Reform), and objective criteria for evaluating voting systems.
- It should make a solid case exposing FPTP as being unjust, undemocratic and unacceptable.
- The Greens should take the strongest possible public position—as champions of the People and Electoral Justice—calling for the adoption of PR. This is an important opportunity to raise public awareness of the issue and demonstrate leadership.

### 4. Should there be a referendum on PR?

- Dr. Dennis Pilon, one of Canada's leading political scientists, has explained why a referendum on ER is unnecessary, inappropriate and inadvisable: (Pilon, Vancouver Sun Op-ed, 2017/05/29: [Change the voting system without a referendum](#) ).
- FPTP was never adopted by Citizens in any referendum.
- A promise of a referendum on PR is a promise that can easily be kept without being fulfilled. Opponents of ER (e.g. the federal Conservatives) have demanded a referendum, pretending that this is a constitutional or democratic requirement (untrue), knowing that all Canadian referenda on ER have been successfully defeated by stealthy disinformation campaigns.
- A strong case can be made that a referendum on PR would be a violation of Electoral Justice, given that its defeat would result in the majority depriving the minority of their innate and inalienable right to a vote that counts in the election of their government.

## 5. Where do the parties *really* stand on PR?

- The Greens are fully committed to PR, and should become its champions!
- The NDP promised a referendum on PR when they were in Opposition. (n.b. Some NDP associates played key roles in the defeat of ER in the 2005 and 2009 referenda on BC-STV.)
- The former BC Liberal leader opposed BC-STV in 2005 when she was Deputy Premier, strongly supported BC-STV in 2009 when she was a political commentator, and spoke strongly against PR just before she quit politics (again).
- **No Canadian party has ever delivered on a promise of ER when they became Government** (presumably because power takes precedence over principles—and the leadership doesn't want to lose the quasi-dictatorial power of '*false majority*' governments).

## 6. Where do the People stand on PR?

- **Most people don't know and don't really care** that much about Democracy, and have no idea how a voting system shapes both electoral outcomes and how the game of politics is played.
- A solid majority (57.8%) of BC voters supported BC-STV in 2005, but this slipped to only 39% in 2009 due to a stronger negative campaign and limited public awareness.
- A successful campaign should be possible in 2018. But only with a strong public information campaign, focused on Electoral Justice, leveraging the work of the BC Citizens' Assembly, and by calling out the predictable disinformation campaign against PR.

## 7. Is STV a form of PR?

- Roughly—but not really. However, STV is much more proportional than FPTP. Using a preferential ballot and grouping up to seven ridings together, STV achieves a degree of proportionality by lowering the threshold for election (i.e. lowering the standard of democracy) accordingly (e.g. one-eighth plus one for election in a seven-member district), and transferring surplus votes and votes for defeated candidates to each voter's next choice, through a rather complex process of elimination (quite fair and logical, but easily ridiculed by opponents, and guaranteed to confuse most people).
- The BCCA shortlisted STV and MMP (i.e. Single-Transferable-Vote and Mixed-Member-Proportional, generally referred to as PR) and evaluated them very carefully. While a strong majority initially preferred PR, they chose STV over MMP by 80% to 20%, mainly because STV gave voters more choice whereas MMP gave the parties more control.

## 8. Should BC-STV be reconsidered in 2018, as a superior alternative to PR?

- No. Although STV is vastly better than FPTP and clearly superior to MMP, it's imperfect and too complex.
- PerfectPR is a much better alternative (i.e. strongly based on democratic principles, much more easily understood, almost immune to reasonable criticism, much more easily implemented, no unfortunate consequences, scrupulously fair to all Voters and all Parties, with many unique opportunities for future enhancements).



## 9. What is PR?

- Proportional Representation (i.e. PR) is a generic designation of a class of voting systems. In principle, the objective of PR is to achieve Electoral Justice, by making the number of seats of each party be as nearly proportional as possible to their share of Citizens' votes. A secondary goal is to achieve more balanced representation (by gender etc.).
- PR has been used many places to remedy the grossly disproportionate (i.e. distorted) results of elections under First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)—in particular to avoid '*wasted votes*' and to make (almost) every vote count.
- To achieve approximate proportionality between the number seats and the votes for each party, PR requires some major intervention in electoral boundaries (and/or additional seats) as well as the electoral process (e.g. transferring votes from one candidate to a voter's next choice, as in STV) or adjustment (e.g. additional regional or 'compensatory' seats as in MMP) to offset the distorted results of FPTP.

## 10. What are the major problems with FPTP that are resolved with PR?

- Eliminates the '*wasted vote*' problem (almost), making every vote count (STV and MMP).
- Eliminates the '*vote-splitting*' problem (STV and MMP).
- Eliminates 'strategic voting' (STV).

## 11. What are the problems that PR creates?

- STV's major changes: much larger voting districts (up to seven ridings); many more names on ballots; much more complex voting and counting procedures; relatively low level of proportionality.
- MMP's major changes: to riding boundaries; needs either about 50% more representatives, or 50% larger ridings, or some combination of each; gives more control to parties and less accountability of representatives to voters.
- Major impacts on voters, candidates and parties.

## 12. If PR is so problematic, why does anybody want it?

- FPTP is so thoroughly unjust, and its distortions always work to the unearned advantage of the winners and corresponding unfair disadvantages of the losers.
- Victimized losing parties under FPTP often declare their intention to replace it if they win.
- But once they win, they become beneficiaries of FPTP distortions, and they usually set up a process that's designed to fail (e.g. the federal Liberals in 2016, and BC Liberals in 2005).

## 13. What should BC's NDP Government (supported by BC Greens) do to fulfill their commitment on PR?

- Acknowledge that the underlying commitment is to Electoral Justice.
- Establish a "**PR Implementation Committee**" (with membership proportional to party vote-share) with a clear mandate to determine the best form of PR.
- Conduct an open process with Citizen engagement and full public information.
- Adopt the chosen form of PR by a majority vote of the Legislature—with no referendum.

- If PerfectPR is chosen, it should be implemented as soon as possible to ensure government stability and a truly democratic balance of power (i.e. Electoral Justice).

#### **14. How should the best form of PR be determined?**

- This would be determined by the "**PR Implementation Committee**".
- Establish objective criteria, under the principles of Electoral Justice, stating what an electoral system should and should not do (with reference to the defects of FPTP and other systems).
- See table on page 11 as suggested criteria.

#### **15. Would the People accept PerfectPR?**

- Surely the People would want *their* votes to *always* count, equally, and be cast with every vote in the legislature—as a proxy vote by an elected representative of their preferred party—regardless whether their local candidate won or lost.
- PerfectPR is a much better alternative (i.e. strongly based on democratic principles, much more easily understood, almost immune to reasonable criticism, much more easily implemented, no unfortunate consequences, scrupulously fair to all Voters and all Parties, with many unique opportunities for future enhancements).

## 8. Appendix: Should Democracy be re-invented for the Digital Age?

It's time to reinvent Democracy and its electoral processes, to escape from the defects and limitations of medieval or 19<sup>th</sup> Century voting systems, and take advantage of the new possibilities of the Digital Age.

- We must carefully design secure online voting systems.
- We should make voting a much more frequent opportunity.
- We should make Governments more accountable and more responsive to their Citizens.
- We should do everything possible to increase voter participation.

The old version of Democracy with one vote per Citizen every four years was right for previous centuries, when the pace of life was so much slower, and voting and vote counting required so much human effort.

- Digital technology has radically transformed the options and expectations of modern life (well before children reach school age).
- Most financial transactions are now done by computer, safely and securely, with appropriate controls. Verification and auditing ensure accuracy and integrity.
- Voting is an electoral transaction, which should also be done by computer, safely and securely, with appropriate controls. Verification and auditing would ensure accuracy and integrity.
- With the power and flexibility of proxy voting, the convenience of online voting, and near-zero cost of voting transactions, there is no need or justification for restricting voting to one vote every four years.
- **PerfectPR** enables the two electoral objectives of voting to be separated:
  - (1) electing a local representative;  
n.b.: Consideration should be given to the possibility of two candidates per party per riding, to provide meaningful democratic choice in 'safe seats', and to improve voter accountability of incumbents.
  - (2) giving parliamentary voting power to a party;  
n.b.: a 'non-partisan' voting option for 'Independent' representation is recommended, to give voters a constructive option of dissent.
    - General elections to elect local representatives on a fixed schedule (e.g. four to six years).
    - Citizens should be able to vote online for a political party every year (e.g. on their birthday). Voters would be registered with the Elections Authority. Online voting would be initiated by the Elections Authority, and follow established authentication protocols.
    - Voters should be able to verify their electoral transactions online (just like financial transactions).
    - With **PerfectPR**, voting transactions should be validated and implemented periodically (e.g. monthly or quarterly). This should remove concerns about 'election hacking'.
    - This would greatly improve Government accountability to Citizens, and should increase Citizen participation in Democracy.

BC should become a leader, and we should transform BC's Democracy into the model for all of Canada—and for the World!