<u>Announcing "CITIZEN'S VOTE EMPOWERMENT": the Third Alternative!</u>

Our First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system is unjust to voters, candidates and political parties.
It produces an unjust balance of power in the Legislature—disproportionate to party vote-shares.
Voting systems based on Proportional Representation (PR) are designed to replace FPTP because of its distortions and other defects.

Most democratic countries use some form of PR. Many Canadians who see that FPTP violates basic democratic principles have long wanted some form of PR.
Most of them overlook the defects of the various forms of PR, and under-estimate their vulnerability to defeat by a NO campaign in a referendum on PR.

Thankfully, we now have a much simpler and better way to free ourselves from the injustices of FPTP, while also avoiding a flawed PR alternative. The solution is to **fix FPTP—by eliminating its defects—***through* "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**"!

<u>The major consequences of</u> "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" *are:*

1. It's no longer justified or acceptable to use FPTP without "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**".
2. All seat-based PR alternatives become obsolete by "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**".

In BC's upcoming referendum on PR, Citizens are told there are basically only two alternatives:

1. **To retain FPTP (**with all its serious defects).
2. **To replace FPTP** with some unidentified form of PR (with some new set of lesser(?) defects).

Both the YES and NO campaigns would have us believe that these are the only possible alternatives. But they are wrong; there is a better way!

3. **To fix FPTP**, so that we won't continue suffering from its defects, and so it won't need to be replaced. And this can easily be done by eliminating FPTP's defects, thereby making it perfectly fair to all, while automatically guaranteeing a perfectly proportional balance of power in the Legislature!

The easy way to fix what's wrong with FPTP is through "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**". It's based on a simple principle: *"Doing Democracy 'right' by making the Citizen's vote <u>really</u> count, where it matters most—in the Legislature"*.

"**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" is also founded on analysis of FPTP's defects. Its core defect is *'wasted votes'*, whereby all votes for defeated candidates have no representation in the Legislature, and are effectively *'thrown away'* by FPTP. The consequences of the *'wasted vote'* problem are a list of serious subsidiary defects, including: *'strategic voting'*; *'vote splitting'*; *'safe seats'; 'false majority'* governments; *'wrong winners'*; *'blowout elections'*; *'fragile governments'*—*and increasing numbers of people who see no good reason to vote at all.*

By eliminating FPTP's core defect of *'wasted votes'*, "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" thereby also removes all of its subsidiary defects. This transforms FPTP from being a system that regularly distorts the *'Will of the People'*—cheating a large majority of voters, candidates and parties—into an honest system that's perfectly fair to all voters, candidates (including incumbents) and parties!

How do we implement "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" and fix FPTP's problems?

- o Make the Citizen's vote the unit of voting power in the Legislature!
- o Each party would have exactly as many votes in the legislature as won by all of their candidates (i.e. elected and defeated).
- o Each party's votes should be equitably assigned among their Representatives, according to established rules, with the Leaders holding any unassigned votes that may remain.
- o As each Representative casts their single vote in the Legislature, this would automatically be converted by computer into their assigned number of Citizen's votes (i.e. *'proxy voting'*).

  [Computers can instantly convert the Representative's votes into Citizen's votes—and instantly count millions of Citizen's votes with absolute accuracy and full transparency to all Representatives. Clearly, in the digital age, this is the right way to count votes in the Legislature! This is by far the simplest and most fair way to do Democracy. It would likely have been invented by the pioneers of PR if they had computers or cell phones in the 'horse-and-buggy' era!]

Given that FPTP always cheats a large majority of voters in so many ways (about half of all Citizen's votes being *'wasted'*, about two-thirds of the votes being in *'safe seats'* where no vote really makes any difference, and about a third of the voters being coerced into *'strategic voting'* against their true preference) maybe it's surprising that about two-thirds of our Citizens still vote (although voting seems to decline with each generation). By eliminating these and other problems of FPTP, and making all votes equal, "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" gives everyone a very good reason to vote.

As "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" works with FPTP, no voting system changes are required!

- o No changes to riding boundaries.
- o No changes to voting procedures.
- o No changes to how votes are counted and Representatives are elected.
- o No changes to the relationship and accountability of Representatives to Citizens.
- o No costs or complexities to implement "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**".
- o No costs or complexities to revoke "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" and revert to flawed FPTP.

The Benefits of "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**"!

- o **Perfect proportionality** is automatic!
- o **No need to ever change ridings** (even as population changes)—a major future savings!
- o Since all Citizen's votes will be equal (even for losing candidates, even in *'safe seats'*) and counted in the Legislature (for all parties that win a seat), **voters are liberated from the coerced practice of *'strategic voting'.*** Everyone is empowered to vote for their true preference (knowing that their vote will not be *'wasted'*), rather than being forced to *'hold their nose'* and vote for a *'lesser of evils'* in a desperate attempt to block some other party from becoming the Government.
- o **No possibility of any rural-urban or regional bias**—because all votes count equally.
- o **Eliminates the risk of tie votes** in the Legislature, and problems selecting a Speaker.
- o Facilitates future enhancements—e.g. **elimination of regional polarization** (ensuring both the Government and Official Opposition are represented in all regions), and **'balanced representation'**

(reducing under-representation of *'third'* parties) by the creation of **regional seats**, similar to MMP. But unlike MMP, such seats could even be decided after an election, on an *as-needed* basis (and targeted *where-needed* to remedy representational deficiencies), as they would have no impact on the balance of power between the parties (they'd simply draw down the reservoir of unrepresented votes for defeated candidates—aka *'wasted votes'*). Also, only about one-third the number of *'top-up'* seats would be needed (because perfect proportionality is automatic), and they could be filled by best runners-up with consideration of demographic factors (e.g. gender balance, age, etc.).

o **No need to wait for an election** to implement "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" since the only changes in voting procedures are not at the ballot box—but in the Legislature (i.e. to reflect the expressed *'Will of the People'*)!

o **No need to waste public funds on a referendum** for "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**". With appropriate media analysis and coverage, **this should be a non-partisan campaign based on democratic principles and voter's rights**, rather than a divisive political battle.

"**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" is the **true fulfillment of the original goals of PR** and has rendered seat-based PR alternatives into a pointless pursuit of a *'horse-and-buggy'* era concept. Moreover, whereas **opponents of PR can make a plausible case against any standard PR** alternative (based on added costs, complexity, confusion, larger ridings or multi-riding electoral districts, more seats, party lists, reduced accountability, rural-urban bias etc.), by contrast **there's no good reason for not fixing the problems of our existing system**—especially with a *cost-free, trouble-free* and *risk-free* solution available!

"**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" is a *'made-in-BC'* perfect fix for FPTP's undemocratic and unjust flaws which have plagued Democracy for centuries, everywhere FPTP has been used.

Adoption of "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" would become a lasting legacy of this Premier and this Government, and a truly historic gift of BC to Democracy across Canada and around the world.

For further information on "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**":

" **Citizen's Vote Empowerment** *"*, submission to the BC Government on "How We Vote"*.

" PR Redux, Citizen's Vote Empowerment ", summary of submission on "How We Vote".

" Q&A, Citizen's Vote Empowerment ", further analysis of PR and CVE issues.

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*N.B.: Electoral Justice Now acknowledges that our vision of "***Citizen's Vote Empowerment***" was inspired by submissions to the BC Citizens' Assembly in 2004 by Mr. John R Kennedy of Burnaby BC.*
*We believe "***Citizen's Vote Empowerment***" would clearly be the best choice—with the best chance to become the BC2018 PR Referendum winner! However, we've also developed a comprehensive and flexible set of electoral reform options called* "Citizen's Vote Empowerment +" *which merit consideration as possible future refinements.*