



Electoral Justice Now!

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

©2017 ElectoralJusticeNow.ca

EJN Newsletter #16: BC's 2018 PROREP REFERENDUM

The Vote for PROREP: 'WE the PEOPLE' vs the 'SYSTEM' !!!

by Jeff & Diana Jewell

'We the People' will win the Referendum on Proportional Representation (ProRep), but only if we keep our eyes on the prize (Question #1: the vote for ProRep), and refuse to be confused by distractions (Question #2: to rank the government's three ProRep alternatives).

By winning the vote for ProRep, BC will become the first province to free itself from the First Past The Post (FPTP) voting system (a vestige of Canada's colonial era). BC would become a standard of truly representative democracy, and inspiration for the rest of Canada.

But if the People and ProRep are again defeated, electoral reform in BC and Canada will likely be dead for another generation—and the winner would be the 'System', controlled by political powerbrokers of the major parties, on behalf of their patrons and corporate lobbyists.

So the stakes for democracy and liberty could not be higher. Either the people finally win an honest voting system, or we remain subjugated under the FPTP 'System' of fake democracy.

Either 'We the People' win, or the 'System' wins.

Question #1 will determine the future of democracy in Canada! That's the real importance of a vote for ProRep!! That's what BC's Referendum on ProRep is really all about!!!

So what is this Referendum Question #2, why is it there, and what should voters do about it?

Question #2 is optional, deliberately confusing, and should simply be ignored by the 99.99% of people who aren't voting system wonks.

Question #2 entices voters to rank the three ProRep alternatives selected by the government: Dual Member Proportional (DMP); Mixed Member Proportional (MMP); Rural-Urban Proportional (RUP). Most voters don't have the time or interest to study these alternatives enough to choose among them. Question #2 seems designed to generate public confusion and frustration—and thereby to discourage voter participation.

Are DMP, MMP and RUP the best ProRep choices? While that could be argued either way, what's clear is that they were selected under a process entirely controlled by the government. Of these choices, only MMP has ever been implemented anywhere, and it's said to be the NDP's preference. Which raises the question of whether DMP and RUP were chosen on merit, or to channel voters into supporting MMP? Such suspicion may be groundless—but cannot be dismissed given the government's secretive and partisan process.

Question #2 may appear as a sincere invitation for public participation in the democratic process. Yet the opposite is true, as it draws disinterested and distrustful electorate into the political swamp of voting system technicalities and unknown consequences. This is particularly distressing since the government was strongly advised, by a majority of electoral reform advocates, to avoid any detailed question that most people would find confusing.

The government received over 40 submissions from ProRep advocacy organizations, with a large majority making **two very clear and specific recommendations**:

1. The referendum should have one simple question—not requiring any knowledge of ProRep details, to avoid confusing voters and suppressing voter participation.

[Fair Vote Canada BC: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/271/2018/01/FVC-BC-Submission-2018-01-23.pdf>]

“We recommend what some have called a “mandate question” that is precise enough to ensure that voters know what they are voting for but avoids drawing voters into the arcane technicalities of PR voting systems.”

[Fair Voting BC: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/271/2018/03/Fair-Voting-BC.pdf>]

“Ballot Question: The ballot should include a specific question requesting a public mandate to adopt proportional voting that is linked to a transparent public process to choose a specific proportional system.”

2. If a ‘party list’ form of ProRep (MMP or DMP) is chosen, it should explicitly exclude ‘closed lists’, that would give party bosses more control, with less accountability to citizens.

[Fair Voting BC: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/271/2018/03/Fair-Voting-BC.pdf>]

“Closed party lists - British Columbians have expressed no interest in voting systems in which political parties have the power to place candidates in favoured positions on a list such that those closest to the top are highly likely to be elected regardless of whether or not voters specifically select them.

... We strongly recommend that the government explicitly exclude these features”.

The government chose to ignore both of these recommendations, making it much easier for the NO campaign to criticize the referendum and its ProRep choices, and far more difficult for the YES campaign to convince voters that the government hasn’t rigged the referendum to its advantage (as alleged by the Liberals and the NO campaign).

Who’s behind the NO campaign, and what interests do they represent? The official NO campaign is led by a former NDP strategist, a former BC Liberal cabinet member, and a former senior bureaucrat. While this may appear as an odd coalition of partisan political interests, they’re all loyal servants of the ‘System’. Their mission is to preserve the power structure of the ‘System’—by defending it against the democratic interests of the People. Their method is to run a FUD campaign—to maximize public Fears, Uncertainties and Doubts about ProRep, based on misinformation and half-truths.

Is the government really trying to win this referendum, as proclaimed? Or are the two major parties engaging in a ritual dance, choreographed by their backroom strategists, to defeat ProRep (just as they did in the two previous BC referendums on BC-STV)? If that’s their objective, they couldn’t have done a better job.

Political reporter Tom Fletcher outlined a conspiracy theory about the NDP government’s referendum:

“they’re making a mess of it on purpose so proportional representation will be dead for a generation, along with Green hopes of further erosion of NDP support that goes to them and other upstart parties”.

<https://www.abbynews.com/opinion/b-c-views-no-time-for-maps-in-referendum/>]

What’s clear is that Question #2 could not have been a greater gift to the FUD campaign if it was a backroom concoction of the NO cabal. Was it? Did the ‘System’ use its back-channel powers to produce a ProRep referendum that was covertly designed to be defeated? Are the people being duped again by the ‘System’?

Here’s why ‘We the People’ should vote for ProRep to replace FPTP:

- Most Canadians recognize that our FPTP voting system always produces distorted results that are unfair to many if not most voters, candidates and political parties.
- FPTP usually gives the winner (not always the party with the most votes) a ‘false majority’ government, with 100% of the power based on a majority of seats, but typically only 40% vote-share from the 60% of

citizens who still have faith in the system and make the effort to vote. So FPTP routinely gives us quasi-dictatorships that are only supported by about 25% of the people.

- Because votes for losing candidates are ‘wasted’ (having no impact on the balance of power in the legislature), many voters are coerced into ‘strategic voting’ (for the ‘lesser of evils’). This results in the ‘two-party’ system, where any number of parties can run but only two have any chance of forming government.
- Hence, under FPTP voters aren’t really free to vote their conscience, and any ‘third party’ is doomed to playing a negative role as a ‘spoiler’ that interferes with the main contest between the two dominant parties.

In summary, FPTP never delivers electoral justice, due to its many flaws: ‘false majority’ dictatorships; ‘wrong winner’ elections; ‘blowout’ elections; ‘wasted votes’ (about half of all votes) and ‘strategic voting’ (about one-third); ‘safe seats’ (about two-thirds); gerrymandering etc. All such systemic defects of FPTP are alleviated by ProRep.

Most people believe this referendum is about voting systems. But it’s really about political power and control. It’s really about the democratic liberation of the People vs the preservation of the ‘System’. The two electable parties, and their patrons and lobbyists (the powerbrokers behind the NO campaign), don’t want to lose FPTP, which is the direct source of their unfair advantage and political power. It’s so much easier for politicians and lobbyists to do backroom deals with a quasi-dictatorship under FPTP, than a minority or coalition government under ProRep.

In conclusion, we advise voters to not waste any time trying to understand the government’s three ProRep choices—none of which are fully specified.

Just vote YES for ProRep on Question #1, and leave Question #2 blank.

If a majority votes for ProRep and none of the government’s alternatives receives a majority, the government should then be obliged to initiate **a transparent and non-partisan process to select the best ProRep alternative** for BC—as recommended by a majority of advocates.

If you agree, please share this referendum analysis and voting strategy your friends.

‘We the People’ will win the referendum for ProRep—but only if a majority of voters refuse to be confused by Question #2!