



Fair Vote Vancouver

Media Release
For Immediate Release

Berger Commission Urged To Favour Pro-Rep

VANCOUVER -- April 7, 2004 -- Fair Vote Vancouver is urging the Berger Commission, the Vancouver Electoral Reform Commission, to pay more attention to "pro-rep" and other innovative advances. While proportional representation is often mentioned by the commission, it is usually as a sidelight, something that seems unlikely or too difficult. Submissions to the commission from the Vancouver Green Party and others have shown that some forms of pro-rep are allowable under the current Vancouver Charter, though Commissioner Berger has not yet conceded that point.

The commission has heard experts talk in favour of only non-proportional systems: at-large plurality (the current system), straight wards, and a mixture of the two. They even had three ex-mayors plugging those three options.

"Looking around the world, nations and other jurisdictions looking to adopt the most advanced systems do not pay much attention to archaic systems like those," said Korky Day, a spokesperson for the group, "Rather, they consider the various systems which can accomplish fair proportions."

"The momentum for pro-rep is snowballing right now. Six provinces, the federal government, and the City of Vancouver are all officially looking at electoral alternatives," said Steve Kisby, "BC's Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, looking at ways to improve the first-past-the-post ward system being use at the provincial level, has issued its first statement cautiously saying that pro-rep has merit."

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is considering pro-rep and is about to begin public hearings. The Quebec government is expected to introduce legislation for a proportional system this spring. The new Liberal government in Ontario has promised a binding referendum on a new voting system. The PEI government is considering a proposal to move to pro-rep. New Brunswick and Saskatchewan are studying reform options.

Minister Cotler, last week on March 31, tabled in Parliament the Law Commission of Canada report that recommends scrapping the current federal first-past-the-post system and replacing it with a proportional voting system. The new Conservative Party caucus is supporting pro-rep and other reforms. Federal NDP leader Jack Layton has announced that any minority government requiring NDP support will have to hold a national referendum on pro-rep. The Green Party is actively campaigning for pro-rep.

Of those eight jurisdictions, Vancouver is one of the first to report. Is Vancouver going to lead the way to electoral fairness, higher voter turn-outs, and superior governance, or be left in the dust?

The commission might feel that it is constrained by the Vancouver Charter and the provincial Liberals from designing the best system for Vancouver. With the BC Liberals behind in the polls, now might be just the time they will be anxious to prove they really are serving the people. Why else would they have set up a Citizens' Assembly which is likely to recommend pro-rep?

"Why does federal NDP candidate Kennedy Stewart, who is also at the forefront of COPE's Think City, push straight wards?" said Day, "His master's thesis praised pro-rep and both the federal and provincial NDP support it, too."

Fair Vote Vancouver is made up of voters who came together in response to the Vancouver Electoral Reform Commission. Background information can be found at <http://www.alternatives.com/prorep> and the group can be contacted at prorep@alternatives.com

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