



Fair Vote Vancouver

Media Release
For Immediate Release

Berger Commission Urged To Recommend The Best System

VANCOUVER -- April 13, 2004 -- Fair Vote Vancouver calls on the Berger Commission, the Vancouver Electoral Reform Commission, to recommend in its upcoming report to City Council a system that it thinks is best for Vancouver, not just a system it believes can be done without a change to the City Charter. Initially, the Berger Commission was not considering proportional representation and other innovative advances in electoral reform because it believed those systems require changes to the City Charter, yet at the same time the commission was considering recommending spending controls and financial reporting even though those changes also require changes to the city's Charter.

"It's hypocritical of the commission to consider recommending spending limits and financial reporting requirements that would require a change to the Vancouver Charter while at the same time not consider proportional systems or preferential voting because they require changes to the Charter," said Steve Kisby, as spokesperson for the group.

The Berger Commission has said that it "intends to make recommendations divided into two parts: What the Council can do on its own, and what will require provincial legislation." Fair Vote Vancouver calls on the commission to recommend the best system and simply state in its recommendations what parts of that system Council can do on its own and what parts of that system will require provincial legislation.

"COPE is lobbying the commission to recommend rushing to straight wards. That apparently would be without spending controls and financial reporting," said Kisby. "The system they want to bring in would be even worse than what we now have provincially or federally," continued Kisby.

One of the dangers of rushing to one of the two systems the commission says can be implemented by City Council, would be that they would be implemented without the spending controls and financial reporting that have been widely called for.

City Council has asked the Commission to report to Council on "other reforms for the improvement of civic democracy that would require amendments to the Vancouver Charter or other statutes in order to be implemented" and to "report to Council on the merits of the current at-large system, the ward system and other alternative systems."

Until recently, the commission had been saying that only three non-proportional systems were under consideration: at-large plurality (the current system), straight wards, and a mixture of the two.

All three panellists at the April 6 Think City Think Democracy wrap-up agreed that a system that included proportionality would be superior to a straight wards system.

A straight wards system is the same flawed system we now have provincially and federally. The Berger Commission is due to report at the end of May 2004.

Fair Vote Vancouver is made up of voters who came together in response to Vancouver's Electoral Reform Commission. They believe a voting system should be measured on these four principles: Proportionality (where there should be a close correspondence between the percentage of votes a party or political affiliation wins and the percentage of seats it wins), Voter Choice (where comparatively you want a voting system that is better at presenting the choices that voters want, and encourages voters to vote sincerely, rather than strategically), Local Representation (where all regions in Vancouver should be fairly represented in City Council), and Every Vote Counts (where the voting system should accord equal weight to all ballots cast and should minimize the wastage of votes).

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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