



PR by “CITIZEN’S VOTE EMPOWERMENT”

**How our existing voting system can be made truly Fair
— for all Citizens, political parties, and candidates!**

*Submission to the BC Government’s Public Consultations for the
BC 2018 Referendum on Proportional Representation*

Electoral Justice Now!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Summary | 3 |
| Highlights | 3 |
| Recommendations | 4 |
| Referendum Question..... | 4 |
| Preamble to a Referendum Question on “Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”: | 5 |
| Appendix#1: How “Citizen’s Vote Empowerment” Fixes FPTP’s Problems!..... | 6 |
| Defects of our present FPTP electoral system | 6 |
| “Citizen’s Vote Empowerment” as the true solution to FPTP’s defects | 8 |
| Unique benefits of PR by “Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”: | 8 |
| Proxy voting in the Legislature: the key to “Citizen’s Vote Empowerment” | 9 |
| Proxy PR alternatives..... | 9 |
| Proxy Vote Assignment Alternatives | 10 |
| Appendix#2: Critique of the Major PR Alternatives | 11 |
| Excerpts from the transcript of the presentation to ERRE Committee (2016/09/28):..... | 11 |
| The standard (seat-based) PR alternatives—their strengths and weaknesses | 11 |
| Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP). | 12 |
| Single Transferable Vote (STV). | 12 |
| Flexible District PR | 13 |
| Local PR. | 13 |
| Appendix#3: Political realities of PR..... | 14 |
| Partisan political ‘elephants’ in the PR room..... | 14 |
| Players in the PR Referendum game..... | 14 |
| Observations, Opinions & Conclusions..... | 16 |
| Who we are | 17 |



PR by “CITIZEN’S VOTE EMPOWERMENT”

Doing Democracy ‘right’—by making the Citizen’s vote really count, where it matters most—in the Legislature !

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SUMMARY

1. The BC Government’s commitment to a referendum on PR (Proportional Representation) is praiseworthy. However, while any form of PR would be far more democratic than our present FPTP (First-Past-The-Post) system, all standard forms of PR have unfortunate defects, that are easily exploited by a NO campaign to defeat them in a referendum. Hence, standard PR is not the answer—and a referendum on PR risks becoming another painful exercise in futility.
2. Fortunately, there’s a much simpler and better solution. FPTP’s basic flaw (i.e. all votes for losing local candidates being ‘wasted’—having no influence in electing the Government), along with its many consequent problems, can easily be eliminated—with no need to replace FPTP!
3. “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” would fix what’s wrong with FPTP—transforming it from a democratically dishonest electoral system that always produces distorted outcomes—into an honest system that guarantees a perfectly proportional balance of voting power in the Legislature! This profound improvement (plus many more) can be achieved without increased complexity and costs, with no need to change ridings or add seats, and without changing our voting procedures or the relationship and accountability of local Representatives!
4. “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” would be perfectly fair to all voters, parties and candidates (including incumbents)—with no possibility of any regional bias, and no need to ever add seats, even with future population changes (a substantial bonus benefit over the long term).
5. There’s no need or justification for wasting further time and money evaluating (or engaging in divisive partisan disputes about) any of the standard PR alternatives (e.g. MMP, STV etc.).
6. There’s no need to waste any public funds on either a YES or NO campaign for a referendum to mandate “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”—as this, with appropriate media analysis and coverage, should be a non-partisan campaign based on democratic principles and voter’s rights.

Highlights

- No need to change the ridings.
- No need to change how we vote.
- No need for further studies (or acrimonious debates) about flawed voting alternatives.
- No need for any wonky voting systems with complex voting procedures (along with a confusing public information program trying to explain it) that most people don’t understand.
- No need for any ‘*compensatory seats*’ filled from ‘*party lists*’.
- No need to reduce the accountability of local Representatives to constituents.
- No need to have more small parties in the Legislature.
- Just make every vote count equally—regardless which party.
- Just make every vote count equally—regardless whether the local candidate wins or loses.
- Just make every vote count equally—regardless where it is—even in ‘*safe seats*’.
- **Just make the Citizen’s vote really count—where it matters most—in the Legislature!**

Recommendations

1. Do NOT waste time and money on a referendum seeking a mandate to study and/or adopt an undetermined form of PR (as any non-specific question would likely be defeated).
2. Just fix our existing FPTP voting system—to make it fair for all voters, parties and candidates. And the obvious solution to the ‘wasted vote’ problem is to stop throwing Citizen’s votes away!
3. The way to fix FPTP is through “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”, i.e. “doing Democracy ‘right’, by **making the Citizen’s vote really count—where it matters most—in the Legislature**”.
4. **Make the Citizen’s vote the official unit of voting in the Legislature**—here’s how:
 - In the Legislature, make the number of votes for each party exactly equal to the number of Citizen’s votes won by all of their candidates (i.e. those elected and those defeated).
 - Each party’s votes are equitably assigned among their elected Representatives (under rules to be established—see below: “Proxy Vote Assignment Alternatives”).
 - Each Representative’s single vote cast in the Legislature is automatically converted by computer into their assigned number of Citizen’s votes (i.e. ‘proxy voting’).
 - Any Independent Representative would have the number of votes they personally received.
 - All laws passed by the Legislature would be supported by a majority of the Citizen’s votes!
5. Consider several practical improvements (which wouldn’t impact the political balance of power):
 - The Speaker should retain only his own single vote—with the rest of their votes reverting to the party, for reassignment to voting Representatives.
 - If a Representative is unavoidably absent, their votes should temporarily revert to the party, for reassignment to voting Representatives (i.e. Democracy and the Citizen’s right to be represented should not be compromised by the absence of Representatives).
 - To enhance government stability, a ‘**double majority**’ rule (i.e. a majority of both the Citizen’s votes and the Representative’s votes/seats) could be made a requirement for non-confidence votes (**this would retain FPTP’s level of stability**—and reduce the risks of a minority government being manipulated by a third-party with unreasonable demands).
6. A referendum on “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” should not be complicated by secondary electoral issues—such as regional/balanced representation, representation of votes for independents and unrepresented parties etc. Such issues should be considered as possible future refinements, as part of a comprehensive review after two election cycles (it being noted that reversion to the status quo ante could be done at any time, without complications or costs).

REFERENDUM QUESTION

To ask Citizens any question requiring any understanding of electoral systems would be unfair and unwise, probably resulting in its defeat. The only reasonable referendum question(s) would relate to **principles, democratic standards, or electoral outcomes**, such as:

- Should the Citizen’s vote be empowered to really count—where it matters most—in the Legislature?
- Should the Citizen’s vote be empowered as the unit of voting in the Legislature?
[n.b.: This would empower Citizens to elect their Government (for the first time under FPTP!) based on a majority of Citizen’s votes (rather than a majority of Representative’s seats).]
- Should the Citizen’s vote be empowered to ensure that all laws passed by the Legislature have the support of a majority of Citizens (as expressed through their votes)?

Preamble to a Referendum Question on “Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”:

The core problem with our present FPTP (First-Past-The-Post) voting system is that all votes for losing candidates (typically half of all Citizen's votes) are effectively '*wasted*'—meaning that they do not contribute to the voting power of those parties in the Legislature. This distortion always works to the unearned advantage of the winner and unfair disadvantage of the losers.

FPTP's '*wasted vote*' problem is also the direct source of many other serious problems, including: '*strategic voting*' (i.e. for the '*lesser of evils*'); '*false majority*' governments (i.e. total control with less than 50% vote-share); '*safe seats*' (where only one party can win, and no vote really matters); '*vote splitting*' (similar parties defeat each other); '*wrong winners*' (e.g. BC1996 the NDP won a '*false majority*' government with only 39% vote-share—when the losing Liberals had 41%) etc.

The goal of PR (Proportional Representation) is to make the number of seats of each party roughly proportional to their total number of votes. The standard forms of PR either add '*compensatory*' seats for under-represented parties, or create multi-member districts; both methods require major changes in how we vote and how winners are elected—adding complexity, confusion and costs.

Through its public consultation on the modernization of our electoral system, the BC Government has found a new and better way to do PR—through “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”!

- “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” is a true solution (*made-in-BC*) to the problems of our existing FPTP (First-Past-The-Post) voting system. It eliminates FPTP’s basic problem of '*wasted*' votes—ensuring perfect proportionality, and making FPTP perfectly fair to all voters, parties and candidates!
- “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” is much simpler and less costly than standard forms of PR, as it does not require any changes to our ridings, how we vote, or how Representatives are elected.
- “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” makes the **Citizen’s vote the unit of voting power in the Legislature**. The total number of Citizen’s votes for each party becomes their total number of votes in the Legislature (i.e. perfect proportionality—automatically—by design).
- “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” makes every Citizen’s vote count equally—including votes for losing candidates (for all parties that won a seat). Hence, voters can vote for the party they truly like most, rather than one they dislike less than another party they really don’t want as their Government.
- “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”, with the Citizen’s vote being counted where it matters most—in the Legislature, ensures (for the first time in the history of FPTP) that the Government is elected by a majority of Citizens! Also, that all laws are passed with the support of a majority of Citizens!

Accordingly, the BC Government is proud to present the following referendum question—empowering the Citizens of BC to accept or reject “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”:

Q: Do you want “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” to be adopted for use by the BC Legislature—eliminating the unfair distortions of our existing voting system—making it fair for all voters, parties and candidates?

☐ **YES.**

☐ **NO.**

APPENDIX#1: HOW “CITIZEN’S VOTE EMPOWERMENT” FIXES FPTP’S PROBLEMS!

With PR, as with many other challenges, finding the best or ‘*right*’ solution becomes easy and even obvious once we find the right way to see the problem.

PR is presented as solution to the problems of FPTP’s systemic electoral distortions, in particular its failure to produce results that fairly reflect the ‘*Will of the People*’ (as expressed by the total number of votes for each party).

PR is confusing to many people, partly because there are so many forms of PR (because they’re all flawed) with each having its own defects. All of the standard PR alternatives derive from what is now a misconception—that some clever process of ‘electoral engineering’ is needed to force the number of Representatives of each party to be roughly proportional to their vote-shares. That was true when PR was invented centuries ago. But now, in the digital age, it’s a misguided approach which fails to recognize and remove the source of FPTP’s defects. Proper analysis reveals that there is now a much simpler and better solution—through digital technology!

FPTP is the voting system from the Middle Ages that even now, in the digital age, still degrades democracy in England and many of its former colonies (including Canada, the USA and India). While many former British dependencies have upgraded their democracy by replacing FPTP (Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and Scotland), Canada’s emancipation is long overdue.

Defects of our present FPTP electoral system

Many Citizens are unaware of the extent and severity of FPTP’s long list of defects, including:

- **‘Wasted votes’**: all votes for losing local candidates (typically about half of all votes) have zero electoral value—and are essentially ‘*thrown away*’; they are unrepresented in the legislature, and hence have no impact in electing the Government.
Even worse, this means that laws passed by the legislature usually don’t have the support of a majority (i.e. more than half) of voters—hence, they lack ‘*democratic legitimacy*’, and cannot truly be claimed to reflect and serve the ‘*Will of the People*’.
Is this fair? NO. Would this problem be corrected by “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”? YES!
- **‘Strategic voting’**: to avoid wasting their vote, many citizens (typically about one-third) are coerced by FPTP to ‘*hold their nose*’ and vote for the ‘*lesser of evils*’—trying to block some other party from becoming Government.
Is this fair? NO. Would this problem be corrected by “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”? YES!
- **‘Vote-splitting’**: where two similar parties competing for the same voter segment usually result in their mutual defeat which is unfair to both the parties and voters.
Is this fair? NO. Would this problem be corrected by “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”? YES!
- **‘Safe seats’**: typically about two-thirds of seats have only one party with a realistic chance to win, hence reducing voter turnout, as no vote in such ridings can make any difference.
Is this fair? NO. Would this problem be corrected by “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”? YES!
- **‘False majority’**: most FPTP elections produce a majority government with more than half the seats (and 100% of the power) often with much less than half of the votes (typically 40%).
Is this fair? NO. Would this problem be corrected by “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”? YES!
- **‘Wrong winners’**: e.g. BC1996 produced an NDP ‘*false majority*’ Government with just 39% of the votes, while the losing Liberals won 41% of the votes (i.e. ‘*false*’ democracy).
Is this fair? NO. Would this problem be corrected by “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”? YES!

- **'Blow-out elections'**: e.g. BC2001 produced a Liberal landslide; even though 42% voted for other parties, there were only two opposition members elected (i.e. *'broken'* democracy).
Is this fair? NO. Would this problem be corrected by **"Citizen's Vote Empowerment"**? YES!
- **'Fragile minority Government'**: e.g. BC2017, where the two main parties were almost tied in both seats and votes; the Greens won the balance of power with only three seats—despite winning almost 17% vote-share (i.e. equivalent 15 seats under PR). The close margin makes the Government much more vulnerable than it would be under PR with the temptation under FPTP being much stronger to force an early election.
Is this fair? NO. Would this problem be corrected by **"Citizen's Vote Empowerment"**? YES!

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 the commitment to voting seems to be declining with each generation).

People need to understand how FPTP (as currently practiced) blocks expression of the true *'Will of the People'*—because the *'wasted vote'* problem forces many voters to resort to the common practice of *'strategic voting'*. This abuse of voters and Democracy is then compounded by FPTP's systemic distortions—which misrepresents the *'Will of the People'* as expressed.

However, despite the many flaws of our present FPTP system, one would think that there must be a better alternative than the standard forms of PR. And there is—FPTP without the flaws—i.e. FPTP with **"Citizen's Vote Empowerment"**!

Let's re-examine how FPTP works to identify what it does well, and where it fails so badly.

Every general election must fulfill two quite different and separate objectives:

- first, to elect local Representatives—to represent the Citizens of each riding in the Legislature;
- second, to elect a Government—to govern over all people of the nation or province.

Under FPTP these two essential objectives are conflated into a single vote: voters have a single vote for a local representative—the winner (with the most votes) being elected to the Legislature. That part is fair. But under FPTP, as practiced for centuries, that's where Democracy ends.

Most citizens would probably be shocked to learn that, under FPTP (as currently practiced), **'We the People' do NOT actually elect 'our' Government!?!'**

Instead, the Government is elected for us by the Assembly of elected Representatives. Alas, under FPTP, our elected Assembly is always a substantial distortion of the 'Will of the People'. (n.b.: The *'Will of the People'* is accurately expressed by the total number of Citizen's votes for each party—not by the number of seats won by each party.)

Representative Democracy is based on the principle that the elected Representatives and the Government should reflect and serve the *'Will of the People'*. But under FPTP, the Citizen's vote is counted *only* in the election of their local Representative—not in the election of a Government. Worse, all votes for defeated candidates (typically half of all Citizen's votes) are effectively *'wasted'*.

So the crux of the problem is this: the Citizen's vote is NOT used to elect the Government and a large percentage of the Citizen's votes have no representation in the Legislature—hence FPTP is depriving those voters of their democratic right to participate in the election of 'their' Government.

“Citizen’s Vote Empowerment” as the true solution to FPTP’s defects

Clearly the simplest and best solution to the problems of FPTP is to **make the Citizen’s vote really count—where it matters most—in the Legislature**, through what we’ve called **“Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”**! Again, this can be done by:

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

[This is clearly the simplest and most fair way to do Democracy. It would likely have been invented by the 19th century pioneers of PR—if they only had computers!]

Unique benefits of PR by “Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”:

- Perfect proportionality is automatic—with no need to change ridings (ever) or voting procedures—hence no complications and no expenses.
- Since all Citizen’s votes will be equal (even for losing candidates, even in ‘safe seats’) and counted in the Legislature (for all parties with at least one seat), it also brings “*Citizen’s Vote Liberation*” from the coerced practice of ‘*strategic voting*’.
- No possibility of rural-urban or regional bias—because all votes count equally.
- Eliminates the risk of tie votes in the Legislature, and problems selecting a Speaker.
- Facilitates future enhancements to eliminate regional polarization (ensuring representation of both the Government and Official Opposition in all regions), and ‘balanced representation’ (reducing under-representation of ‘third’ parties)—by the creation of regional seats, somewhat like MMP. But unlike MMP, such seats could be decided after an election, on an as-needed basis, as they would have no impact on the balance of power between the parties (they would simply draw down the number of hitherto ‘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).
- 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*’)!
- No need to waste public funds on a referendum for **“Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”**.
- **“Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”** is a ‘*made-in-BC*’ fix for FPTP’s profound problems—which have plagued Democracy for centuries everywhere FPTP has been used.
This could become the lasting legacy of this Premier and this Government, and a truly historical gift of BC to Democracy throughout Canada—and around the world.

Proxy voting in the Legislature: the key to “Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”

The key to “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” is *proxy voting* of the Citizens’ votes in the Legislature! Each time the Legislature votes, each Representative’s single vote is automatically converted by computer into the number of Citizen’s votes assigned to them—thus automatically ensuring perfect proportionality!

Until now, to our knowledge, proxy voting has not been used in any democratic legislature. However, proxy voting has long been the universal standard practice in corporate shareholder democracy. In a political democracy, the ‘*shareholders*’ are the Citizens—each entitled to one equal voting share, which should always count in every decision of the legislature. Hence, proxy voting with the Citizen’s votes being counted in the legislatures seems only natural—and destined to become standard practice in the democracies of the world.

“**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” also emulates the original Athenian democratic practice, whereby each Citizen was empowered to vote directly on each issue. With the reinvention of democracy in the modern era, it was necessarily based on *representative democracy*—with each representative having just one vote (i.e. their *own* vote—with *all* of the Citizens’ votes essentially having no power). In the digital age, there is no longer any excuse for the Citizen’s vote having no power in the election of *their* Government, and in passing the laws governing society. Hence, this undemocratic practice is no longer justified or tolerable.

Proxy PR alternatives

Again, the distinguishing characteristic of Proxy PR is “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”—whereby the Citizen’s vote becomes the unit of voting power in the legislature, with Representatives casting proxy votes on behalf of the Citizens. As with PR itself, there are multiple forms of Proxy PR—each based on the “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” model—with differentiated characteristics such as enhanced representation.

Three independently developed Proxy PR alternatives are:

- “[AccountablePR](#)”, as proposed by Jeff Jewell of Mission BC (the author).
- “[Popular PR](#)”, as proposed by Greg Holloway of Victoria BC
- “[Proxy PR](#)”, as proposed by Byron Weber Becker of Waterloo ON.

Proxy Vote Assignment Alternatives

The goal of “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” is to make all Citizen’s votes count in the Legislature. Under FPTP, and without “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”, all votes for losing candidates have no value and no representation in the Legislature. With “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”, the total number of Citizen’s votes won by each party (i.e. by all of their winning and losing candidates) becomes their total number of votes in the Legislature.

The issue is to establish appropriate rules defining how the Citizen’s votes won by a party should be distributed among their Representatives. Several logical alternatives include:

1. Give each Representative an equal share of the party’s total votes—with the Leader retaining any remainder votes. This would give the same number of votes to all Representatives (except the Leader) of each party—but it would be a different number for the Representatives of different parties. [When this was presented to the ERRE Committee, some of its members expressed concerns about such inequalities.]
2. Give all Representatives of all parties an equal number of votes—with the Leaders of each party retaining any remainder votes. This number of votes for all Representatives would be equal to the average number of votes for the most over-represented party. But this would leave the Leaders of the under-represented parties with a much larger number of votes—precisely reflecting the degree of under-representation of each party.
3. Equally divide half of each party’s votes among their male and female Representatives—thereby ensuring gender parity in voting power, regardless how many male and female Representatives were elected.

Other vote assignment alternatives might also merit consideration. On balance, the second alternative seems preferable.

- With possibly large numbers of votes retained by leaders of under-represented parties, it would make a compelling case for the creation of ‘*compensatory*’ seats (as under MMP).
- Such seats would logically be allocated on a regional basis, to the most under-represented parties in each region—thereby eliminating regional distortions that are common under FPTP.
- Such seats could be filled by the most appropriate defeated candidates within the region (avoiding the need for any party lists)—and the criteria for awarding these seats could include such demographic factors as diversity, age and gender balance (often cited as PR advantages).
- With typically about half of all Citizen’s votes being for losing candidates, each party would have a large pool of votes to be reassigned, which would provide the proxy votes for ‘*compensatory*’ seats—with no impact on the perfectly proportional balance of voting power for all parties (this being another unique and powerful feature of proxy voting).
- Because “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” guarantees perfect proportionality by design, any ‘top-up’ seats would only be required to provide more balanced regional representation. By contrast, MMP would need about triple the number of regional ‘top up’ seats to provide reasonable proportionality.
- In the BC2017 election, adding just 10 regional seats would provide representation from all regions for both the Government and the Official Opposition, and the Greens would add 7 Representatives to their caucus.

APPENDIX#2: CRITIQUE OF THE MAJOR PR ALTERNATIVES

Excerpts from the transcript of the presentation to ERRE Committee (2016/09/28):

<http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/ERRE/meeting-32/evidence>

○ Mr. P. Jeffery Jewell (As an Individual):

“ Proxy voting is something we all know as the standard in corporate shareholder democracy, but in a political democracy, the way to think of it is that every adult citizen is an owner entitled to exactly one equal voting share to be entrusted in the representative. What we have now, by contrast, is that we count the votes; the winners are elected, and they go to Parliament. **How many votes do they have? They have one: their own. All the citizens' votes are thrown away.**

The conclusion that I want to make to you is that truly democratic representative government cannot be achieved simply by changing how the citizens vote. Truly democratic representative government can only be achieved by changing both how the citizens vote and how the Parliament votes.”

...

○ Mr. Nathan Cullen: (MP)

“ Mr. Kam, just looking through your notes, I don't know if you land on a preferred type of voting system, if you go between the proportional or the current system at all. Do you express a preference?

Mr. Christopher Kam: (Assoc. Prof., Political Science, UBC)

No.

Mr. Nathan Cullen:

You don't have one?

Mr. Christopher Kam:

No, I'm choosing among flawed alternatives. I think the trade-offs between them is almost perfect. So what I get from one I lose from another and....

Mr. Nathan Cullen:

Okay.

So the mandate of this committee is to come up with something among these imperfections.”

The standard (seat-based) PR alternatives—their strengths and weaknesses

- The goal of PR is to make the number of seats for each party be roughly proportional to their total numbers of votes.
- The unstated principle underlying PR is that the total numbers of votes for each party is a true expression of the *‘Will of the People’*.
- The presumption is that PR is fair to all parties, voters and candidates. It is not. Although PR is arguably much more fair than FPTP to parties, voters and candidates—all forms of PR introduce imperfections, and none of them can claim to truly represent the *‘Will of the People’*.
- When the major forms of PR were invented centuries ago, seat-based PR voting systems were the only alternative. Now, in the digital age, vote-based alternatives—through **“Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”**—provide perfect solutions without requiring any major changes or costs!

- There's a presumption that parties that are under-represented by FPTP have some rightful claim to additional seats to produce proportional representation. That is not true. Parties (also candidates and voters) only have a right to expect a fair voting system—i.e. a voting system that doesn't coerce voters into '*strategic voting*'—and doesn't '*waste*' all votes for losing candidates.
- Democracy belongs to the Citizens—not the parties or candidates. Electoral Reform should focus on being fair to all voters—by empowering the Citizen's vote to count where it really matters most—in the Legislature. It should not compromise the principles of democracy to force a more fair electoral balance for the parties.

All defects and costs associated with each PR alternative become easy targets that the NO campaign will exploit. Selecting any of the standard PR alternatives is almost choosing to lose.

Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP).

- MMP's problems originate with FPTP distortions. As riding elections are conducted under FPTP, such distortions need about one-third of all members to be filled by so-called 'compensatory' seats (i.e. to compensate for FPTP distortions). Hence, MMP requires some combination of about 50% more seats or 50% larger ridings.
- Adding 50% more seats would be a non-starter: the public would be outraged by the extra costs, and there simply isn't enough space in the legislature.
- 50% larger ridings would be unfair to constituents (even more unfair to incumbents).
- Comprehensive redistricting would probably be required to minimize increased seats and costs. This would be unfair to incumbents, and reduce service to constituents by local Representatives (offset by regional representatives).
- The regional representatives are chosen from 'party lists', according to the degree of under-representation of each party in each region. The understood intent is that these representatives should be elected, but this would present voters with a list of names of candidates they probably knew little or nothing about.
- Problems with party lists were a major concern for the BC Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform, leading them to choose STV over MMP by 80% to 20%. They concluded that party lists gave the parties more control—whereas STV made Representatives more accountable to the Citizens and gave voters more choice.
- MMP's flaws make it highly vulnerable to proven negative campaign strategies. [e.g. Bill Tieleman's hit-job against PR in general and MMP in particular: "[Greens Political 'Hostage-Taking' Preview of Grim Future Under PR](#)".]

Single Transferable Vote (STV).

- While STV is objectively superior to MMP, its excessive complexity made it highly vulnerability to NO campaigns [BC-STV was defeated in the BC referendums of 2005 (receiving 58% of the votes, with 60% then required) and 2009 (just 39%)].
- STV does not need additional members or different ridings. STV groups ridings into electoral districts that elect up to seven members (far fewer in rural areas).

- Each voter has only one vote—but the ballot shows all candidates in all ridings in that electoral district, and the voter can rank order as many candidates as desired. Both voting and vote counting are considerably more complicated under STV.
- STV drastically reduces the quota needed for election—to much less than a majority (typically just 13% to 20%), depending on the number of members in each district. This imposes a coarse granularity with the consequence that STV is only crudely proportional. For example, if the district size is 4 ridings, the quota is then $20\%+1$; this means that zero to 20% of votes elects nobody, $20\%+1$ to 40% elects one member, $40\%+1$ to 60% elects two members etc. But it is greatly complicated by secondary choices and transfers of votes from eliminated candidates (to each voter's next choice)—as well as fractionalized surplus votes (i.e. in excess of the quota) from elected members. The whole process is very opaque, and given the coarse granularity and indeterminate impact of the order of elimination, it's impossible to know the degree of electoral justice vs randomness of the results.
- Moreover, there are questions concerning the democratic quality of STV voting. Specifically, each voter is confronted with a full matrix of all candidates in all ridings in the district. How knowledgeable are voters about candidates in other ridings? How ethical or democratically acceptable is it for people to vote for candidates they know little or nothing about? How democratically satisfactory is it if most of the votes for candidates within a riding might come from voters in other ridings? Also, there's some evidence that, faced with lengthy ballots and with little knowledge, there seems to be a tendency for unintentional bias dependent upon the positions of names on the list. Greater choice does not necessarily ensure better democracy.
- STV also doesn't guarantee that a member is elected from each riding! Worse, in mixed rural-urban districts, there's a risk that representatives might be concentrated in urban ridings—with under-representation of rural ridings. However, the district is well represented, usually with members from several parties.
- STV does have other positive qualities—it places candidates from each party in competition with one another (increasing accountability to constituents, and making it more likely that non-performing members might be defeated), and it greatly reduces 'safe seats' (i.e. at the riding level, but not at the district level).
- STV is well designed for highly populated urban areas, but district size would be a major concern in Canada's vast sparsely populated rural areas.

Flexible District PR

- Flexible District PR is a hybrid: STV in urban areas and either MMP or FPTP in rural areas.
- Flexible District PR is a commendable but unfortunate compromise—inheriting most of the defects of STV (excessive complexity) and some of the defects of MMP (more members but less proportionality)—but it does avoid STV's unsuitability for Canada's vast rural areas.

Local PR.

- LocalPR is a clever Canadian modification of STV that ensures one member is elected in each riding (with some reduction in the quota for election).
- This also makes LocalPR suitable for Canada's vast sparsely populated rural areas
- LocalPR otherwise suffers from STV's defects.

APPENDIX#3: POLITICAL REALITIES OF PR

As revealed last year with the federal electoral reform debacle, it would be naïve to ignore the presence of highly partisan political ‘elephants’ in the electoral reform room.

Also, from past political experience with electoral reform promises and referenda, this places the Government in a ‘*conflict of interest*’ situation—testing their commitment and integrity.

Partisan political ‘elephants’ in the PR room

- Many political partisans fiercely oppose PR—because their party is a regular beneficiary of FPTP distortions. Their backroom strategists are always ready to mastermind a NO campaign—using their expertise in negative campaigning to raise public fears, uncertainties and doubts among naïve and disinterested voters. In particular, the NO campaigns have well-proven playbooks to defeat each of the standard forms of PR—by exploiting their defects, as well as public apathy and cynicism about politics—especially distrust of parties and politicians.
- Opponents of PR are already portraying the Referendum as a blatant political sellout of the people’s interests by a fragile and unprincipled government—as payback to the ‘third-party’ for their support (i.e. a *‘tail wags the dog’* scenario).
- The two prior referenda on BC-STV were officially non-partisan—without overt participation by any political party. By contrast, this 2018 PR initiative has been highly partisan from the beginning. This PR Referendum campaign stands to become Canada’s most ugly abuse of the democratic process.

Players in the PR Referendum game

It’s important to know who the referendum players are, and where they’re coming from. From prior referenda on PR, a clear picture has emerged:

- **The Government.** As winners under FPTP, they’re the beneficiaries of FPTP distortions—which unfair advantages would be lost under PR. A prior campaign promise of PR (or a referendum on PR) often becomes inconvenient—as it places them in a conflict of interest. Hence, a common result is a *‘made-to-fail’* study or referendum.
- **The Politicians and party apparatchiks.** Their positions on PR are defined by self-interest and service to their party—as well as service to the lobbyists and patrons who support them.
- **The general public.** The vast majority of people have no awareness and no interest in electoral systems. They don’t trust politicians—and are probably more worried that change might make things worse—rather than optimistic that change would make things better. They’re easily confused—and duped into voting against their own best interests—by the negative campaigns of the NO side.
- **The PR activists.** They understand that FPTP produces atrocious electoral outcomes—and hold an almost religious belief that PR is the path to democratic salvation. That said, few of them really understand the flaws of any voting system—including the various forms of PR. And, as yet, they have no idea how easily the defects of FPTP can be eliminated through “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**”!

- ***Electoral Justice Now***, our fledgling organization promoting “**Citizen’s Vote Empowerment**” through a form of Proxy PR, appears to be alone in understanding what’s wrong with FPTP (and how to fix it), and what’s wrong with the standard forms of PR. We have a clear solution, with a clear understanding of PR opponents and their tactics, and a clear campaign strategy (“**Power Our Vote!**”) that’s capable of winning the referendum!
- ***The YES campaign***. Previous YES campaigns, run by well-intentioned political amateurs playing ‘softball’, have been textbook examples of how to plan and run a losing campaign.
- ***The NO campaign***. All of the NO campaigns, run by savvy political pros playing ‘hardball’, have been textbook examples of how to plan and run winning campaigns based on negativity—to spread fear, uncertainty and doubt—to overpower opponents and dupe an unsuspecting public.
- ***The media***. They don’t seem to have much interest in electoral reform. Their careers are based on serving the interests of corporate masters, and maintaining access to the political masters. By giving balanced coverage of PR campaign, they give unwarranted credibility to the NO side.

OBSERVATIONS, OPINIONS & CONCLUSIONS

Electoral Reform is far more complex than people think. It's important to find the truth and keep our focus.

- The Electoral Reform 'movement' began in England in 1884. It has long since lost its way. In Canada, it has become dominated by PR advocacy organizations that seem to function as 'gatekeepers'—under leadership promoting 'proven loser' PR alternatives with 'proven loser' strategies.
- Some 'experts' have recommended that the referendum should have a binding question seeking a mandate to implement some undetermined (but circumscribed) form of PR, to be determined by some '*commission*' of experts and politicians. That would be a great way to go if the goal was another '*made to fail*' referendum. The NO campaign would be ecstatic to have such an easy target to discredit the entire process. Such a referendum question would be like asking the public to sign a blank cheque, which the NO campaign would zealously exploit to stoke public cynicism and distrust of politicians (especially with the heavily partisan political baggage that dominates this PR initiative). Not knowing which standard PR alternative to attack and ridicule, they would continue to freely attack them all—as they have already been doing for months.
- Given the powerful and compelling advantages of "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**", there's no need or justification to give further consideration to any of the standard PR alternatives, each of which would involve much greater changes, complexity and costs to produce inferior results.
- "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" should be adopted, for many positive reasons (not least of which are voters' rights and democratic principles), for all democratic elections contested by political parties. It therefore seems almost certain that it will ultimately prevail. The only question is where it will be adopted first (BC now has first right of refusal but will hopefully claim the honour, as an idea that has originated in BC!), and how long it will take to become the norm.
- "**Citizen's Vote Empowerment**" would provide a major democratic improvement to any voting system—e.g. FPTP, Alternative Vote, MMP, STV etc.—as the only way to achieve perfect proportionality, with no added complexity or costs.
- **It is fundamentally WRONG and undemocratic to throw away all Citizen's votes** which, by the very concept of PR, are implicitly acknowledged as being the embodiment of the expressed '*Will of the People*'. It's particularly important to make the Citizen's vote *really* count—where it matters most—in the Legislature, especially for what really matters most—the election of the Government, and to ensure majority consent for all laws!
- The parliamentary convention of one-vote per Representative was a practical necessity before computers, but an undemocratic outrage in the digital age.
- Multi-member districts should probably be considered at some point, but only after evaluating their potential to improve upon results from "Citizen's Vote Empowerment".
- Just as the #MeToo movement emerged suddenly to condemn abuses that were long invisible and silently tolerated, when Citizens realize how much their democratic rights have been abused in so many ways under the present form of FPTP, they should stand together in a #MeTooVotersRights movement as victims of democratic abuse to demand our democratic rights—Electoral Justice Now—through "Citizen's Vote Empowerment"! That should be the focus of our campaign to "Power Our Vote"!

WHO WE ARE

“Electoral Justice Now!” (EJN) is a new democratic advocacy organization, founded in 2017 by **Jeff & Diana Jewell** of Mission BC, Canada.

- The EJN Vision:
 - To refocus the Electoral Reform movement towards more positive and present goals.
 - To inspire and lead a grassroots movement demanding ***Electoral Justice Now!***—firstly within Canada at both the provincial and federal levels—then exporting the Canadian solution to the problems of FPTP and the other PR systems used around the world.
 - To promote **“Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”** to make the Citizen’s vote the unit of voting in the Legislatures of the world.
 - To conduct campaigns calling for **“Citizen’s Vote Empowerment”** as a fundamental democratic right, under the banner: ***“Power Our Vote!”***
 - To coordinate with other Electoral Reform organizations where possible.
- The EJN reference documents:
 - Criteria for Electoral Justice:
<https://makeeveryvotecount-always.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Electoral-Justice-Criteria.pdf>
 - Announcing AccountablePR:
<https://makeeveryvotecount-always.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Announcing-AccountablePR.pdf>
 - AccountablePR + Balanced Representation:
<https://makeeveryvotecount-always.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/EJN-Newsletter-5-PracticalPR-Balanced-Representation.pdf>
 - Lessons from the Tragedy of BC-STV (2009 audio documentary by Jeff Jewell for Vancouver CoOp Radio)
<https://makeeveryvotecount-always.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Lessons-from-the-Tragedy-of-BC-STV.mp3>

*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 Kennedy](#) of Burnaby BC. We believe that our proposed **AccountablePR** would clearly be the best upgrade path for our Democracy—capable of winning the BC2018 PR Referendum! However, we’ve also developed a comprehensive and flexible set of further electoral reform options called **‘AccountablePR+’** which should be carefully considered as possible future refinements.*