

**Winter 2006** Also enclosed – Fair Vote Canada's post-election news release.

The following articles are from the monthly email newsletters published by Fair Vote Canada.

**NEW B.C. ELECTORAL REFORM PLAN: "RIGHT DIRECTION, WRONG YARDSTICK" (September 13, 2005)**

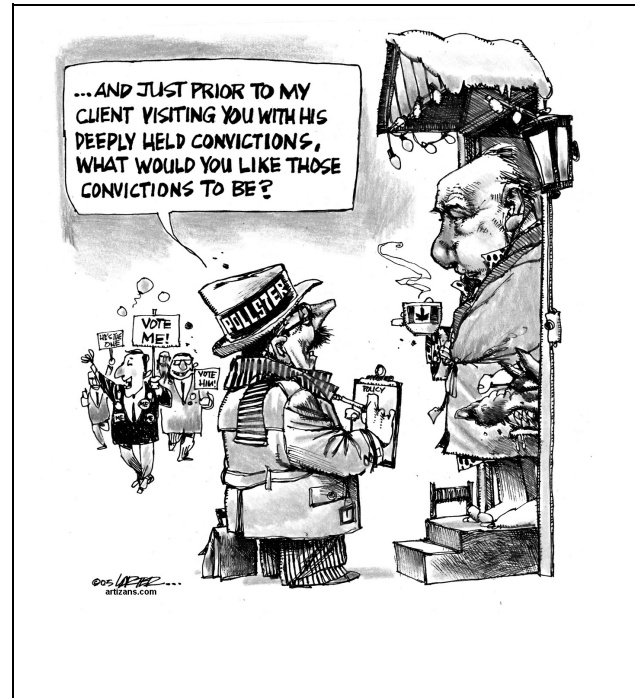
B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell has committed to a second referendum on a proportional representation voting system, but is drawing fire from electoral reform advocates for imposing yet another unprecedented and unfair threshold for enactment.

In the September 12 throne speech, the Premier pledged to have an Electoral Boundaries Commission set new riding boundaries for both the current voting system and the proposed BC-STV voting system. Voters will then be asked to choose between the two options in a referendum to be held with the November 2008 municipal elections. The system chosen in that referendum will be used in the 2009 provincial election.

The first referendum was held in conjunction with the May 17 provincial election, with nearly 58 percent voting in favour of electoral reform, slightly below the 60 per cent threshold set by the government. Meanwhile, Premier Campbell's government attracted only 46 per cent of the vote.

"Governments routinely make far-reaching legislative decisions based on simple majority rule," said Fair Vote Canada President Wayne Smith. "Last May, far more people voted for electoral reform than for the government. Incredibly, that government is still saying the rules for citizens and the rules for politicians are different. Another way of looking at it: under Premier Campbell's rules, a minority of voters can block democratic reform for everyone."

"We commend the Premier for his continuing commitment to a citizen-driven reform process," said Smith, "but we strongly condemn his double standard when citizens rather than politicians make decisions."



**FVC AND OPPOSITION PARTIES CHALLENGE FEDERAL ELECTORAL REFORM DELAY (Sept. 28, 2005)**

At a Parliament Hill press conference, Fair Vote Canada and opposition parties criticized the the federal government for footdragging on electoral reform and asked that they: 1) clarify which minister is in charge of electoral reform and 2) answer a challenge to publicly debate their electoral reform position and plan within 30 days.

Joining FVC President Wayne Smith were Ed Broadbent, Democratic Renewal Critic, NDP; David Chernushenko, Deputy Leader, Green Party of Canada; Tom Kent, former principal assistant to Prime Minister Pearson and founding editor of *Policy Options*; and Scott Reid, Democratic Renewal Critic, Conservative Party of Canada.

All of the speakers criticized the federal government's recent announcement that the public consultation process on electoral reform,

proposed by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, will be significantly delayed.

Tom Kent, who also serves on the FVC National Advisory Board, stated: "Democratic renewal requires various reforms...But what is fundamental to democracy is that more people feel more reason to be involved, that votes count equally, that representation is fair. And for that, the first, crucial requirement is a more proportionate electoral system. Mr. Martin, an avowed democrat, should not be allowed to stand in the way."

### **CONSERVATIVE DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL CRITIC CALLS FOR NATIONAL CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY (September 30, 2005)**

In the fall 2005 issue of *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Scott Reid, MP, and Democratic Renewal Critic for the Conservative Party, called for a national citizens' assembly on electoral reform with a change to the model recently used in British Columbia.

Rather than presenting just one option to voters, Reid proposed the assembly "design several options, which would be placed on the [referendum] ballot in competition to one another. Voters would then have the option of ranking the competing models...I am advocating that Canada should use a preferential referendum whereby voters would place a "1" on the ballot beside their preferred option, a "2" beside the option they like second best, and so on. If no single option won a majority of votes, the least-favoured option would be dropped from the ballot, and the ballots of voters who had chosen this option as their first preference would be redistributed to the options that had been their respective second choices. This process would continue until a single option achieves a clear majority."

### **FAIR PLEBISCITE IN P.E.I. THREATENED BY GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE (October 21, 2005)**

The opportunity for Prince Edward Islanders to lead the nation on electoral reform is being threatened by blatant government manipulation of the plebiscite process, according to Fair Vote Canada. Islanders will vote on a proposed mixed member proportional (MMP) voting system in a November 28 plebiscite.

According to media reports, Premier Pat Binns:

1) directed Elections P.E.I. to significantly cut the number of polling stations to be open for the plebiscite, 2) after ensuring it will be harder to vote, announced he will not implement any reform if turnout is low; and 3) indicated he does not accept the recommendation from the Commission on P.E.I.'s Electoral Future for a 50 per cent plus one threshold.

FVC called on Premier Binns to rethink his position and act in good faith by: 1) directing Elections P.E.I. to open the usual number of polling stations, 2) encouraging all islanders to vote on November 28, and 3) honouring the majority decision by those who do.

### **FVC PETITION DRIVE (Dec. 1, 2005)**

Close to 9,000 people have already signed the FVC petition (both paper and online versions) calling for a national referendum on a more proportional voting system. The FVC petition is also being endorsed by a growing list of prominent Canadians as part of an effort to press the new federal government to act on electoral reform early in its new term.

### **ELECTORAL DYSFUNCTION: THERE IS A CURE (December 1, 2005)**

Comedian Don Ferguson of CBC-TV's *Royal Canadian Air Farce* is featured in an FVC leaflet and video ad to be launched in the coming days. A take-off on Viagra ads, "Doctor" Don Ferguson explains that electoral dysfunction is "a serious problem if left untreated". Fortunately, it can be cured through a "good dose of proportional representation". The two-minute video will be posted at [www.fairvote.ca](http://www.fairvote.ca) and publicized widely through the internet and media.

### **PEI PLEBISCITE RESULTS DISAPPOINTING, BUT REFORM DRIVE CONTINUES (Dec. 1, 2005)**

With only 36 per cent voting in favour of the proposed mixed member proportional voting system in the November 28 non-binding plebiscite, PEI has apparently lost the opportunity to lead the nation on electoral reform. However, local fair voting supporters will continue to push for provincial reform, with strong encouragement from the national electoral reform movement.

"From a national perspective, we had hoped the Birthplace of Confederation would become the Birthplace of Electoral Reform," said Wayne

Smith, President of Fair Vote Canada. “But the honour of leading the nation will now very likely go to another province. We expect at least one, if not several, other provinces – Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia – to adopt new voting systems within the coming few years, and that will produce a new context for Islanders to reconsider their own options.”

“Education remains the great task for the electoral reform movement,” said Smith. “We need to help people make the connection between their dissatisfaction with politics and politicians, and our winner-take-all voting system.”

## **FVC AND PROMINENT CANADIANS CALL FOR ELECTORAL REFORM FOCUS IN REMAINING DEBATES (December 19, 2005)**

More than 60 prominent Canadians from a variety of backgrounds and political viewpoints joined Fair Vote Canada in an urgent call to the network consortium and party leaders to focus a portion of one of the remaining debates on voting reform. The following statement was sent to the broadcast consortium and included the related FVC press release.

*We the undersigned believe the next Parliament and Government must make Canada’s democratic renewal an urgent priority. We can no longer afford to ignore our democracy deficit or postpone substantive reform to our core democratic institutions, including voting system reform.*

*Therefore, we call on the broadcast networks and party leaders to dedicate a portion of one of the leaders’ debates to focus exclusively on the “Democratic Renewal of Canada”.*

- **Roger Abbott**, Royal Canadian Air Farce
- **Lincoln Alexander**, former Ontario Lieutenant Governor, former federal cabinet minister
- **Rick Anderson**, consultant, columnist, former advisor to Preston Manning
- **Nkem Anizor**, Black Youth Taking Action
- **Harry Baglole**, founding Director, Institute of Island Studies
- **Patricia Baird**, former Chair, Royal Comm. on New Reproductive Technologies
- **Maude Barlow**, author, activist and Chairperson, Council of Canadians

- **John Beckwith**, composer, conductor and educator
- **Avie Bennett**, Chair, McClelland & Stewart
- **Ed Broadbent**, former NDP leader
- **Larry Brown**, National Sec. Treas., National Union of Public and General Employees
- **Meyer Brownstone**, professor emeritus, international election monitor and advisor
- **June Callwood**, author, former chair of Writers’ Union of Canada and P.E.N.
- **Barbara Caplan**, former activist, political organizer and City of Toronto senior mgr.
- **John Cartwright**, President, Toronto & York Region Labour Council
- **Michael Cassidy**, former NDP MP, former leader of the Ontario NDP
- **James Clancy**, National President, National Union of Public and General Employees
- **Paul Copeland**, criminal lawyer, active with the Law Union of Ontario
- **Bonnie Diamond**, Executive Director, National Association of Women and the Law
- **Howard Dyck**, conductor & artistic director, CBC radio host
- **Margrit Eichler**, professor, sociology and women’s studies
- **Dave Farthing**, co-founder and Executive Director, YOUCAN
- **Don Ferguson**, Royal Canadian Air Farce
- **Max Ferguson**, former broadcaster and satirist on the CBC
- **Ursula Franklin**, Professor Emerita, physicist, author, activist
- **Margaret Fulton**, educator, former President of Mount St. Vincent University
- **Graeme Gibson**, author
- **Gordon Gibson**, former leader B.C. Liberal Party, Fraser Institute Senior Fellow
- **Katherine Govier**, author
- **Luba Goy**, Royal Canadian Air Farce
- **Elizabeth Gray**, writer
- **Margaret Hancock**, Hart House Warden, University of Toronto
- **Marjorie Harris**, Ed. at large, Gardening Life
- **Mel Hurtig**, author, publisher, activist
- **Richard Johnston**, former President, Centennial College, former Ontario MPP
- **G. Alex Jupp**, retired public affairs consultant
- **Tom Kent**, former advisor to Prime Minister Pearson, former royal commission chair

- **Bruce Kidd**, University of Toronto professor and former Olympic athlete
- **David Langille**, Executive Director, Centre for Social Justice
- **Troy Lanigan**, National Communications Director, Canadian Taxpayers Federation
- **Frances Lankin**, Pres. & CEO United Way of Greater Toronto, former Ont. Cabinet Minister
- **Jeannie Lea**, former Prince Edward Island cabinet minister
- **Betty Lee**, author, journalist, editor
- **Nick Loenen**, founder, Fair Voting B.C.
- **Raif Mair**, radio host, writer, political commentator, Hall of Fame broadcaster
- **Henry Milner**, professor, author, electoral reform expert
- **J. Fraser Mustard**, founding President, The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research
- **Nancy Ruth**, Senator, feminist, social activist
- **John Oostrom**, former PC MP 1984-88
- **Sylvia Ostry**, economist, Univ. of Toronto, former Chair, Economic Council of Canada
- **Bernard Ostry**, former chairman and CEO of TVOntario; former deputy minister
- **Erna Paris**, author
- **Walter Pitman**, former president of Ryerson Polytechnic Institute
- **Judy Rebick**, Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice and Democracy, Ryerson University
- **Alan Redway**, former Progressive Conservative MP, cabinet minister
- **Walter Robinson**, former Federal Director, Canadian Taxpayers Federation
- **Virginia Rock**, Professor Emerita, D. Litt., York University, American, Women's Studies
- **Norman Ruff**, political scientist and media commentator
- **Peter Russell**, former President, Canadian Political Science Association
- **Linda Silver Dranoff**, family law lawyer, writer, law reform activist
- **Hugh Thorburn**, former President, Canadian Political Science Association
- **John Trent**, former Secretary, International Political Science Association
- **Lois Wilson**, former Senator and former chair, World Council of Churches.

## **ANOTHER CHANCE FOR ELECTORAL REFORM IN P.E.I.? (December 24, 2005)**

In a year-end interview with a Charlottetown newspaper, P.E.I. Premier Pat Binns indicated an electoral reform process may continue after the next provincial election. "I don't think it's over", Mr. Binns said.

The Premier noted that Islanders need time to reflect on the results of the November 28 plebiscite and reconsider the most appropriate voting system for P.E.I.. Turnout for the plebiscite was very low and the proposed MMP voting system received only 36 per cent support. The Premier said if he receives another mandate, there would likely be another plebiscite.

## **LAYTON, HARPER AND HARRIS TALKING ELECTORAL REFORM (January 7, 2006)**

Electoral reform is increasingly being identified as a core issue for negotiations among parties for a minority government.

At the end of December, NDP leader Jack Layton said "proportional representation will be a big part of any discussion" regarding support for a minority government. The NDP is calling for implementation of a mixed member proportional (MMP) voting system.

On January 4, Green Party leader Jim Harris announced that the Green Party will push for a national citizens' assembly "to determine the form of proportional representation that best serves Canadians."

On January 7, Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper told reporters he would be willing to discuss electoral reform with the NDP, noting that "this is something our convention in March expressed some interest in, although we haven't adopted any particular specific model."

While Paul Martin continues to avoid the issue, Liberal Senator Sharon Carstairs told the Winnipeg Free Press it is time to be "exploring some form of proportional representation".

## **FVC REPORT DOCUMENTS DECADES OF VOTING SYSTEM DYSFUNCTION (January 9, 2006)**

Fair Vote Canada today released “Dubious Democracy: Report on Federal Elections in Canada from 1980 – 2004”. The 14-page report provides a very concise overview of how the first-past-the-post voting system subverts democratic values, drives wedges between the regions, unfairly rewards and punishes various political viewpoints, and makes a mockery of representative democracy and government accountability.

“The data illustrate just how badly the voting system has warped our political arena,” said Wayne Smith, President, Fair Vote Canada. “Given the way the system treats voters, it’s not surprising 40 per cent of registered voters don’t vote. It’s surprising 60 per cent still do.”

### **GROWING MEDIA COVERAGE OF ELECTORAL REFORM AND FAIR VOTE CANADA (January 9, 2006)**

Media, political and public attention to PR has grown significantly since the last election campaign. The past several weeks, in particular, have been amazing.

December 21 - Roy MacGregor devoted his entire page two Globe column to the FVC Electoral Dysfunction video and campaign.

December 23 - Roy MacGregor ran another column featuring Tom Kent, one of FVC’s National Advisory Board members, again focusing on electoral reform.

December 30 - Globe columnist John Ibbitson called for PR as a means of uniting and stabilizing the country.

January 1 - The issue of electoral reform came up on CTV’s Question Period.

January 7 - CBC Radio’s The House devoted extensive attention to electoral reform and PR.

January 9 – The Ottawa Citizen ran a major multi-page feature article by Doug Fischer on the case for proportional representation, incorporating FVC data and quotes.

In addition to this national media coverage, many local reporters, columnists and editorial writers have also turned their attention to electoral reform.

### **FVC VOLUNTEERS MAKE A BIG SPLASH DURING ELECTION (January 24, 2006)**

Thanks again to the FVC members and supporters who volunteered during the federal election campaign. Volunteers distributed 50,000 leaflets in January and collected petition signatures. They attended countless candidates meetings asking questions about electoral reform, often to applause from audiences, and sometimes eliciting surprising support (e.g., Bill Graham, after being dogged constantly at candidate meetings, signed the FVC petition). FVC volunteers had many excellent letters and articles published in daily and weekly newspapers across the country and also managed to get on major radio shows, such as Cross Country Checkup, and viewer input portions of The National.

These grassroots initiatives, along with our national media relations campaign, helped boost web traffic to [www.fairvote.ca](http://www.fairvote.ca) by more than 80%. In January, more people joined FVC online than in any prior month.

### **DISTORTED ELECTION RESULTS SPAWN CABINET CONTROVERSY (Feb. 7, 2006)**

The first day of the new government exploded in controversy as the new Prime Minister tried to compensate for a regionally skewed caucus created by the first-past-the-post voting system.

With not one Conservative elected in Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver, Mr. Harper used the lack of government MPs from those cities to justify Cabinet appointments for Michael Fortier, a Montreal-based party operative whose name did not appear on any ballot, and David Emerson, a Vancouver-based MP who just weeks ago presented himself to voters as champion of a different party and political agenda.

“Had the same votes been cast in a fair voting system, Conservative voters would have elected approximately nine MPs in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto,” said Wayne Smith, President of Fair Vote Canada, “creating a pool of legitimately elected representatives for cabinet consideration. But our voting system failed us again, and so our new government is built on backroom brokerage.”

### **PR IS NOW “ALL THE RAGE IN CANADA” (February 20, 2006)**

For the first time ever, the leaders debate included a question on electoral reform, after FVC widely circulated a call for the debate's broadcast consortium to dedicate debate time to electoral reform. The call was endorsed by a long list of prominent Canadians.

FVC also called on the national media, through a news release and letters to media presidents, to apply five guidelines to their election reporting. The first guideline was to "anchor your commentary and analysis on what voters have actually said with their ballots, rather than blindly reporting the number of seats won by each party." On election night and afterward, we did see a shift in that direction.

Media coverage in general was much better this time. Three Globe and Mail columnists wrote positively about proportional representation, as did reporters and columnists in numerous other papers across the country, including a spectacular two-page feature in the Ottawa Citizen. CBC.ca ran several good articles in their Reality Check section.

But most enjoyable of all was a post-election quote from Globe columnist Doug Saunders, who dislikes PR and FVC, but noted "suddenly, after Monday night, everyone is a democracy activist...proportional representation has become all the rage in Canada."

### **FEDERAL REFORM CAMPAIGN – REGROUP AND PREPARE (February 20, 2006)**

With another minority government in Ottawa, the situation is highly dynamic, and Fair Vote Canada will remain alert to any possible openings as the new Parliament begins its work. Meanwhile, FVC President Wayne Smith reminded supporters we will likely be back to the polls for another federal election within 18 months to two years.

"I have no doubt our campaign will grow stronger, so we'll have even more impact in the next election," said Smith. "I'm delighted to see new interest in voting reform among Liberal MPs. Even former Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan said she thinks it's time for some type of PR."

Smith noted in the coming 12 to 18 months, FVC will focus on strengthening our grassroots base by recruiting more supporters, signing up more members, and organizing more chapters.

### **ONTARIO ANNOUNCEMENT EXPECTED SOON (February 20, 2006)**

In some parts of the country, provincial reform campaigns will also be quite active in the coming year. In Ontario, the government is expected to announce in March details on the Ontario citizens' assembly for electoral reform. Assuming the assembly recommends a new voting system, Ontarians will likely be voting in a referendum in conjunction with the October 2007 provincial election.

Several years ago, FVC launched the Fair Vote Ontario campaign. Ontario members of FVC will be hearing more as the campaign gets underway this year.

### **FAIR VOTE CANADA ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR APRIL 21-22 IN OTTAWA**

**The fifth Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held in the Parliament buildings on Friday evening, April 21 and Saturday, April 22. Further details will be available soon.**

**An email notice about the National Council election was circulated in late February noting the March 17 deadline for members to declare candidacy. Ontario members were also notified of the election for at-large positions on the Fair Vote Ontario campaign council.**

**All FVC members in good standing who have joined before February 21, 2006 are eligible to vote and run for office.**

**Eligible members will receive election materials and ballots in April.**

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