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Greetings from the new Executive Director

Hello all!

I cannot tell you how exciting (and a little bit scary) it is to be the new Executive Director of Fair Vote Canada!

We are all indebted to Larry Gordon for creating this organization, and for building it into one of the most respected civil society organizations in Canada. As a founding member of FVC, as a member of the National Council, and especially when I was President of Fair Vote Canada, I worked closely with Larry. I learned a lot from him and have always had great respect for his political instincts and his leadership skills. Now that I am doing his job, I am even more impressed with his work ethic!

Under Larry's leadership, we have come a long way. When we started this organization, the popular vote totals were not even included in broadcast election coverage. Only seats won were discussed, and most Canadians just assumed that a party with a majority of seats in Parliament must have received a majority of the votes cast.

Thanks to our efforts, millions of Canadians now realize that most of us are "represented" in Parliament by people we voted against and that it takes only about 40% of the votes to win a "majority" government. More and more Canadians are questioning the wisdom of giving absolute power to a single political party even though most of us voted against them. We are making the connection that the reason we are so dissatisfied with our politics and our politicians is that these are not the people we voted for!

We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go. Our goal is to hold politicians and political parties accountable, and that means taking power away from political party elites and giving it to voters, through a fair voting system.

They won't just hand it over. The Catch-22 of voting system reform is that the people elected under the current system tend to think the current system is working just fine, thank you. We will not get a fair voting system until voters demand it!

Democracy remains a do-it-yourself project. I look forward to working with all of you to build a bigger, stronger Fair Vote Canada, and a better democracy in Canada!

FVC intervenes in Quebec charter case

On February 8, 2011, the Quebec Court of Appeal heard submissions in a challenge to the Quebec Elections Act.

A group of Quebec voters, l'Association pour la Revendication des Droits Democratiques (ARDD), is seeking to have Quebec's winner-take-all election system declared unconstitutional because it is unfair to the supporters of small political parties. Fair Vote Canada and the Green Party of Canada also have status as intervenors in this case. We held fundraising events for the case in BC and in Ottawa.

The submissions went very well, and we await the decision of the court. Either way, the case is likely headed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

A detailed report is available here: <http://bgibb-takingonthesystem.blogspot.com/2011/02/julius-grey-and-peter-roenthal-2.html>.

NDP presents Opposition Day motion on proportional representation

On Thursday, March 3, the federal NDP used their final Opposition Day of the session to present the following motion in Parliament:

Mr. Christopherson (Hamilton Centre) — That: (a) the House recognize the undemocratic nature of the current form of representation in the Parliament of Canada, specifically the unnecessary Senate and a House of Commons that does not accurately reflect the political preferences of Canadians;

(b) the House call on the government to (i) propose amendments to the Referendum Act in order to allow the holding of a special referendum at the same time as the next general election, (ii) put a simple question, as written by the Special Committee for Democratic Improvement, which would allow Canadians to vote to abolish the Senate;

(c) the House appoint a Special Committee for Democratic Improvement, whose mandate is to (i) engage with Canadians, and make recommendations to the House, on how best to achieve a House of Commons that more accurately reflects the votes of Canadians by combining direct election by electoral district and proportional representation, (ii) advise the

government on the wording of a referendum question to abolish the Senate; and [details on the composition and operation of the Committee.]

Fair Vote Canada was happy to endorse the proportional representation component of this motion. We issued a media release that resulted in favorable coverage in the Winnipeg Free Press and other media.

Although it was refreshing and exciting to watch fair voting reform being debated in the House of Commons, and Fair Vote Canada was mentioned and quoted several times, no other parties or MPs supported the motion, likely because of the inclusion of Senate abolition in the package.

FVC has no position on the abolition of the Senate. Our position on the Senate is included in our February 2010 statement on Reform of Parliament, which is available on our Web site at <http://www.fairvote.ca/en/node/15418>.

FVC Annual General Meeting in Ottawa, June 10-11

HOLD THAT DATE! The Fair Vote Canada Annual General Meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 11, 2011 in Ottawa. There will be a social evening on Friday, June 10. Online registration details will be available as soon as the venue is confirmed.

Nominations open for annual election of FVC National Council

Nominations are now open for election to the National Council of Fair Vote Canada.

The 15-person National Council is the board of directors of Fair Vote Canada. The Council conducts business, holds discussions, and makes decisions by e-mail and periodic conference calls. One in-person meeting is usually held each year in conjunction with the AGM.

Five members will be elected this year to a three-year term.

Individual council members often serve on committees, work groups and/or work with local chapters.

Members in good standing who would like to contribute their leadership expertise, experience and volunteer time to help build the FVC campaign are encouraged to consider candidacy.

Any member **who joins by March 31, 2011, and is in good standing** (i.e., annual dues have been paid) is eligible to vote and stand for election. If you wish to confirm your membership status, contact us at 416-410-4034 or office@fairvote.ca.

Candidates are self-nominated by notifying the FVC office and submitting a candidate's statement in electronic format (strict 300 word maximum). Those candidates wishing their

statements to be in both official languages must provide the translation (300 word maximum on each version). Your notice of intention to run and your candidate statement must be received no later than April 30, 2011, at office@fairvote.ca.

Candidate statements will be posted on the Fair Vote Canada website at www.fairvote.ca and mailed on request ONLY to those members who do not have email.

All members in good standing will be notified of online and mail-in balloting procedures in advance of the voting period.

The election will be conducted with the Single Transferable Vote (STV) proportional voting system. Ballots must be received by May 31, 2011 to be included in the count.

New FVC chapter in Lethbridge

Fair Vote Canada is proud and happy to announce the formation of the brand new Fair Vote Canada Lethbridge Chapter! Lethbridge is in southern Alberta and is the fourth largest city in the province. Lethbridge joins our Edmonton and Calgary chapters as partners in the Fair Vote Alberta campaign.