

Newsletter/Special Issue – UK Reform: What Does it Mean for Canada?

FVC Annual Meeting and Conference: You Won't Want to Miss This One!

Join us on Saturday, May 29 in Ottawa for FVC's 9th annual meeting and conference: **Voters' Rights Now! Advancing Electoral Reform in an Era of Minority Government.**

The timing couldn't be better and we have a stellar line-up of speakers: Carolyn Bennett, Liberal MP; Paul Dewar, NDP MP; Vanessa Gordon, CAPP Montreal activist; Dr. Robert MacDermid, campaign finance expert; Dr. Henry Milner, proportional representation expert; Judy Rebick, author and activist; Mercédez Roberge, president, Mouvement pour une démocratie nouvelle; Walter Robinson, political consultant and columnist; Dr. Peter Russell, minority government expert.

Plus, we'll have two hours of discussion groups on participant-selected topics. Register online at www.fairvotecanada2010.eventbrite.com or call 416-410-4034.

Coalition Government and Possible Electoral Reform Breakthrough in the UK

The May 6 election in the UK produced a familiar result for Canadians: no party won a majority of seats. But unlike Canada, two parties – the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats – have formed a coalition government committed to providing stable effective government based on a negotiated package of policies. Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron and Liberal Democrat Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg called their coalition an intentional effort to develop a new style of politics.

The coalition platform includes a pledge to hold a binding referendum – with a simple majority threshold – on the Alternative Vote (AV) system, sometimes called Instant Run-off Voting (IRV). Unfortunately AV, like first-past-the-post, is a winner-take-all voting system that does not deliver fair and proportional results (see FVC backgrounder). However, the fact that Britain is now governed by a coalition that agreed to act on electoral reform may provide a model for Canada. The coalition agreement also commits to developing a proportional voting system to elect some or all of the House of Lords.

“While we're disappointed the Liberal Democrats backed down at this time on their demand for proportional representation, these are dramatic developments with significant implications for Canadian reformers,” said FVC President Bronwen Bruch. “First, we saw the British MPs' spending scandal ignite a national debate on electoral reform and proportional representation – a debate that carried through the election. And now we see a new generation of British party leaders from both sides of the spectrum deciding it's good politics to lead, rather than impede, electoral reform. This all happened relatively quickly. Our challenge in Canada is to find a way to make it happen here and to make proportional voting reform a front-burner issue for the next election.”

Bruch invited FVC members and supporters to join the lively discussions and exchange ideas on the Fair Vote Canada Facebook fan page, and for those who are not yet members to join Fair Vote Canada and help build our movement.

Rebalancing provincial seats in the House of Commons will not create voter equality

On April 1 the Harper government moved to add 30 seats to the House of Commons to reflect the growing populations of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia – but failed to address a more egregious problem: the partisan inequities created by the electoral system.

The Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation issued a study indicating that the current allocation of seats to each province gives votes cast in some provinces more weight than those cast in others. According to the study, a vote in Saskatchewan is worth 54% more than a vote in British Columbia. A vote in New Brunswick is worth 38% more than a vote in Ontario. The Mowat Centre study called those figures "startling" and emphasized the need to adjust the provincial seat allocations.

But partisan inequities created by the first-past-the-post voting system are even more startling. If all votes had an equal effect, the ratio of seats to votes for each party would be equal.

The results from the last federal election show the dramatic inequities for those who cast votes for the various parties.

- Bloc Quebecois: 1 seat for every 28,163 votes
- Conservatives: 1 seat for every 36,427 votes
- Liberals: 1 seat for every 47,184 votes
- NDP: 1 seat for every 67,981 votes
- Greens: 0 seats for 937,613 votes.

The weight or effect of a Bloc vote was 2.4 times that of an NDP vote. A Conservative vote was worth 1.3 times that of a Liberal vote. A Green vote had no weight at all.

Voter equality requires two conditions," said Larry Gordon, Executive Director of Fair Vote Canada. "The first is having the same number of voters per MP. The second is having a voting system that gives equal weight to all votes."

FVC National Council election results

Fair Vote Canada election officer Wayne Smith announced the results of the 2010 FVC National Council election.

The successful candidates for the five three-year terms were: Wilf Day, Port Hope, ON; Jamie Deith, BC; Shoni Field, Vancouver, BC; Mark Greenan, Toronto, ON; and Margaret Hoff, London, ON.

Elected to fill two one-year positions were: Gary Dale, Toronto, ON; and Bob McKie, Salt Spring Island, BC.

The full list of the 15-person Fair Vote Canada National Council is available [here](#).