

First-Past-the-Post Voting System Misrepresents Alberta Voters

For only the third time over the past two decades, Albertans will have a majority government actually elected by a majority of voters. Meanwhile, voters supporting opposition parties continue to be dramatically under-represented.

By winning 53% of the popular vote, Ed Stelmach's Progressive Conservatives avoided the false majority results of the 2004, 1993 and 1989 elections in which the party captured a majority of seats even though they failed to win a majority of votes.

"As usual, the first-past-the-post voting system distorted the results and denied fair representation for a significant portion of the electorate," said Stephen Broscoe, President, Fair Vote Canada. "Just under half of Albertans voted for opposition parties and they gained only 11 of 83 seats."

"We congratulate Premier Stelmach and the Progressive Conservative Party on their victory tonight", said Stephen Broscoe, President of Fair Vote Canada, a national citizens' organization promoting fair voting systems across the country. "The PC Party won a legitimate majority government. However, they should not be rewarded with 88% of the seats."

"These types of distortions occur regularly with the first-past-the-post system used all across Canada", continued J.D. Crookshanks, spokesman for Fair Vote Alberta, the provincial wing of Fair Vote Canada. "To put tonight's results into perspective, it only took about 7000 votes province-wide to elect a PC candidate. It took 31,000 votes to elect a Liberal MLA, and 40,000 votes to elect a representative of the NDP. The 64,000 voters who cast ballots for the Wild Rose Alliance were shut out completely, as were the 43,000 supporters of the Alberta Greens. It is no wonder that Albertans are tuning out on a massive scale when so few of their votes count."

"With a fair voting system that treats all voters equally, the number of seats won by the parties closely matches the will of the voters", added Broscoe. "We can never know exactly what the results would have been under a different system, but if all votes cast had equal value, Albertans would likely have elected about 44 PC, 22 Liberal, 7 NDP, 6 Wild Rose Alliance and 4 Green MLAs. We would have seen a much stronger opposition, a more balanced legislature, and most importantly, Albertans would have seen their voting intentions accurately reflected in the election results."

"Similar outcomes in other provinces have led them to examine alternatives to first-past-the-post", said Crookshanks. "British Columbia and Ontario have convened citizens' assemblies to study different types of voting systems in use around the world, and recommend alternatives. In fact, in May 2009 British Columbians will be voting in a referendum on a fairer voting system called BC-STV, recommended by the BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. Given tonight's results, we call on Premier Stelmach to convene an Alberta Citizens' Assembly to study the voting system and determine if a better alternative exists for this province."