



**Fair Le Mouvement pour
Vote la représentation équitable
Canada au Canada**

CHAPTER GUIDELINES

Last updated: September 2008

1. What is a Fair Vote Canada (FVC) chapter?

An FVC chapter is a regional association of FVC members who wish to work together on the FVC campaign in the local area. Chapters are a good means for FVC members to meet one another, work together on campaign activities and stay personally connected to the national campaign.

2. What is the difference between an FVC chapter and an FVC caucus?

Chapters will be formed solely on a geographic basis. FVC will also be organizing non-geographic special interest caucuses of members. For example, in the future, we may have FVC caucuses such as Students for Fair Voting, Teachers for Fair Voting or Trade Unionists for Fair Voting. In addition, it is hoped that FVC members with party affiliations will form FVC caucuses within their parties, such as Liberals for Fair Voting, PCs for Fair Voting, etc.

For further information on FVC caucuses, see Appendix 1.

3. How are FVC chapters initiated?

When the national office becomes aware that a number of FVC members live in a common area, those members will be contacted about their interest in organizing a chapter. FVC chapters will be initiated, formed and operated by those individual FVC members in a region who choose to do so.

4. What are the geographic coverage areas of FVC chapters?

The location and geographic coverage of chapters will be largely determined by those who organized them, but FVC chapters will require official recognition and certification by the FVC National Council. Only one chapter will be recognized in a given geographic area. In major urban centres (e.g., Toronto, Vancouver), members may choose to have one large chapter or several chapters in different parts of the metropolitan area. In rural areas, a chapter may cover a town, region or portion of a province. In some cases, a chapter may cover an entire province.

5. What type of membership will chapters have?

FVC chapters are expected to follow the mission and spirit of the national FVC campaign. Chapters are expected to actively seek membership and leadership that illustrate the multi-partisan spirit and composition of FVC. Chapters must also stay focused exclusively on the FVC agenda.

6. Do FVC members have to belong to an FVC chapter to work on the campaign?

No. Involvement in an FVC chapter is optional. Individual FVC members can play an important role in the campaign without being in a chapter by distributing literature, helping recruit members, setting up speaking engagements for FVC speakers, and so on.

7. How are chapters formed?

If there is a critical mass of FVC members in a region (say 5 to 20 people depending on the size of the region), one or more members should form an organizing committee to plan an initial meeting of all FVC members in the area. A contact list will be provided by the national office. The initiators would likely become an interim steering committee. One or two people should be appointed interim chair or co-chairs.

An initial meeting should be convened at which the participants can review the purpose and role of chapters, and the model bylaws. A committee should be set to draft and bring forward chapter by-laws for presentation at a founding meeting of the chapter.

Upon adoption of the by-laws, the group would then set the date for an initial annual general meeting (AGM) at which time the chapter executive (or officers) would be elected. Until that time, an interim leadership group would need to be appointed.

When the by-laws are adopted, the chapter would then contact the national office and formally ask for recognition. Upon recognition, the chapter would be listed in FVC materials and have access to the chapter section of the national FVC web site for postings.

(See Appendix 2 for model by-laws.)

8. How are chapters funded?

FVC chapters are self-funded. FVC membership dues go to the national office and are used to fund the national campaign. Chapters can and are encouraged to engage in local fund-raising. Chapters can also empower themselves to assess their own membership fees (see model by-laws).

9. What do chapters do?

In general, the role of chapters is to help support and carry out FVC campaign activities. In many cases, there will be nationwide initiatives underway – e.g., membership drives, petition drives, MP contact programs, public education initiatives and sector organizing projects. However, chapters will play an important role in identifying and taking action on opportunities for maximum impact in their local area. The only guideline is that FVC chapters should maintain and continually demonstrate a multi-partisan spirit and character.

Chapters can and should consult with the national office on their program initiatives. Some general types of chapter activities are listed below.

1) FVC membership recruitment

All chapters should continually focus on signing up as many FVC members as possible. Outreach efforts should start with the obvious places for quick results – personal contacts, friends and co-workers of current FVC members – plus any places or groups who would have a natural interest or inclination to support the FVC mandate.

2) Self-education on voting system reform

Many people who join FVC are aware and supportive of the general principles of voting system reform, but will be interested in learning more about the specific problems with our current voting system and how proportional representation alternatives work. Chapters might wish to include an educational component at each meeting, and/or form an FVC reading or study group.

3) Speaker training

The success of FVC campaigns will depend largely on our ability to set up as many engagements as possible for well-informed, articulate FVC speakers and workshop leaders. In some cases, local chapters may be able to work with speakers or workshop leaders from the national office or the National Council. However, more extensive outreach will be possible if qualified and trained local leaders are also able to do presentations.

Chapters should obtain the model speaking notes and workshop outlines from the national office in order to develop their outreach capabilities, and/or work with the national office to provide national FVC speakers or workshops in the region.

Important Note: If local chapters have contacts with national or provincial organizations and can arrange speaking engagements or meetings, the FVC national office should be contacted regarding identification of the person/people who should represent FVC and the national campaign in these cases.

4) Local forums or community meetings

In addition to sending FVC representatives to other groups and events, an FVC chapter may wish to organize and host its own forum or community meeting on voting system reform. Speakers could be invited to make individual or panel presentations. Local community leaders, MPs and others might be invited.

5) House meetings

House meetings can be an effective organizing technique to help build momentum and recruit active members. A local chapter could ask each of its members to host a house party to which the host's friends, co-workers and contacts would be invited to spend an evening or afternoon learning about FVC. This informal meetings – with refreshments! – are an excellent way to find people who have an initial interest and motivate them to become members and activists.

6) Petition drive

The national FVC petition is a good outreach tool for use by individual members to approach friends, co-workers and contacts. Likewise, the petition is a good focal point for information tables at community events. Please note that the petition asks for an email address and phone number, making the signatories a good group for membership recruitment.

7) Meetings with local MPs and party officials

In conjunction with the national campaign and MP Liaison Committee, local chapters can and should be continually in contact with local MPs, party officials and candidates to help educate them on fair voting issues and determine their positions.

8) Other Activities

Local chapters will also be asked to help support various national campaign activities as the movement grows. Chapters will be encouraged to be innovative and take advantage of unique local opportunities to advance the campaign.

10. Resources

The FVC web site is one good source of information. The national office will continue to develop and make available campaign and public education materials in English and French.

The National FVC office will also have templates for introductory community presentations, introductory workshop models, and more advanced presentations designed for those working on campaigns.

In addition, the national office and National Council members will make themselves available to provide support to chapters – attending meetings, making presentations and assisting with contacts.

11. Note About Chapter Elections

The election of chapter officers is an opportunity to familiarize members with proportional voting systems. The model by-laws suggest the use of the Single Transferable Vote (STV). Free STV tabulation software is available from the Electoral Reform Society (UK) website.

Appendix 1: FVC Caucuses

FVC will also be organizing special interest caucuses of members. For example, in the future, we may have FVC caucuses such as Students for Fair Voting, Teachers for Fair Voting or Trade Unionists for Fair Voting. In addition, it is hoped that FVC members with party affiliations will form FVC caucuses within their parties, such as Liberals for Fair Voting, PCs for Fair Voting, etc.

While FVC chapters are expected to have a wide and diverse range of members to reflect the wide base of citizen support for fair voting, FVC caucuses will be comprised of people with a common background or affiliation.

In most other respects, an FVC caucus will operate in a similar fashion to an FVC chapter, with the likely exception being that planning and most meetings will likely be done over the internet, rather than in person.

Those who are interested in helping organize or support an FVC caucus are encouraged to contact the FVC national office or a member of the FVC National Council.

Appendix 2: Model By-Laws for an FVC Chapter

Model By-Laws for an FVC Chapter

I. Name

The chapter of Fair Vote Canada in _____ shall be called Fair Vote Canada - _____, hereafter referred to as the Chapter.

II. Aims and Objectives

- The aims and objectives of the Chapter are:
- to support the purpose and objectives of Fair Vote Canada and its multi-partisan, citizen-based campaign;
- to provide a means for people in _____ to participate in the creation of a new voting system; and
- to provide information on voting system reform to the public.

III. Members

Members of the Chapter are those members in good standing of Fair Vote Canada (hereafter referred to as the National Organization) residing in _____ who abide by these By-Laws and those of the National Organization, and who have not asked that their names be removed from the Chapter's contact list.

IV. The Executive

The Executive of the Chapter shall be composed of the following:

- i) President;
- ii) Secretary;
- iii) Treasurer;
- iv) Executive Members, the number of which shall not be less than two or more than four.

The term of office shall be one year.

Meetings of the Executive may be held at any time and place to be determined by the Executive provided that 48 hours written notice of such meeting shall be given personally, or transmitted by facsimile or electronic mail, to each member of the Executive.

Each member of the Executive is authorized to exercise one vote. A quorum of the Executive shall consist of a majority of the Executive.

V. Annual General Meeting

The Chapter shall hold an Annual General Meeting, which shall:

- i) receive a current financial statement from the Treasurer; and
- ii) elect the Executive.

A quorum of the Chapter shall be five per cent of the membership including a majority of the Executive.

Fourteen days written notice shall be sent either by regular mail, facsimile transmission, or electronic mail transmission to each member of any annual or special general meeting of members.

Notice of any meeting where special business will be transacted should contain sufficient information to permit the member to form a reasoned judgement on the decision(s) to be taken.

Each member present at a meeting shall have the right to exercise one vote. A majority of the votes cast by the members shall prevail except where the vote or consent of a greater number of members is required by these By-Laws and/or those of the National Organization.

VI. Elections

The Executive shall be elected by secret ballot.

- i) The Executive shall be elected by a proportional vote using a transferable ballot.
- ii) The Executive will hold an election to fill the Executive offices at their first meeting following the Annual General Meeting.
- iii) Any vacant Executive position may be filled by a majority vote of the Executive.

VII. Executive Roles and Responsibilities

i) The President shall:

- chair meetings of the Chapter and the Executive;
- represent the Chapter to the public;
- assume responsibility for all communications and records of the Chapter;
- act as ex officio member of all committees and shall have the authority in consultation with the Executive to designate a member of the Executive as an ex officio member to any committee;
- interpret the Chapter By-Laws.
- act as co-signatory for the Chapter bank or credit union account.

ii) The Secretary shall:

- record and keep a record of all Minutes of membership and Executive meetings;
- ensure the proper distribution of said Minutes.
- draft, as directed, correspondence and other documents;
- ensure that said correspondence is forwarded as appropriate.

iii) The Treasurer shall:

- present a current financial statement to each meeting of the Chapter and its Executive;
- act as co-signatory for the Chapter bank or credit union account.

VIII. Committees

The Chapter Executive shall have the authority and the responsibility for establishing committees of the Chapter.

IX. Finances

i) The Chapter may be funded by donations explicitly collected for the local Chapter. If a Chapter undertakes a fundraising drive of its members, it must consult with the Executive Director of the National Organisation to avoid any conflict with national fundraising activities.

ii) The Chapter may also be funded by Chapter membership fees that may only be levied by a two-thirds majority vote at an Annual General Meeting, at which fourteen days written notice of the proposed fee had been given to members before the meeting.

ii) Whenever a Chapter membership fee is levied, members must be notified that those not wishing to be part of the local Chapter are not required to pay the Chapter membership fee and may resign their Chapter membership, at which

point their names shall be removed from the Chapter's contact list. They would still remain members of the National Organization.