

## FVC-AGM WOMEN Panel Presentation – Sat, Jun 2, 2007

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Good afternoon. I understand FVC has been doing wonderful job in **promoting fair voting systems** for so many years since its inception in Aug 2000. You deserve lots of credit for your diligent, persistent endeavours and for your strong contributions. With the new MMP system recommended by the OCA on Electoral Reform on hand, you are about to win your very first major victory. For that reason this AGM must be very special to all of you and as a member of the Citizens' Assembly I feel very honoured to participate as one of the panellists. Thank you very much for inviting me.

I could understand the reasons why FVC strongly supports the recommended MMP system. It seems to meet most of the purpose of FVC – in terms of Proportionality, Fair Representation, Accountability, and Voter Choice.

As a matter of fact, the Citizens' Assembly was quite convinced it's the best possible electoral system for today's Ontario. Because, first, it will provide the voters with greater choice - Voters will enjoy two clear choices, one for the local candidate, another for a political party: they will no longer have to face difficulties of choosing between local candidate and a political party.

It will also ensure high level of proportionality while maintaining strong local representation. There will be no more distorted election results, as experienced by PC that won only two seats in spite of winning 17% of popular votes in 1993 election, since the share of seats elected for each party shall reflect quite accurately the will of the electorate.

It's also easy for voters to understand and the transition & implementation should be very smooth.

CERTAINLY a big improvement when compared to the current SMP system. Therefore, the voters as well as political parties will be and should be happy with all the good features of the new system. And I feel strongly that the merits will sell the system. Therefore, the more public education programmes, the better. And the more public discourse, the better. And I appreciate FVC's timely launching of Yes' Campaign.

However, as no electoral system can be perfect, the recommended MMP system will present certain challenges, PARTICULARLY in terms of Women Representation. Because there is no assurances built in for significant improvement of GENDER BALANCE.

**According to CRIC study**, Portraits of Canada 2004, 90% of Canadians want to elect more women.

As you know, the ratio of 30% for the list seats is the bare minimum needed for achieving proportionality. It is very low comparatively – New Zealand 44%, Germany 50% - perhaps the lowest ratio in the world. Because the 30% ratio is so low, a meaningful increase for Women Representation can hardly be expected.

In fact, I did some math during the deliberation process. Assuming that there should be no significant changes for the ratio of women rep for the local seats, unless at least half of the list seats are won by female, Women Rep will not be improved to 30% critical mass level.

[Women local seats 24 x 90/103] + [list seats 39 x ½] = 21.0 + 19.5 = 40.5 => 31.4%

Now, I may have to briefly mention about why gender balance is so important and why I have been so much interested in it, as June Macdonald requested.

A family is usually thriving when the man and the woman are working together as EQUAL PARTNERS in every aspect of life. I've always believed that IN PRINCIPLE the governance of a province or country would not be much different from the management of a happy family life. GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES, women can be as good as men in any field. In fact they have proven to be much better in so many areas like child-care, health-care, education, and senior-care. Therefore, women's under-representation means tremendous loss to this country. Once we achieve the gender balance, I firmly believe, the Index of Harmony and Happiness of the nation would be skyrocketing.

Canada has been regarded as one of the most developed democracies in the world. And yet its women rep has been so low, ranking 49th in the world, in spite of diligent endeavours for gender equality started by Canada's first MP Agnes Macphail already in 1921 and carried on by so many more courageous, insightful activists like your Doris Anderson. Then I had to consider seriously arguments by Electoral System expert Jackie Steele of Ottawa Univ, for instance, who strongly urged OCA members to adopt a quota for women rep or no improvement would be achieved.

**Ideally, CA should have designed an electoral system that guaranties gender balance, as the Canadian Charter of Rights guaranties the gender equality.** But I was hoping to be able to achieve at the beginning at least 35% of Women Rep.

Then I realized 35% was unattainable at all with the MMP model of 70:30.

Then, I'd try to persuade my fellow members to include "ZIPPERING" for the list seats, but no avail. Perhaps I was not persuasive at all.

The resistance against "ZIPPERING" or any type of quotas was so strong that it wouldn't matter to the majority of CA members that a form of quota system has been widely used in over 100 countries presently including most EU democracies - Scotland, Wales, Germany & Sweden.

**I had to satisfy myself with the inclusion of a recommendation on Nomination of list candidates.**

**As you know, the recommendation reads that political parties to nominate list seat candidates in a Fair and Transparent Way in order to achieve a good balance of gender, diversity of population, and regions. It does not recommend the same requirements for nominating the local candidates, but expects political parties to nominate the local candidates in a Fair and Transparent Way as well.**

**Another words, political parties are expected to grow out of the 'Old Boys Club Backroom Politics and to exercise a high level of integrity and a good sense of balance.**

Can it be done easily? How can we make it realized? Perhaps only by on-going vigil by organizations like FVC and the voters, and by rewarding any political party that implements the recommendation well. And lets hope for the best, though.

Thank you.