



Fair Représentation
Vote équitable
Canada au Canada

Fair Vote Canada
Newsletter

Représentation équitable au Canada
Bulletin d'information

This semi-annual newsletter includes articles previously circulated in Fair Vote Canada email newsletters and posted on the FVC web site over the past six months.

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Yes for BC-STV campaign now underway (July 2008)

Electoral reformers in British Columbia are already working full-tilt to organize a successful campaign to win the May 2009 referendum. Campaign committees are now contacting volunteers from the 2005 campaign, identifying regional and local organizers, and developing the message strategy and communications tools. Visit the campaign website – www.stv.ca – for more details.

Marie Bountrogianni joins FVC National Advisory Board (July 2008)

Fair Vote Canada is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Marie Bountrogianni to the FVC National Advisory Board. Dr. Bountrogianni is currently President and CEO of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) Board of Governors and is the former Ontario Minister for Democratic Renewal. She was first elected to the Ontario legislature in 1999. In October 2003, she was named Minister of Children's Services and Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In June 2005 she became Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister for Democratic Renewal.

Electoral reform interest is growing in Alberta (July 2008)

The abysmally low voter turnout and greatly distorted results in the recent Alberta election have led to growing interest in provincial electoral reform, particularly by opposition parties who won 47% of the votes, but gained only 11 of 83 seats. Recent news stories have reported on various proposals for the opposition parties to jointly promote proportional representation.

A new FVC chapter will be launched this month in Calgary, which together with the Edmonton chapter, will spearhead the Fair Vote Alberta campaign.

FVC National Council election results announced (July 2008)

Using an STV voting system, Fair Vote Canada members elected the following five people to three-year terms on the FVC National Council: Doug Bailie (Edmonton, AB), Wayne Smith (Toronto, ON), Andy Blair (Montreal, QC), John Deverell (Pickering, ON), and Jennie Dailey-O'Cain (Edmonton, AB).

Opportunity knocking: another federal election, another minority? (Sept. 2008)

An election call in the coming days? We'll know soon. Meanwhile, the polls, pundits and even the party leaders are pointing toward another minority government. Depending on the fortunes of the parties and the wacky allocation of seats by our first-past-the-post system, the election could produce new opportunities for electoral reform.

Would a Liberal minority, requiring NDP or Green support, agree to a reform process? Would a new Conservative minority, needing support, agree to a national referendum on both the future of the Senate (already proposed by prominent Conservatives) along with one on electoral reform?

Fair Vote Canada will run a very active online, media and ground campaign during the federal election. If you can volunteer to attend candidates' meeting and/or send letters to the editor, contact us today.

BC-STV campaign growing quickly – volunteers needed (Sept. 2008)

In eight months, British Columbians go to the polls to vote on the STV system recommended by the BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. Visit www.stv.ca to learn more, subscribe to the newsletter and volunteer. If you live outside of BC, you can help by being active through online forums, blogs and rallying others to support the campaign. Supporters are also encouraged to join the Yes to BC-STV Facebook group.

Quebec reformers prepare for Dec. court hearing (Sept. 2008)

Whether the Westminster voting tradition violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) will be decided, at least initially, in Quebec. The Quebec Superior Court

has agreed to give full hearing in December to an application asking it to declare first-past-the-post unconstitutional. The applicants will argue that the Quebec Elections Act violates equal treatment in law and freedom from legal discrimination based on political or ethnic association.

The initiative was organized by l'Association pour la Revendication des Droits Democratique (ARDD) and has been supported, in part, by a financial contribution from Fair Vote Canada.

Quebec elections chief presses for proportional voting (Sept. 2008)

Marcel Blanchert, Quebec Director General of Elections, told Radio-Canada that Quebec's present electoral system has reached its limits and should be reformed. In a report to be tabled with the National Assembly this Fall, Blanchert will propose a new electoral map for Quebec, but also note that the National Assembly should now consider adopting a proportional voting system. Last December, Blanchert published an extensive report, requested by the government, on a mixed proportional voting system for Quebec. Blanchert believes it will now be more difficult for the National Assembly to avoid the electoral reform issue.

FVC Executive Committee re-organizes (Sept. 2008)

FVC President Stephen Broscoe announced his resignation of the presidency, with regrets, due to heavy and competing demands related to his work. The Council thanked him for his two years of leadership, and asked that he continue as an At-Large member of the National Council's Executive Committee, which he accepted. Subsequently, the Council elected former Vice President Barbara Odenwald as the new FVC President. Andy Blair was elected Vice President, having previously served as the At-Large executive committee member.

Election 2008: let's keep the pressure on – we need

volunteers and donations! (October 2008)

Some pundits and politicians just want us to go away, but the topic of electoral reform keeps bubbling up. The media coverage of vote-swapping and strategic voting initiatives is sparking extensive discussion of the core problem: the dysfunctional first-past-the-post system. We need to keep that discussion alive and growing, because the post-election environment may provide an opening for a federal electoral reform process.

If you can volunteer even a few hours between now and election day, please contact us immediately! Check out our election campaign action page. We need volunteers sending letters to the editor and posting to online forums and blogs, and people who can attend all-candidate meetings to hand out leaflets and ask questions.

Even if you can't volunteer, a small donation can make a big difference. Every dollar counts in the fight to make every vote count.

And everyone, please download our campaign flyer, photocopy a few dozen or a few hundred, and pass them around to friends and contacts. Those members and supporters in regions with an FVC chapter can also pick up the full-colour printed version from your chapter's volunteer coordinator.

OrphanVoters.ca and the Great Democracy Disaster Contest (October 2008)

Have you visited our special campaign site: OrphanVoters.ca and forwarded the link to your friends and contacts? If not, do so today.

Also, be sure to enter the Great Democracy Disaster Contest. We have cash prizes for those making the best predictions on the number of orphan voters, by province and nationally, that will be created by the October 14 election.

FVC calls on Harper and Dion to endorse democratic voting (October 2008)

On September 28, Fair Vote Canada issued an open letter to Stephen Harper and Stéphane Dion.

Dear Mr. Harper and Mr. Dion:

On behalf of all Canadians who want to believe in democracy, allow me to express my enormous frustration with this election campaign. The leaders of our two largest political parties are acting more like fear mongers than true leaders.

Stéphane Dion, you say Canadians must vote for the Liberal Party, or Stephen Harper, with a phony majority government, will ruin Canada as we know it. Stephen Harper, you say Canadians must vote for the Conservative Party, or Stéphane Dion as head of a phony majority Liberal government will ruin Canada as we know it.

Is Canada truly in such terrible danger, or are both of you simply avoiding the core question that any Canadian would ask: 'Why should a leader and party without true majority voter support be allowed to seize command of Parliament and impose law and policy on all Canadians?'

Dion muffs his pitch to 7.5 million orphan voters (October 2008)

Stéphane Dion, trailing badly in election opinion polls, muffed a chance to woo 7.5 million orphan voters on CBC's Cross Country Checkup on September 28.

The Liberal leader dodged a caller who asked for his position on election reform and proportional representation. Instead he touted another winner-take-all voting system which would continue to shut out all small-party voters and elect many more Liberals.

Cincinnati to vote on STV system (October 2008)

In addition to voting for the President on November 4, voters in Cincinnati, Ohio, will decide whether to adopt the single transferable vote (STV) system for use in future municipal elections. The Cincinnati chapter of the NAACP, the largest American civil rights organization, collected the necessary signatures to put the issue on the ballot.

Cincinnati used STV from 1925 to 1955, which led to the election of the first racially mixed city councils. Unfortunately, backlash to the growth of American civil rights movement in the 1950s led to a referendum to bring back winner-take-all voting. If Cincinnati adopts STV, it will become the first major city in the US to do so in modern times. An STV win in Cincinnati would also provide a tremendous boost for the STV campaign in British Columbia. *[Note: unfortunately voter support in the referendum fell short of a majority by several percentage points.]*

Fair Vote Canada calls for two-question referendum on the future of Parliament (Dec. 2008)

Parliament is continuing to demonstrate an inability to reform itself, Fair Vote Canada stated in a December 19 press release, as the Prime Minister prepared to announce more appointments to the unelected upper chamber.

FVC called all the Parliamentary parties to authorize a referendum to allow Canadian citizens to give clear direction on the reform of both chambers. Fair Vote Canada proposes a referendum with two questions. One would let voters direct the government on the future of the Senate, indicating their preference for either an elected Senate or Senate abolition. The other would let voters direct the government to establish an independent Citizens' Assembly to design a fair and equitable made-in-Canada voting system for use in future elections of the House of Commons.

Quebec court to deliver ruling on first-past-the-post in March (Dec. 2008)

In the first week of December, the Quebec Superior Court heard arguments asking it to declare first-past-the-post unconstitutional. The applicants, organized by l'Association pour la Revendication des Droits Democratique (ARDD), argued that the Quebec Elections Act violates equal treatment in law and freedom from legal discrimination based on political or ethnic association. The court is expected to announce its ruling in March.

2,000 survey respondents indicate preferences for campaign action (Dec. 2008)

More than 2,000 Fair Vote supporters participated in an online survey to provide feedback on a number of action ideas. See what people had to say about suggestions such as Democracy Day in Canada, Double-Up for Democracy, a voters' strike, civil disobedience, and more. Survey results are available at www.fairvote.ca.

Fair Vote Canada AGM planned for April 18 in Vancouver (Dec. 2008)

FVC will hold its eight annual meeting in Vancouver on Saturday, April 18, just 26 days before the British Columbia electoral reform referendum. The annual election for five seats on the FVC National Council will also take place in March. Details on the AGM and election will be available in the new year.

BC-STV conference in Vancouver energizes campaign volunteers (January 2009)

Former members of the BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform held a five-year reunion on January 10-11 in Vancouver. The assembly alumni were joined by BC-STV campaign activists,

organizers and volunteers from across the province.

British Columbians will vote again on the BC-STV voting system proposal in a May 12, 2009 referendum. In the 2005 referendum, nearly 58% voted in favour, but the popular reform was not implemented because the government set and the opposition supported a 60% threshold.

Among the featured speakers at the January 10-11 event were former Assembly chair Jack Blaney, former BC Liberal Party leader Gordon Gibson, Dr. Dennis Pilon, author of *The Politics of Voting*, former assembly research director Dr. Ken Carty, and political scientist Dr. Fred Cutler.

Please support this important referendum campaign in any way possible – for more information visit www.stv.ca.

FVC AGM and candidate call for National Council election (January 2009)

The Fair Vote Canada AGM will be held in Vancouver on Saturday, April 18, just a few weeks before the BC electoral reform referendum. Speakers and registration details will be available next month.

In March, FVC members in good stand will be electing five Council members to serve on the 15-person National Council of Fair Vote Canada.

Any member in good standing is eligible to be a candidate. Candidate declarations must be made by February 15.

Democracy Action Day: stay tuned! (January 2009)

Fair Vote Canada is planning an action day shortly after Parliament convenes. Stay tuned for further announcements on how all fair voting supporters can play a role.

Voting reform forum in Toronto on February 21 (January 2009)

Fair Vote Ontario is sponsoring a one-day forum on voting reform on Saturday, February 21 in Toronto. Details have already been sent to Ontario members and contacts. For more information, call 416-410-4034.

Hebert and Coyne say PR reform is a priority

On the January 1 broadcast of CBC-TV's *The National*, the political commentators on the "At Issue" segment were asked the following question: "If you had a magic wand, what change would you make to our constitution or to any of our practices of governance to make them more democratic, more responsive, more transparent, more worthy of our confidence?" Both pointed to the need for a proportional voting system.