



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This issue of our Newsletter is devoted to giving you some insight into the upcoming provincial referendum. This referendum can/will change the way we choose our Member of the Legislature and the model of governance. This is the third time B.C. has asked us to look at Electoral Reform. Twice the bar was set so high and the financing to educate us so low that both previous referendums failed.

If B.C. decides, through a 50 +1 majority, to go to Proportional Representation it will set a precedent for North America. So, I urge you all to think carefully, seek out the information readily available on line and make an informed decision. I urge you to cast your vote in the mail-in ballot that will arrive in the next few weeks.

The three articles here are an introduction to the debate and an incentive for you to explore the options open to us right now. Do we go with the status quo or do we step out of our comfort zone and explore a different model that does work for some very stable and progressive countries. Please take time to do so.

The first two articles are from Political parties so you have an idea of where they stand and the third is from a Trail resident who lived in New Zealand before, during and post Proportional Representation.

**Websites to explore that can lead to others:**

Vote PR BC: <http://voteprbc.ca/get-informed/>  
Fair Vote Canada: <https://www.fairvote.ca/>

In Universal Kinship and Loving Peace,  
Laura Savinkoff  
Coordinator Boundary Peace Initiative  
Coordinator B.C. Southern Interior Peace Coalition

**Proportional Representation (PR)**

By: Ian Mitchell, President  
Boundary Similkameen NDP Constituency  
Association

Friends,

This fall we have an opportunity to make history and transform our democracy for the better.

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**Proportional Representation (PR)**

Following on the campaign promises made by the Green Party of and the BC NDP our democracy has already made a huge leap forward in the banning of big money from politics. Now we have the chance to take the next step in transforming our democracy for the better. We get to choose between our antiquated First Past the Post (FPTP) system and Proportional Representation (PR). The evidence of the benefits of PR systems is massive and could fill many pages. And this is a two part referendum in which we get to select our preferred type of PR system, and this warrants a great debate as well. But for this piece I will focus on the two key benefits. Making every British Columbian’s vote count, and making our democracy and governance truly work for us all.

**Making Every Vote Count**

Under first past the post, we know what the outcome will be in most ridings before the first vote is even counted. And in almost every election, one party is granted 100% of the power with about 40% of the vote. I could point out the destructive legacy of the Harper government’s majority years or that of the BC Liberal’s 16 years in power, but the strongest case against FPTP today is surely Doug Ford’s government in Ontario.

That a premier like Ford can rule a province and tear it apart as he is already doing while only having the support of 40% of voters is almost all the argument one needs to see that it is time for FPTP to die.

Under PR, every riding is therefore a battleground riding. No riding is a “safe riding.” All parties will have to fight for undecided voters in Kootenay West (long term NDP stronghold) as well as Peace River North (long term BC Liberal stronghold). Parties will need to campaign, and govern, in a way that will appeal to voters in every corner of the province. And **NO** party and **NO** premier will have the mandate to do what Doug Ford is doing to the people and the democracy in Ontario today.

This leads me to the second point I want to make.

**Better governance**

We are actually fortunate in that our current provincial government is actually an excellent example of how minority governments can serve the people incredibly well. The BC NDP has been able to govern effectively and with stability because of the agreement reached with the BC Green Party.

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(From page 1) **Proportional Representation (PR)**

The two parties have had to work together to find common ground. While I am a proud member of the BC NDP, I can say that I believe that this government has been better for the fact that we have had to work with the Green Party to adapt and craft legislation that is in *the best interest* of BC.

It is worth noting that the opponents of PR are well financed moneyed interests who benefit greatly from the status quo. They believe that it just fine when people like Doug Ford wreak havoc on democracy so long as he gives them tax cuts and corporate handouts.

In contrast to the falsehoods peddled by these interests, it is a fact that the most successful and stable democracies in the world (which also top the list in terms of quality of life) all use some form of PR. Australia, New Zealand, and most of Europe are doing just fine and in fact thriving under the model of collaborative governance that PR provides.

So I urge you to join me this fall in revolutionizing our democracy and putting more power into the hands of you and me and every British Columbian. Vote for Proportional Representation. Generations to come will thank you for it.

For more information contact Ian at [bdsndppres@gmail.com](mailto:bdsndppres@gmail.com)

**Proportional Representation (PR)**

By: Jim Thornton: Boundary Similkameen B.C. Liberal Constituency Association

Dear Neighbours,

The first concern is that two of the proposed versions of Proportional Representation have not been used before anywhere in the world. This presents a risk to stable government that could last for eight years, until the voting system could be subject to another referendum.

The second consideration is that the details of how Proportional Representation would be administered are to be revealed after the referendum. Andrew Weaver, leader of the Green Party, has publicly stated that, “With Proportional Representation, the BC liberals would never get a majority again.” Likely true, but by the same token, the NDP would never get a majority again either. Despite the current NDP/Green coalition, the possibility exists that John Horgan, leader of the NDP, would very much like to run the government without the influence and control of the Green Party.

A third likelihood is that if PR came into play, more than the current three parties would be able to gain over 5% of the vote and have seats in the legislature. These parties could be from the extreme left and right of the political spectrum.

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(From last column)**Proportional Representation (PR)**

Those currently supporting the Green Party look to the fact that if PR was in place for the 2017 election, they would currently have 15 seats in the legislature. With new parties in the mix, that strength would likely be diluted.

Fourth, voter participation is low now at 50-60%.

With Proportional Representation the process, and the actual ballot, would be so complicated and so confusing that possibly even fewer people would vote, except for the zealous few of the extreme parties.

Fifth, considering the population distribution of BC, the Lower Mainland would control the results of the referendum, leaving Central and Northern BC without any influence. With such a rushed referendum process, requiring only 50%+1 to pass, it is possible that if only 30% of eligible voters participate, 15% of BC will change, or retain, the voting system. Please see graphic below.

Whether a person believes in Proportional Representation or not, it is a very flawed referendum.

Finally, when considering the merits of First-Past-the-Post and Proportional Representation, one could look at the possibilities in the future. The current BC government, comprised of a coalition of the NDP and Green parties, is satisfactory to most supporters of those parties. Alternatively, if PR came into play for the next election, it is just as possible that a coalition of the BC Liberal and BC Conservative parties could form a government.

I hope this helps.

For more information contact Jim at: [jgt3@telus.net](mailto:jgt3@telus.net)

**Proportional Representation**

By: Dr. Nadine McDonnell

**Democracy:**

Our democracy is precious. The right of the people to choose their rulers was not inevitable. The electoral system was the result of a long battle between the powerful and the powerless. The right to vote was hard fought and hard won over centuries of struggle.

The idea of democracy sounds simple. All that is needed is an election and the people vote to select the folks who will rule until the next election. The elections allow people either to endorse the existing government or change it simply by voting for someone else. The problem is that elections require a system – an electoral process. And without a fair electoral process, there can be no democracy.

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## (From page 2) **Proportional Representation**

A fair electoral process requires constant reform. Electoral reform is to democracy what weeding is to gardening. For over 150 years a central question was who should vote – men of property, Christians, women, and so on. The idea of universal suffrage was not readily accepted. Reforming the voting process itself also has a long history. The secret ballot was another fight, which many people thought was settled but has returned as part of the debate over mail ballots and online voting. The process of districting, the drawing of constituencies, is constantly under study. And in most democratic countries, reform has included how the votes are counted. Reforming the electoral process to ensure that all votes are counted by adopting proportional representation is also necessary to ensure fairness – and to protect democracy itself.

Electoral reform is a process, not a place. While past struggles may have resolved many issues, others remain. Proportional representation is the obvious next step. Fewer people, in particular the young, are voting. Something must be done to convince those who have come of age in this new millennium that voting matters. Proportional representation ensures that each vote counts when the government is formed. This may not seem like a big deal, but experience with proportional representation elsewhere has shown that it helps get out the youth vote.

While reform to change how votes are counted may not seem like a radical change to the electoral system, it is necessary to protect our democracy. Democracy is precious and will be lost if people don't vote.

### **New Zealand**

The experience of New Zealand is relevant for BC for a number of reasons. Both have about the same number of people. Both were settled in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century by Europeans, largely from the UK, and the system of government and law is based on the Westminster system. For decades prior to the reforms of the 1990s the New Zealand electoral system was First Past the Post (FFP). The radical changes wrought by the governments of both the left and the right in the period from 1984 to 1991 prompted thousands of New Zealanders to seek a more representative form of government. In 1993 the country held their first election in which the votes were counted using proportional representation system called Multiple Member Proportional (MMP). Folks were asked in 2012 if they wanted FFP back and a majority said 'no'.

With MMP New Zealand voters got two votes - one is the candidate of their choice and the second for the party. The party vote is in many ways a vote for the party platform, or in other words, the party policies and promises. Voters thus have the chance to vote for the candidate, but are not then obliged to vote for the candidate's party and vice versa. This means that even if the party with the policies you support fields a poor candidate or maybe does not field anyone in your riding, you can still support the party.

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## (From last column) **Proportional Representation**

Or if the candidate you support is from a party you cannot support, you can vote for the person and not the party. The MMP proposed for BC is different, but the basic idea of two votes is the same.

New Zealand has had MMP for 25 years. How has it worked? I believe that it has provided better government. But it has taken time. For year's politicians, the press and, perhaps even most voters continued to treat the election as the traditional FFP horse race. Under FFP the focus is on the two major parties and, in particular, on the leaders. MMP makes this difficult because the major parties have not been able to win government without the support of minor parties. Personalities, especially of the various leaders matter, but policy also matters. The party platforms cannot be ignored because policy determines which party can work with another to form government.

What is more – the participation rate for young voters is much higher in New Zealand. Almost 20% more voters between the ages of 18 and 34 voted than in BC.

### **The need for change**

Nico Jaspers, CEO and Co-founder of Dalia Research, said: "Political systems around the world are currently changing with a speed that we haven't seen in almost 30 years. The key to understanding why this is happening and what to expect next is to tap into global public opinion. Right now the biggest risk for democracies is that the public no longer sees them as democratic."

David Mills in an essay posted on Dogwood on August 21, 2018 writes: "Indeed democracy is in retreat around the world. Young people are particularly disenchanted, with barely a third saying it is essential to live in a democracy. Fair enough. "Democracy" has foreclosed their future, leaving them with crushing debt and dangerous global warming. Millennials may have the right to vote, but damned if they can find a place to live.

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### **Our Mission**

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents people of diverse backgrounds officially brought together in 2002 because of our mutual concern for the rise in world conflict. Our mandate is to participate in multilateral non-violent conflict resolution in support of global human rights, ecological and environmental sustainability and international law through education, sharing of information, dialogue and activism locally and globally. We encourage and seek your participation in our mutual work for true peace based on social justice, equality, accountability, integrity, honour, respect, etc in order to build a better world today and future generations.

**BPI web site:** [www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org](http://www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org)

***BPI meetings are suspended until at least 3 people commit to meet monthly. For information call (250) 444-0524 or (250) 442-0434 or email [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net).***

## What's Up?

### Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> Municipal Elections

In October **Proportional Representation** ballots arrive in the mail. Remember to follow instructions on how to fill it out and the mail off your ballot.

**B.C. Southern Interior Peace Coalition** Fall Conference in **Grand Forks @ the Slavonic Seniors Center October 27th @ 9 am'** \$10 registration covers rent, all day snacks and Borscht lunch. We have two guests in the afternoon, **Grand Chief Stewart and Joan Phillip**, to generate discussion and form an action. For more info contact Laura at 250-442-0434 or 250-444-0524 or email Laura at [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net) .

The BPI welcomes your input. Articles are the author's responsibility and may not be common consensus of members. To submit articles contact Laura at **250-444-0524 or 250-442-0434** or email [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net).

The BPI is a member of: BC Southern Interior Peace Coalition, Canadian Peace Congress, Abolition 2000, Lawyers Against the War and an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. We work with a wide range of local and global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6  
Go to the Government of Canada website for MP contact information at <http://www.canada.gc.ca>

### (From page 3) **Proportional Representation**

This has created an opening for populist strongmen, who offer a tempting trade: less freedom for more security. Less diversity but more national pride. Leaders that are less accountable, even openly corrupt. It's a bargain millions are willing to take."

Mills then notes: "In the face of this alarming trend, B.C.'s upcoming referendum offers a radical alternative: more democracy. This fall, our province could become the first jurisdiction in North America to adopt Proportional Representation – and bring some much needed light in worrying times."

For democracy to thrive, or even survive, change has always been necessary. Now more than ever. There is a referendum on Electoral Reform this month. For More Information go to: [fairvote.ca/pr4bc](http://fairvote.ca/pr4bc)

In a 2012 landmark study Arend Lijphart, a world-renowned political scientist, compared 36 democracies over 55 years. "Looking at a number of specific indicators, Lijphart found that in countries using proportional systems voter turnout was higher by 7.5 percentage points, when contextual factors were taken into account; government policies were closer to the view of the median voter; citizens were more satisfied with the performance of their countries' democratic institutions, even when the party they voted for was not in power; there was a small increase in the number of parties in Parliament; the share of women elected to legislators was eight percentage points higher; and scores were higher on measures of political participation and civil liberties." (Fair Vote Canada website). Another benefit of PR is that it tends to mitigate "policy lurch" — the all too common phenomenon of an incoming government undoing the work of the preceding government. This yo-yo effect seldom moves us forward and gets in the way of the long-term thinking that is needed to tackle complex issues like climate change and poverty, for example.

**{Ed. Note: Nadine sent along some statistics that I will attach as page 5 of this Newsletter.}**

Peace is the beauty of life. It is sunshine. It is the smile of a child, the love of a mother, the joy of a father, the togetherness of a family. It is the advancement of man, the victory of a just cause, the triumph of truth.

Menachem Begin

To enjoy good health, to bring true happiness to one's family, to bring peace to all, one must first discipline and control one's own mind. If a man can control his mind he can find the way to Enlightenment, and all wisdom and virtue will naturally come to him.

Buddha

Peace begins with a smile.

Mother Teresa