AN ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR ALL

Why British Columbia should adopt proportional representation

Fair

Inclusive

Engaging

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INTRODUCTION

This fall, British Columbia has a rare opportunity to adopt an electoral system that works for all of us—one that is fair, inclusive, and engages more voters. This fall, B.C. has a chance to adopt an electoral system based on proportional representation.

Currently, the province uses an electoral system formally known as single-member plurality. As we have for decades, each riding elects a single member to the Legislature, and that member is the person who receives the most votes during the election, whether or not they get a majority. Most people call this system first-past-the-post (FPTP). The name comes from a reference to horse racing, where the first horse to reach the finish line, or the "post," wins. It's a fitting namesake, since the system itself stretches back to the days when we relied on horses and carriages to get around.

Yes, our electoral system in British Columbia is *old*. Very old. And while there's nothing inherently wrong with an old system, when it comes to democracy, our needs, expectations, and values have changed a lot since B.C. joined Confederation in 1871. Like the rest of Canada and many former British colonies, we inherited our first-past-the-post system from the United Kingdom. We didn't choose it. It was chosen for us.

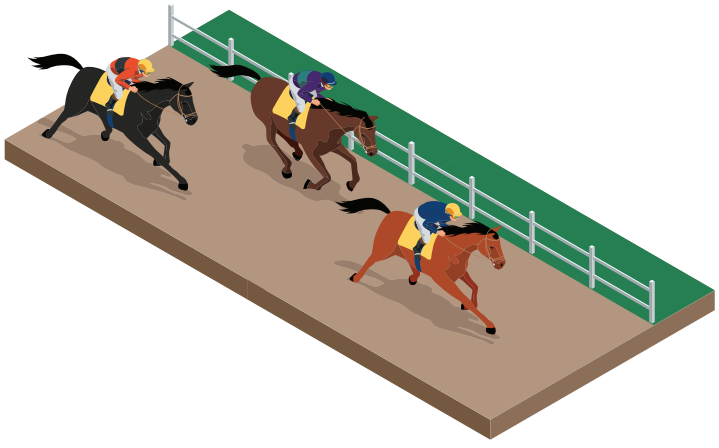
Now, rather than relying on FPTP and defenses like "Well, this is how we've always done it!" we can choose an electoral system for the 21st century.

1.0 BRITISH COLUMBIA'S HISTORIC MOMENT

Electoral systems matter. As a series of rules or procedures for determining who gets to hold office—when, for how long, and under what conditions—the electoral system has an important effect on how politics is practiced and how a country functions.

These effects include who gets represented and by whom, which sorts of policies a government pursues, and even how involved citizens become in the life of their democracy.

So, we should think carefully about how we choose to elect our representatives. When asked why we have the system we do, we should have good reasons; and we should know the advantages (and disadvantages) that the alternatives offer. Since the sort of electoral system we use is a fundamental component of our democracy, we should treat it as such.



B.C.'s Horse Race History

If we want to chart a course to take us towards a modern democracy in which voters cast ballots that contribute to electing members of the Legislature from a party they support, then we must look to Pro Rep. The alternative is to remain floating along while our current electoral system allows parties to win control of the legislature and the government with a fraction of popular support.

In fact, since political parties were recognized in B.C. in 1903, there have been 32 elections in the province. Of those, the winning party received 50 percent or more of the votes cast just a handful of times. That means, parties usually form government with less than majority support. In 1937, the Liberals won a majority with just 37 percent of the vote—after very nearly forming government on their own in 1924 with a measly 31 percent!

The sorts of distortions enabled by FPTP not only mean that winning parties often enjoy anemic public support, but also that some parties receive far fewer seats than is reflected by their share of the popular vote. In the nail-biter 2017 election, the B.C. Green Party tripled their seat count from 1 to 3, but they took home nearly 17 percent of support province-wide.

Under Pro Rep, the Greens would have added about two more seats in the province's 87-seat legislature—although the 2017 election treated the party better than the 2001 contest, in which the Greens won 12 percent of the vote and received zero seats.

did just that in 2005. In that referendum, Pro Rep received 58 percent support, with a majority in nearly every riding in the province supporting a change. Unfortunately, this was just shy of the 60 percent total threshold that was set for adopting a new Pro Rep-based electoral system.

In the 21st century, attitudes towards politics and democratic sensibilities have evolved to include more robust commitments to fairness, inclusiveness, and engagement. FPTP seems increasingly outdated in a world where our expectations for democracy are changing.

That's rough. But that's our current system: it's fickle. In 1991, the NDP took in 40.71 percent of the vote and won 51 seats. Five years later, in 1996, they came close to matching that performance, earning 39.45 percent of the vote but winning just 39 seats. A drop of just over 1 percent cost them twelve seats.

But that's not the most shocking outcome of the 1996 race. That contest is infamous for another reason. That year, with the 39 seats they won, the New Democratic Party formed a majority government with 39.45 percent of the vote,. But the Liberal Party received more support: 41.82 percent. In fact, the results were so skewed that Liberal leader Gordon Campbell said that he would hold a referendum on adopting Pro Rep if he formed government—and he

Like their parties, many individual candidates also benefit from being able to leverage a crowded and competitive field to squeak by on limited support. In the 2017 election, for instance, 39 of 87 MLAs won their seat with less than 50 percent of the vote. In Courtenay-Comox, which proved to be a critically important race, New Democrat Ronna-Rae Leonard won with a mere 37.36 percent, just ahead of Liberal Jim Benninger, who managed 36.72 percent. The two were separated by 189 votes out of nearly 30,000 ballots cast.

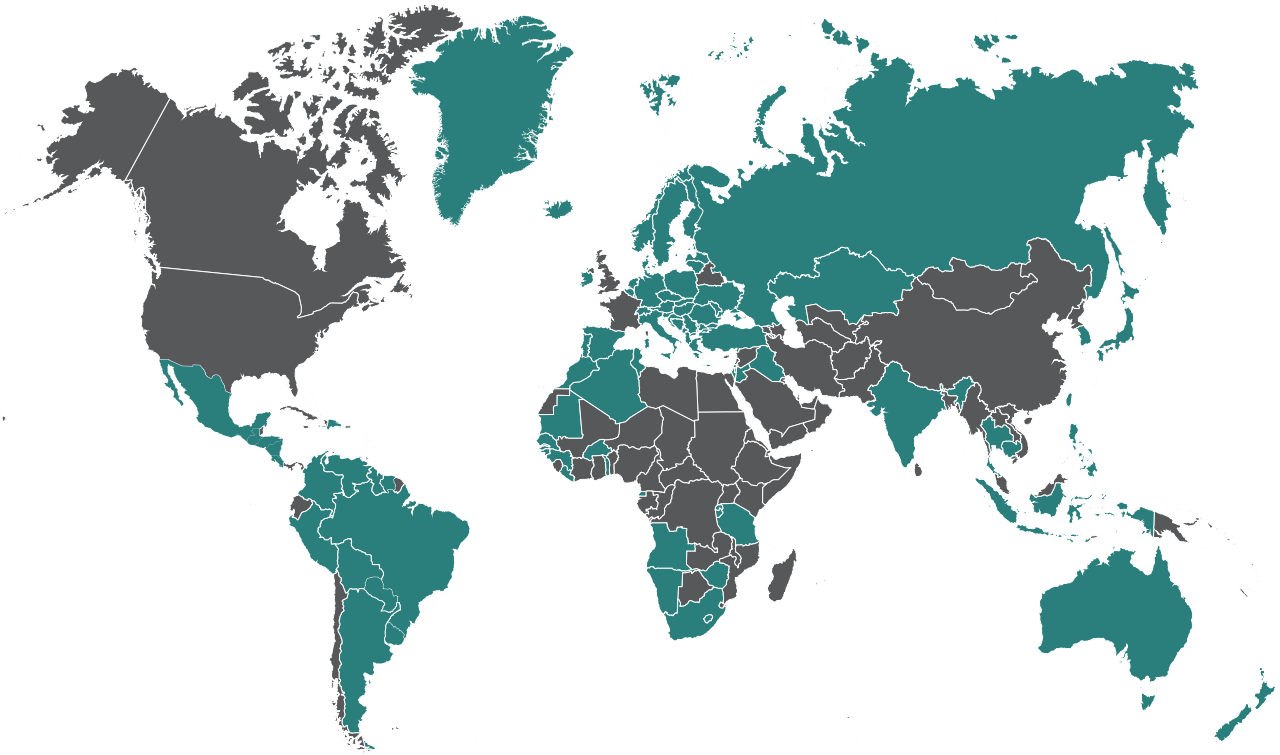
British Columbia's electoral past is full of examples like these. But the future doesn't have to be.

Better Ways to Divide Pie

What if we imagined an election not as a horse race to be won by one candidate or party and lost by all the others, but instead as a pie to be divided? An electoral system based on proportional representation is designed to ensure that the number of seats a party wins closely matches the percentage of votes it receives. If this idea seems fair and intuitive, that's because it is. It's in part for this reason that proportional electoral systems are the most commonly used systems in the world.

A quick glance at the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network electoral systems map shows that about 52 percent of countries use some form of Pro Rep, or mixed Pro Rep, system —including approximately 85 percent of countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). And if we include sub-national jurisdictions, provinces and states, that number goes up. In comparison, only 26 percent of countries throughout the world use FPTP, many of which are countries that, like Canada, also inherited the system from Great Britain.

Old habits die hard. But in the 21st century, attitudes towards politics and democratic sensibilities have evolved to include more robust commitments to fairness, inclusiveness, and engagement. FPTP seems increasingly outdated in a world where our expectations for democracy are changing, and fewer and fewer jurisdictions are using FPTP.



Countries that use some form of proportional representation.

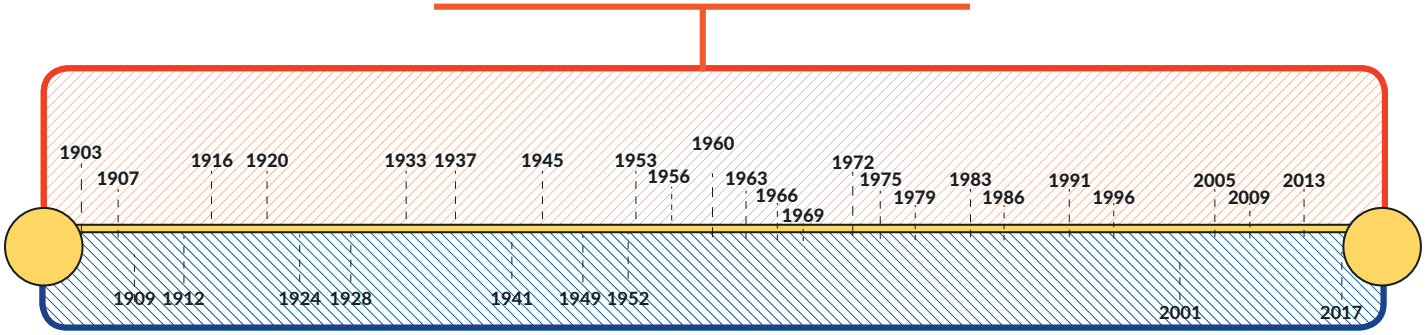
2.0 WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR CURRENT SYSTEM

The primary issue with British Columbia's single-member plurality, or FPTP voting system is that it fails to accurately translate our votes into seats in the provincial legislature. Recall that in elections under FPTP, each riding sends the candidate who received the most votes to the legislature whether or not that candidate won a majority of the votes in the riding. In other words, each riding sends a single member to parliament, that member being the candidate whom received (at least) the plurality of the votes cast. This means a political party in B.C. can capture a majority of ridings in an election—granting them a majority of seats in B.C.'s legislative assembly, and so a powerful majority government—regardless of whether or not they received a majority of the votes cast in that election. Under FPTP, the ridings count more than the votes.

Let's dig deeper into how FPTP works and why it fails voters by looking at an example. Say that Alexandria, Cynthia, and Kshama are campaigning in the same riding in a provincial election. On election night, Alexandria receives 14,050 votes, Cynthia receives 14,000 votes, and Kshama receives 13,950 votes. Under FPTP, this riding would send Alexandria to the legislature, despite that two-thirds of the votes cast in the election were for candidates other than her. The 27,950 votes cast for Cynthia and Kshama effectively don't count, because the outcome of the election—both within the riding and provincially—would have been exactly the same if none of those nearly 30,000 votes were cast. Critics of FPTP often refer to these as wasted votes.

When this type of result appears in the majority of ridings in the province, the number of legislative seats allocated to respective parties in the outcome of the election is far-removed from the popular vote totals the competing parties received. In cases where a particular party wins a majority of the parliamentary seats up for grabs in an election without receiving the majority of votes cast, they form what is known as a false majority.

B.C. elections that resulted in a false majority

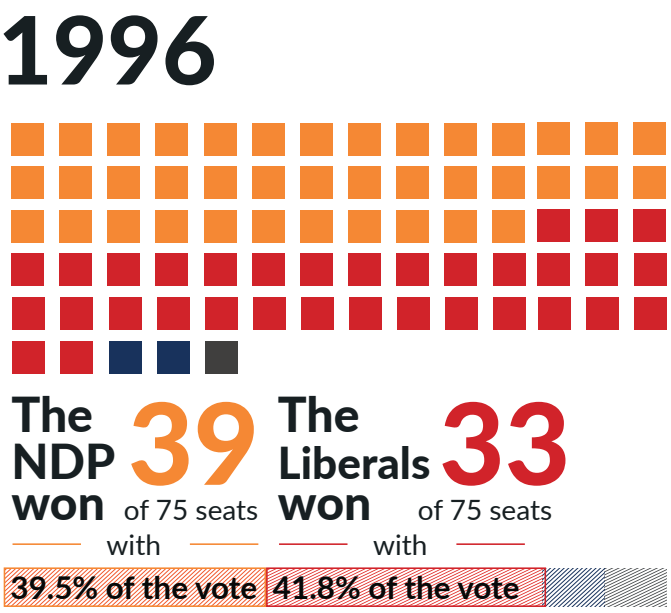


British Columbia is no stranger to false majorities. Earlier, we had a brief look at some of B.C.'s wonky past elections. But there's so much more. Of the 32 elections that took place between 1903 and 2017, a full 22 resulted in false-majority governments. In many cases, one party took a majority despite receiving only a slightly larger share of the popular vote.

In 1920, the B.C. Liberals won 53 percent of ridings despite receiving less than 38 percent of the votes cast. The Conservatives took only about 32 percent of ridings in that election, despite receiving more than 31 percent of the popular vote—less than 7 percent fewer votes than the Liberals. In 1933, the B.C. Liberals took 72 percent of ridings with only 41.7 percent of the vote, while the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) won less than 15 percent of ridings with 31.5 percent of the vote—nearly one-third of all votes cast. In the 1937 election, which we briefly discussed earlier, the B.C. Liberals took 64 percent of ridings with just 37.7 percent of the popular vote, while the Conservatives and the CCF collectively won just 31 percent of the ridings contested, despite together receiving more than 57 percent of all votes cast.

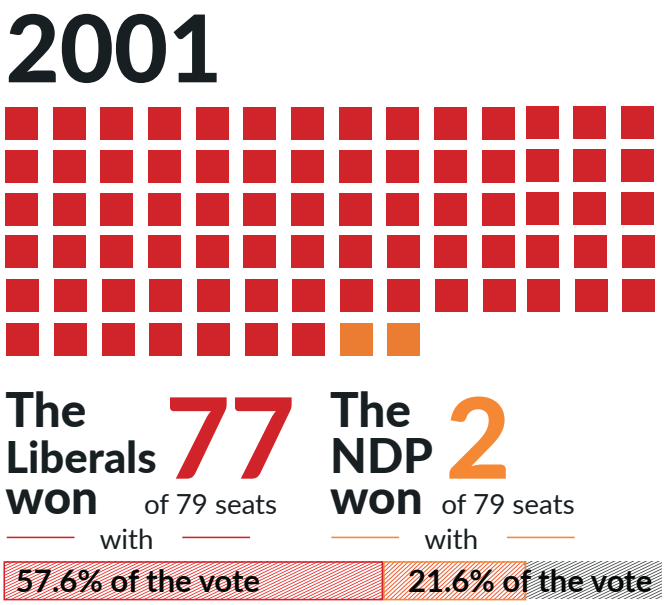
The 1991 election saw the provincial NDP win 68 percent of ridings with just 40.7 percent of the popular vote, while the B.C. Liberals and the Social Credit Party together took just 32 percent of seats despite collectively receiving 57.4 percent of all votes cast.

In the next election, that of 1996, the B.C. NDP won 52 percent of ridings with 39.5 percent of the vote, while the Liberals won *less ridings* (44 percent) despite receiving *more votes* (41.8 percent).



Even the few of B.C.'s elections which didn't result in false majorities weren't significantly more representative of the public's electoral preferences. In the 1912 election, the provincial Conservatives took 93 percent of ridings with less than 60 percent of all votes cast, while the Socialist Party won only a single riding, despite receiving more than 11 percent of the popular vote.

The 2001 election saw a similar outcome, wherein the B.C. Liberals won 97 percent of ridings withless than 58 percent of the vote, while the B.C. NDP received just the final two ridings out of 79, despite receiving 21.6 percent of the popular vote. This type of outcome is called a lopsided majority.



systems. Single-member plurality districts make it much more difficult for smaller parties with geographically dispersed support to gain seats in the legislature, as they are less likely to have enough support in any single riding to receive the most votes and win the seat. That's why the B.C. Green Party won less than 4 percent, or 3 of 87 seats in the 2017 provincial election, despite receiving almost 17 percent of the popular vote.

Unsurprisingly, this makes the system seem unfair to many people. This sense of unfairness can have an impact on voter turnout and political attitudes towards our elections. Globally, proportional systems tend to increase voter turnout by between five and seven percent (Blais and Carty 1990; Lijphart 2012; Radcliff and Davis 2000). One possible explanation for this is, as Pro Rep systems waste fewer votes, citizens have more incentive to participate in elections.

Distorted outcomes and wasted votes do not only correlate with, and possibly cause lower voter turnout, they may also lead to lower perceptions of fairness, efficacy, and the responsiveness of political structures—especially among those who tend to get shut out of the current system. These types of electoral results certainly lead to fewer women being elected, and sometimes candidates from minority backgrounds as well (though FPTP can also favour candidates from minority groups that are geographically concentrated). That's the bad news. The good news is that Pro Rep can help address these challenges.

Globally, proportional systems tend to increase voter turnout by between five and seven percent.

Higher voter turnout and increased electoral engagement aren't just desirable for their own sake. When more people are engaged by the political system—expressing their interests through voting, communication with their representatives, and other institutions—the political system is pushed to meet more people's needs.

When this engagement decreases, public policy bends toward the disproportionate influence of political and economic elites in political life. And this isn't theoretical—it's happening right now. Whether through insecure citizenship, loss of political rights due to criminal status, or

economic insecurity to the point that political engagement becomes infeasible, in the 21st century many of the world's industrialized liberal democracies have routinely excluded large groups of citizens. With this exclusion, these people have more difficulty communicating their preferences to the political system, and so have more difficulty having their needs met by that system. Unsurprisingly, this is accompanied by an increased correlation between the policy preferences of affluent citizens and public policy outcomes. As systematically excluded citizens have their political voices silenced, the voices of more-advantaged citizens dominate the public conversation.

instance, the case of a wealthy businessman organizing a group to campaign against Pro Rep, and against the process of the referendum itself. Given that the group most-typically excluded from politics—low-income citizens—regularly has more positive attitudes toward the welfare state and other redistributive policies than the affluent, it's notable that this trend of democratic disengagement correlates with increasing wealth inequality. Pro Rep systems sit among the democratic reforms which work against this trend, increasing fairness, inclusion, and engagement.

By offering more proportional systems of counting votes and allocating legislative seats in elections, Pro Rep systems encourage public engagement by demonstrating a direct responsiveness in the electoral system.

Low levels of both democratic engagement and public trust in institutions have been noted in several democracies in the world (Flinders and Curry 2008; Bernauer et al. 2015). At the same time, there has been a pronounced increase in global wealth inequality.

The 21st century has seen an amassing of wealth at the highest levels society, with the capture of political power and influence pointed to as both a contributing factor and fundamental outcome of that accumulation (Wedel 2017). Some of these dynamics appear in the current debate regarding electoral reform in B.C. Take, for

That shouldn't surprise anyone. After all, Pro Rep systems increase voters' ability to effectively support the candidate who represents their political preferences—or, at least, is closer to those preferences than any of the other candidates. They also empower smaller parties that have substantial support. In doing so, they compel larger parties to campaign for each vote in a jurisdiction, rather than incentivizing them to strategically target constituencies large enough to carry a riding as FPTP does.

For example, let's look back at Alexandria, Cynthia, and Kshama's riding. If the popular

vote totals remain the same across the three parties—14,050 votes, 14,000 votes, and 13,950 votes—each vote would go toward the parties' respective vote totals. Let's say that Alexandria's party, Party A, receives the most votes at 14,050 in 50 percent of the ridings, while Cynthia's Party B takes the other half of ridings with the small margin of 50 votes. Kshama's Party C doesn't win any ridings, despite receiving just 100 votes fewer than the winning party in each riding. Under an FPTP systems, this would mean that each of the three parties would have very similar popular vote totals.

However, Party A would receive 50 percent of the seats in the legislature, and Party B would receive the other half, while Party C would receive zero seats, despite having only 50 votes fewer, per riding, than either of the other parties. In a more extreme example, imagine that Party A won every riding by the same small margin of 50 votes. This would give Party A every single seat in the legislature, while Parties B and C would receive zero seats, despite each of the three party receiving about one-third of the votes cast in the election. Given that the vote totals are so close in this fictional riding, supporters of any of the three parties would have reason to believe their candidate could win. However, in every case of a vote cast for a candidate who did not ultimately win the riding, that vote did not materially influence the outcome of the election.

The particular Pro Rep system in place determines seats through the province, and in the riding are allocated based on popular vote —we'll demonstrate shortly how this could look in B.C., based on the systems offered in the referendum. But, by offering more proportional systems of counting votes and allocating legislative seats in elections, Pro Rep systems encourage public engagement by demonstrating a direct responsiveness in the electoral system. In the case of electoral reform, they also display the ability to reform foundational political structures to address new and old challenges alike.

3.0 WHAT'S PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION?

Proportional electoral systems are the most commonly used systems in the world. Globally, fifty-two percent of countries use either a pure proportional system or a mixed one to elect the first chamber of their national legislature (e.g., the House of Commons) (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network: Comparative Data). So, as unfamiliar as proportional representation might seem to British Columbians, globally, the system is familiar and common.

Granted, FPTP is used in democracies that most British Columbians will be familiar with: the United Kingdom and the United States. However, aside from these countries and Canada, the majority of full democracies[1], as ranked by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2014, use Pro Rep or a mixed system. This list includes Germany, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Norway, New Zealand, Uruguay, Ireland, Spain, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland.

Varieties of Proportional Representation

There are many different electoral systems that give us proportional results. The simplest form of proportional representation is called "pure portional representation." Under this system, there are no ridings. The entire province would vote for the party that they want to govern, and the percentage of votes a party receives translates directly into how many seats it wins. If a party wins 40 percent of the votes, it gets 40 percent of the seats. Pure and simple.

Because this kind of pure proportional system does not allow for ridings, however, very few people have seen it as a good option for British Columbia. Indeed, British Columbians, with their large geographical and demographic diversity, want to maintain their ridings and local representation.

Because Pro Rep is flexible and easy to adapt to local conditions, there are systems that allow us to keep local ridings and representatives, and still end up with a

[1] The Economist Intelligence Unit defines "full democracies" as "Countries in which not only basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected, but these will also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy. The functioning of government is satisfactory. Media are independent and diverse. There is an effective system of checks and balances. The judiciary is independent and judicial decisions are enforced. There are only limited problems in the functioning of democracies" (Economist Intelligence Unit 2015, 38). Other categories include "flawed democracies," "hybrid regimes," and "authoritarian regimes."

proportional result. Among these are what's known as 'mixed systems'. They combine elements of various electoral systems, giving us the best of both worlds.

All three of these systems will give British Columbians a legislature where the percentage of votes a party receives corresponds to the percentage of seats they win. In all three systems, voters will still have at least one local/regional representative who can advocate for them in Victoria.

This fall, British Columbians will get to choose between three mixed systems: Mixed-Member Proportional, Rural-Urban Proportional, and Dual-Member Proportional. These systems were proposed by Attorney General David Eby, after engaging in online consultations with people throughout the province. According to Eby, these systems were chosen because they provide proportionality, location representation, simplicity, and won't significantly increase the size of the legislature.

All three of these systems will give British Columbians a legislature where the percentage of votes a party receives corresponds to the percentage of seats they win. In all three systems, voters will still have at least one local/regional representative who can advocate for them in Victoria. Now, let's take a closer look at each of them.

Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP)

The first system on the ballot is mixed-member proportional. A mixed-member proportional system includes elements of both the current FPTP system and proportional representation—hence its 'mixed' status. MMP is currently used in seven countries, including Germany and New Zealand, and the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommended it for adoption in 2006–2007.

Under MMP, voters choose both an MLA for their local riding and the party they want to win the most seats in a larger region. The ballot has two sections. One section asks the voter to choose a local representative. This representative will be elected using FPTP, meaning the winning candidate is the one who gets the most votes. The other section asks the voter to choose who they want to represent the region. This section is used to establish how many seats a party will be allocated overall, and to elect what are known as **regional** or **list** members. So, under MMP, voters elect two types

of representatives: a local member and a regional or party-list member.

Let's run through how the allocation of seats under MMP works. First, parties are awarded any seats won through the local races under FPTP, the exact same way we do now. Then we turn to the regional, party vote. This determines how many seats a party is entitled to overall. For example, if a party won 40 percent of the vote, they're entitled to 40 percent of the seats in the legislature. If the party hasn't won 40 percent of the seats through the local races, it is awarded 'top-up' seats from the regional or list section (i.e., the party vote) until its overall share of seats matches its party vote.

What candidates fill these seats are determined by the party list. This list can either be open or closed. With an **open list**, voters are able to choose which specific candidate they prefer. Their vote counts as both a vote for that candidate and for the party they represent. When the votes are counted, the parties still receive a proportional share of seats based on their share of the vote, and party candidates with the most votes are elected to fill those seats. With a **closed list**, the party determines who their top candidates are—and those candidates are placed at the top of the lists. Voters would still see this list when voting for the party, so would know which candidates would be likely to fill any top-up seats the party receives.

Rural-Urban Proportional (RUP)

The second system on the ballot is rural-urban proportional which combines two different types of proportional systems. It uses MMP in rural ridings, and a system called single transferable vote (STV) in urban and suburban ridings. The reason for using these two systems like this is that MMP allows rural ridings to maintain a level of local representation similar to what they have now—rural ridings won't disappear or become uncommonly large—while also allowing for proportional results. Rural-Urban Proportional uses STV in urban and suburban ridings, where there is less concern over making ridings too large. STV is used to provide greater proportionality and choice for these ridings.

Single transferable vote is an uncommon form of Pro Rep, used nationally in first chambers only in Ireland and Malta (and in the Australian Senate). The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommended STV in 2004, and it was supported by nearly 58 percent of B.C. voters in a subsequent referendum (recall, it needed 60 per cent to win).[2]

[2] The 60 per cent threshold was set by the government of British Columbia. In New Zealand's referendums on electoral reform, by contrast, thresholds were set at the standard 50 per cent.

In an STV system, voters elect multiple candidates in each riding, just like in a list Pro Rep system. With STV, however, voters rank candidates. They may rank as many as they wish, and may choose not to rank one or more candidates. Individuals are elected once they meet a quota of support. That quota is typically determined using a formula based on how many votes have been cast in that election and how many seats are up for grabs.

Then comes the counting. STV counts usually occur in multiple rounds. First, any candidate who meets the set quota of support is immediately elected. So, if the threshold is 10,000 votes, any candidate who receives at least 10,000 votes is elected. In the second round, the surplus votes[3] (that is, votes beyond the quota) received by winning candidates are distributed to the remaining candidates by looking at the voter's second choice. If there are then surpluses, these are once again redistributed. If no one meets the quota, the candidate with the fewest votes is dropped from the ballot, and their votes are redistributed. This process continues in subsequent rounds until all seats in the district are filled.

Dual-Member Proportional (DMP)

The final proportional system on the ballot this fall is Dual-Member Proportional. Dual-Member Proportional was created in Alberta five years ago, but has yet to be adopted anywhere.

Under DMP, existing single-member ridings would be combined with an adjacent riding to create ridings with two MLAs—although large, rural ridings would be exempt from this and stay the same as they are now.

In these dual ridings, parties are permitted (though not required) to run two candidates—a primary candidate and a secondary candidate— and independent candidates can still run. Voters cast a single vote for a party and their listed candidates, or for an independent candidate.

Votes are then counted. Since this system yields proportional results, the number of seats a party wins is determined by what percentage of votes it wins. So, if a party wins 40 percent of the votes, it is entitled to 40 percent of the seats.

Seats are won in two ways. First, for each riding, we look at which party or independent candidate won the plurality of the votes, much like how we count votes now. The primary candidate of that party wins the seat. Or, if an independent won the

[3] There are a few ways that surplus votes can be transferred. One option is to choose ballots for distribution at random until they reach the number of surplus votes a candidate has received. A more sophisticated method is used in the Republic of Ireland, where they use a weighted sample of ballots. Another method is the fractional transfer, where all ballots are transferred, but are counted as a fraction of a vote.

plurality of the vote, they win the seat.

The second seats in each riding are allocated to ensure that the overall results are proportional. They "top up" the first seats, and correct for any discrepancy between the number of primary seats a party won, and the number it's owed based on the overall percentage.

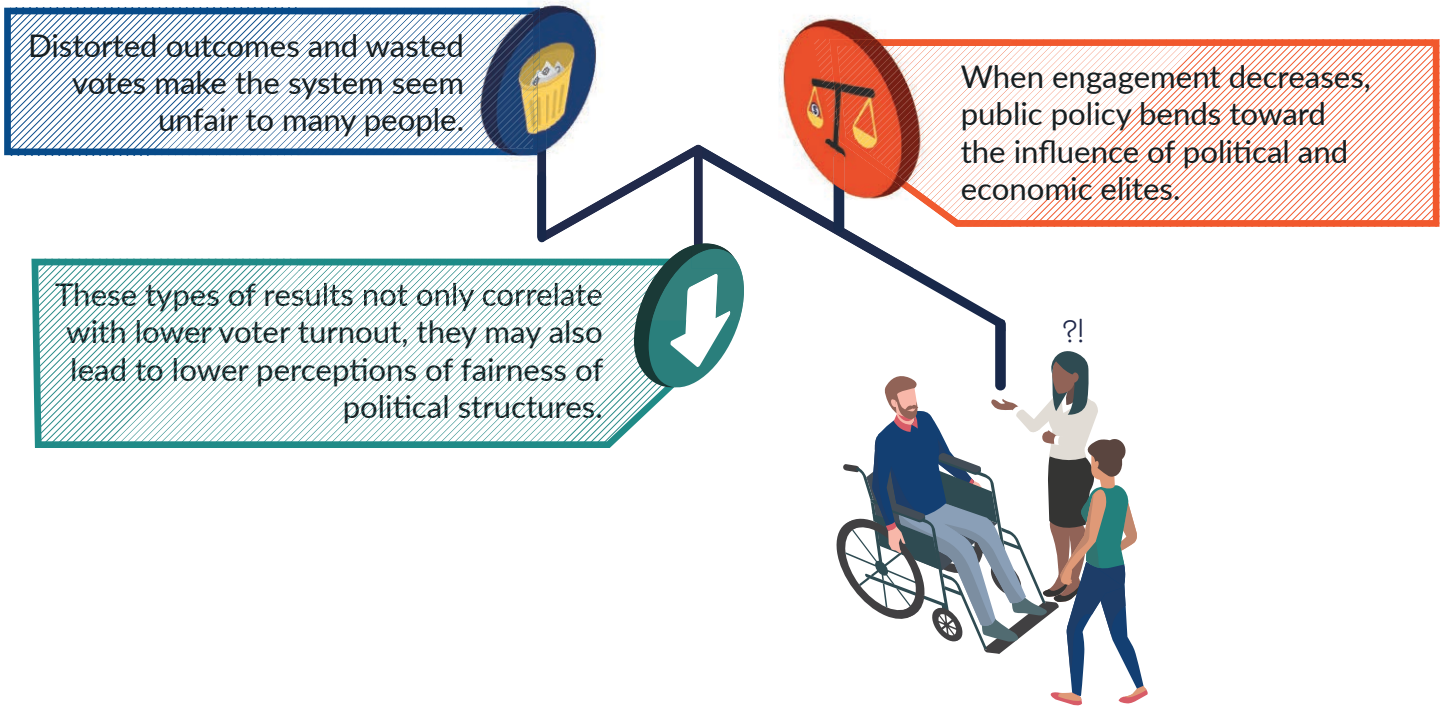
For example, let's say Party A was entitled to 50 seats. Their primary candidates only won 40 seats from the first round. Party A still needs ten more seats. To fill these seats, we look which of Party A's secondary candidates performed best. Party A's earned-but-unfilled seats would go to the secondary Party A candidates which performed best in their respective elections.

4.0 PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION: FAIR, INCLUSIVE, AND ENGAGING

Now that we've looked at the problems with our FPTP electoral system and have understood the the alternative proportional systems British Columbians can choose from, it's time to further explore what makes Pro Rep systems fair, inclusive, and engaging.

First off, democracies are supposed to be fair, inclusive, and engaging. That's their whole point. In a democracy, each citizen is supposed to get a say in their future and the policies that will govern their communities. They're supposed to be able to vote for representatives they trust, communicate their concerns to these representatives, and know that they will be listened to. And all citizens are supposed to be able to do this equally. No one should be excluded from the process.

In B.C., we haven't exactly been living up to these ideals. Politicians are elected who a majority of us didn't vote for. Predictably, these politicians don't make decisions that benefit the majority. Instead, they continue to back policies that advance a select, privileged few. We see the regular reports of the influence money and special interests have had on BC politics and policies. At the same time, we see how the concerns of the majority of British Columbians—over affordable housing, adequate wages, environmental protection, transit, and so on—are left unaddressed.



Voters aren't oblivious to this. They notice that their vote often goes unnoticed. They know that politicians prioritize the concerns of the elite over their own. This causes people to become more and more disaffected with, and distrusting of, the political system and our democracy at large.

This isn't how it's supposed to work. And it's time for this cycle to end. British Columbians deserve a more fair, more inclusive, and more engaging democracy.

When votes are proportionally translated into seats, parties are forced to work together and to consider the policy agendas and preferences of those whom all these parties represent.

And those who have been shut out of the process for so long deserve to be let in. And proportional representation can help get that done while bringing B.C.'s democracy into the 21st century.

Under FPTP, thousands of votes are wasted each election (cast for candidates who don't win, and for parties that receive fewer seats than their public support indicates they deserve). Many voters are left to decide whether to waste their vote or to vote 'strategically' for a candidate they might not prefer, but who might win against another candidate they prefer even less.

Under Pro Rep, very few votes are wasted, and the need for strategic voting for a candidate, because your preferred candidate doesn't have a chance at winning a seat, is nearly eliminated. That's because under proportional systems, a party will receive a proportion of seats roughly equal to its share of popular vote support in a given district. (Keep in mind that districts can and will vary in size, depending on what version of proportional representation B.C. chooses.)

So, in a Pro Rep election, you get to choose the parties or candidates that best reflect your values, issue preferences, or faith in their ability to be a good representative. And each ballot cast goes towards electing a candidate. Then, if Party A receives 39 percent of votes, it receives about 39 percent of the seats in the legislature. This means that both voters and parties receive fairer representation, and small parties have a chance to elect representatives too.

When votes are proportionally translated into seats, parties and parliamentarians are also forced to work together, to co-operate, and to consider the policy agendas and preferences of those whom all these parties represent. Take the example of the current NDP minority in B.C. In the 2017 election, no party won a majority of the votes or seats. This led to a couple of weeks of negotiations between parties, and ended

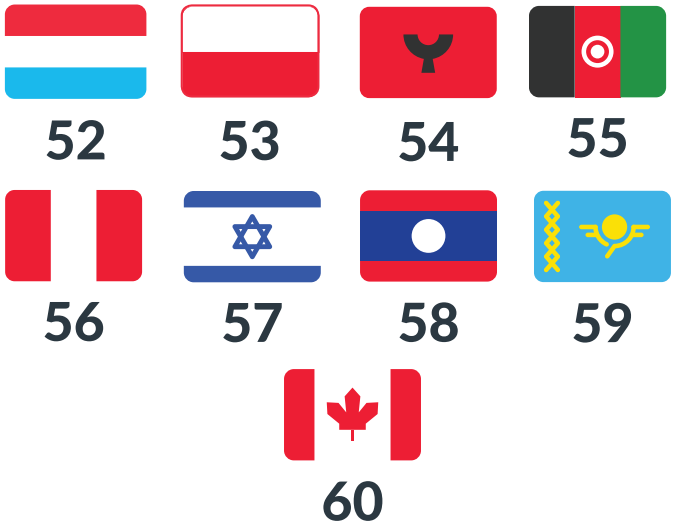
with the NDP and Greens entering into a supply and confidence agreement. Under this agreement, the Green party promised to support an NDP minority government as long as the NDP agreed to implement and prioritize certain policy areas the Green party, and their voters, supported. These two parties outlined their agreement, and the policy areas on which they'd work together, clearly and transparently in a public document, so that British Columbians could see exactly what their government is prioritizing and committing to. This way of governing is much more cooperative than FPTP, and also ensures the preferences and priorities of a wider swath of voters are represented in policy.

So, not only does Pro Rep result in dramatically fewer wasted votes, less strategic voting, and a more equitable distribution of power, but it also incentivizes parties to consider a far more diverse range of interests. In other words, it forces politicians to pay better attention to more citizens, resulting in a much more fair approach to government than what our current FPTP system encourages.

An Inclusive System

Proportional representation can make our politics more inclusive. It would do this, in part, by creating opportunity for more women, more visible minorities, and more Indigenous peoples to be elected to our legislature. It would also create an environment where politicians are forced to listen to more voters, and to compromise with each other, allowing for more egalitarian policies, benefiting the majority of British Columbians.

Under Pro Rep, BC's legislature would look more like B.C. This would start with more balanced representation by gender. We don't elect enough women in Canada, nationally or provincially. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Canada ranks 60th in the world with 27 percent women in Parliament. That puts us behind Kazakhstan, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and several other countries we typically think of as having less representative political systems than our own.



Inter-Parliamentary Union ranks Canada 60th in the world for gender equality in parliament.

B.C. is better than the national average, but still far from perfect. In our current legislature, just under 40 percent of MLAs are women. However, this is a recent, and perhaps precarious, development. In 2009, only 29 percent of B.C. MLAs were women. The increase in the number of women in B.C. politics is due to the work of activists and women themselves; it is certainly not encouraged by the FPTP system.

Pro Rep systems tend to lead to anywhere between one and a half and eight percent more women elected than FPTP systems, depending in part on whether or not quotas are used (Lijphart 2012; Salmond 2006). That might not seem like a lot, but a rise of five percent for B.C. would push us that much closer to gender parity in our politics. Moreover, moving to a system that is more amenable to electing women would help ensure that equal, or close to equal, numbers of men and women in our politics is a feature of the system, and not something that can be lost so easily.

Visible minorities can also sometimes be better represented in Pro Rep systems. We don't do very well on electing visible minorities in BC. The current legislature is made up of roughly 17 percent MLAs who are visible minorities. However, visible minorities make up over 30 percent of the population of B.C., meaning there is a big gap in representation here. Additionally, in 2017, British Columbians elected 4 Indigenous MLAs, bringing their proportion of the legislatures up to 4 percent, while Indigenous peoples make up roughly 6 percent of B.C.'s population.

We can do better. Our politics is still largely dominated by elites, insiders, and special interests. Pro Rep offers an alternative approach to electoral politics that will bring more British Columbians—and more communities of British Columbians—into the system.
The case of New Zealand helps illustrate this point. After its adoption of MMP in the 1990s, the percentage of indigenous (Maori) MPs in New Zealand rose from seven to 16 percent, and its percentage of MPs of Pacific Island descent went from one to three percent.[4] New Zealanders also elected MPs of Asian descent for the first time, their representation going from zero to two per cent.

Now, in both cases of electing more women and more visible minorities, we've been talking about "descriptive representation." Descriptive representation is when a legislature "looks" like the population it's supposed to represent. Descriptive representation happens by electing someone who shares your gender, your ethnocultural background, and so on. Many

[4] New Zealand reserves a minimum number of seats for Maori representatives, known as Maori electorates. Under MMP, the number changes (there were seven in each of the 2008, 2011, and 2014 elections).

will point out that this is different from "substantive representation." Substantive representation is electing someone who will represent your interests, support legislation that will help you, and focus on issues that matter to you. The substantive representation area is complex, since it varies voter to voter, and it can be hard to measure.

So far, we've only talked about how Pro Rep helps descriptive representation. It will help create a legislature that looks like BC.

Descriptive representation is important on it's own. It shows that anyone, from any background, can run for office and have an equal chance of success. It shows BCers, from all backgrounds, that politics is for people who look like them.

But, even beyond this, studies show that descriptive representation is closely linked to substantive representation, electing someone who will represent your interests (Swers 2011; Wängnerud 2009). Electing someone who looks like you, shares your background, and so on, means they're more likely to understand your experiences and your needs, and to prioritize policy solutions that would help meet those needs.

Another example of this is how Pro Rep can help close the representation gap between rich and poor. In our current system, politicians only have to cater to a small

DID YOU KNOW?

While all British Columbians would benefit from Pro Rep, these benefits would be especially pronounced for those who have been shut out of our system for so long.

Pro Rep can increase the number of women, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, and other historically marginalized groups, who get a seat at the table, and help ensure that these voices are hard. That's a big deal.

section of the population. They can solely campaign in safe ridings, devise policies that benefit less than half of the population of BC, and still walk away with majority governments.

Under Pro Rep, this just isn't possible. To win a majority of the seats in the legislature, a party has to win a majority of the votes. This means that they'll have to run campaigns that reach larger numbers of voters, and devise policy platforms that address the concerns of a larger number of voters.

And, if parties don't win a majority of the seats, they'll need to work with other parties in order to pass legislation. This forces parties to compromise, and build consensus, and these kinds of systems tend to be more egalitarian (Bernauer et al. 2015; Lijphart 2012). This is due, in part, to the fact that consensus systems require parties to compromise, and to take into account the preferences of a larger number of voters. It is interesting to note that universal healthcare and the Canada Pension Plan were passed in Canada under consensus-building governments, like the ones Pro Rep encourages.

In all these ways, Pro Rep can help BC's politics become more inclusive.

It's worth mentioning, however, that this isn't the end of the story. While Pro Rep can foster more inclusive politics, this experience isn't universal to Pro Rep. And there are specific issues surrounding political culture, history, and demographics that need to be taken into account. It's also important to note that the modest improvements in minority representation possible through Pro Rep systems won't solve all our inclusion and representation problems.

But Pro Rep would be an important start. Canada's diversity is often lauded as one of its greatest strengths. The same is true of a province as diverse as B.C. A proportional electoral system, properly designed, could help make sure that our province's diverse population is better reflected in our legislature.

Indeed, while all British Columbians would benefit from Pro Rep, these benefits would be especially pronounced for those who have been shut out of our system for so long. Pro Rep can increase the number of women, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, and other historically marginalized groups, who get a seat at the table, and help ensure that these voices are hard. Pro Rep also eliminates the ability of parties to walk away with majority governments when they've won less than the majority of the vote. This means that, in a Pro Rep system, politicians will have to speak and appeal to a broader group–namely, the folks they've been excluding. That's a big deal.

An Engaging System

In the 21st century, people expect their democracy to be open and inviting. They expect their representatives to be available, and they want them to reach out and provide opportunities for citizens to take part in the governing of their country. When this is not the case, they check out. We talk a lot about apathy, but the truth, as the 2015 Millennial Dialogue Report showed, is that alienation and disaffection are the more serious problems. It's not that people don't care—it's that people have given up on a system that excludes them, institutions they see as unresponsive, and politicians they think care little about their voices. This problem is exacerbated for historically marginalized and disadvantaged individuals, who have been that much more abandoned by the system.

Pro Rep systems help address some of the challenges that result from citizens feeling left out of their democracy, and opens the door for the traditionally excluded to participate.

Pro Rep systems help generate better voter turnout. This is hugely important. Turnout has been in decline in Canada for decades—and BC hasn't avoided this trend. In 2013, only 57 percent of eligible voters cast a ballot. In 2017, turnout rose to 61 per cent and we celebrated. Interestingly, the change in turnout between these two elections was largely due to younger voters turning up. Indeed, in 2017, 51.7 percent of eligible voters under the age of 45 showed in 2017. Four years earlier, only 45.1 percent voted. While the number is rising, it still isn't very encouraging.

Under Pro Rep, we could see voter turnout increase by five to seven percentage points (Blais and Carty 1990; Pintor, Gratschew, and Sullivan 2002). Again, maybe that doesn't seem like a lot. But an increase of turnout of even 5 percentage points would mean that 162,332 more British Columbians—perhaps some of them from traditionally excluded, disadvantaged groups—would have cast a ballot and had their voices heard in the 2017 election. And, if we learned anything from that election, it's that the results can come down to just a few thousand votes.

But voter turnout isn't the only measure of a healthy democracy. Citizen attitudes matter, too. In its 2017 report on the state of Canada's democracy, Samara, a research organization concerned with public engagement, gave the country a B- grade. This was an improvement over the C grade it received in 2015. But it's still not good.

One thing the Samara survey found was that Canadians are still fairly disengaged with politics, and distrusting of their politicians. Only 47 percent of Canadians trust that their MPs will "do the right thing" and only 53 percent think their MPs are doing a good job. Less than 30 percent of Canadians believe that politics affects them

every day. These numbers and trends are very similar for British Columbians.

Proportional systems can change this, and have a positive effect on political attitudes.

Once again, New Zealand offers us a telling case study. Its introduction of Pro Rep initially increased system approval (Banducci and Karp 1999) and shifted public opinion favourably, though slightly, in support of the efficacy and responsiveness of the system (Banducci et al. 1999). That said, no single reform is going to be enough to cure all of our democratic ills. Reforms provide tools—such as a fair, representative, and engaging electoral system—that citizens can choose to take up and use to improve our lives and our province. The challenge is seizing the moment to use these tools.

5.0 BUSTING PRO REP MYTHS

There are many myths about Pro Rep being perpetuated by those against this type of electoral reform.

Pro Rep doesn't strengthen the influence of extremist political parties nor does FPTP necessarily keep them out of power.

One of the most common myths is that Pro Rep systems enable extremist political parties to gain seats in the legislature, inviting their policy preferences into the public debate. However, a look at electoral outcomes in Pro Rep and FPTP systems around the world quickly shows that Pro Rep systems do not themselves empower extremist parties, and FPTP systems do not necessarily keep extremists out of power.

Pro Rep systems do not themselves strengthen extremist political parties **Though extremist parties are a common concern about Pro Rep systems, the evidence doesn't support it.** A study of electoral systems has consistently found no correlation between the proportionality of electoral systems and political party extremism (Ezrow 2008). And, while Pro Rep systems have been shown to facilitate greater ideological dispersion among political parties when compared to majoritarian systems, they have also been shown to promote public negotiation, as coalition government compel parties to represent median voters (Dow 2011; Blais and Bodet 2006).

In fact, Pro Rep systems can even work *against* extreme parties. In the 2017 Dutch election, the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV), led by Geert Wilders, received the second-largest vote share, taking 20 of 150 seats with just over 13 percent of the total. The first-place finishing Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)— the largest party in the governing coalition going into the election – won 33 of 150 seats with just over 21 percent of the vote. In addition to VVD and PVV, 11 other political parties won seats in the Dutch House of Representatives. But, despite PVV's second-place finish, the dominant parties refused to form a coalition with Wilders' party, precluding it from what would necessarily be a coalition government.

Further, Pro Rep systems don't have to grant parliamentary seats to every party that receives votes in an election. Most Pro Rep systems have a threshold vote share that a party must pass in the popular vote to receive any legislative seats. This mechanism serves to help keep extremist parties out of parliament since they have a much harder time passing the set threshold. Germany, for instance, sets a threshold of 5 percent to qualify for taking any of the 598 seats contested in a federal election. And while a total of 38 parties ran in at least one

district in the 2017 election, only 6 parties received seats in the legislature.

The reforms proposed in B.C. set the same 5 percent threshold to qualify for seats in the Legislature. Of the nearly twenty political parties and affiliations which ran at least one candidate in B.C.'s 2017 election, only three parties received more than 5 percent of the popular vote—the three parties which currently have seats in the provincial legislature. Pro Rep does increase the occurrence of minority or coalition governments, but these are common in many of the world's highest-ranked democracies, and offer the potential for more consensus-building and cross-party, collaborative policymaking. Examples abound of the many democracies in the world that use Pro Rep systems, with no lurch toward extremism.

While adopting a Pro Rep system gives smaller parties a better chance of winning seats in elections, its strongest effect is on parties that already have significant support but are disadvantaged by the geographical distribution of their voters. This is due to an aspect of Pro Rep systems mentioned earlier: the incentives they present to voters and political parties.

Under FPTP, voters are compelled to weigh their vote choice between the candidate that they feel best represents their interests and vision and the candidate who has the best chance of receiving the most votes—they are often forced to hold their nose vote strategically. At the same time, political parties are encouraged to seek out regional support, aiming to capture a majority of seats in the legislature by winning pluralities in just enough geographically concentrated ridings. In the 1993 Canadian federal election, for example, the Bloc Quebecois became the Official Opposition despite receiving less than 14 percent of the popular vote and not winning a single riding outside of Quebec. By more directly translating vote totals to seats in parliament, Pro Rep systems seek to make every vote—and so every voter—influential.

FPTP systems do not necessarily keep extremist political parties out of power. While it is commonly argued that FPTP systems are naturally more politically stable than Pro Rep systems, there are numerous recent examples of their capacity to facilitate a direct rise to power for extreme political movements.

The Philippines' President Rodrigo Duterte was elected through an FPTP voting system, receiving just over 39 percent of the vote in the 2016 Philippines presidential election. Duterte has gone on to institute extreme policies, such as encouraging the indiscriminate, extrajudicial killing of alleged criminals by police officers, regular citizens, or even their own family members. Reports of such killings under Duterte's administration exceed 10,000 deaths, with the Philippine president reportedly having a list of anywhere between 600,000 and one million names who are also considered

'suspects.' In the U.S., despite his losing the popular vote, Republican candidate Donald Trump was elected President of the United States by nature of receiving more Electoral College votes—votes which allocated by a state-by-state FPTP system. The Trump administration's hard-line positions in both domestic and international politics have elicited vigorous condemnation from domestic political opponents and commentators, surprise and dismay from the United States' international allies, and courted the emergence of new white nationalist and white supremacist movements in American politics.

In Ontario's June election, Doug Ford's Conservatives won 61 percent of ridings, and a majority government, with less than 41 percent of the vote. The Ford government has already brought about dramatic policy changes to the province, including reverting the province's sexual education curriculum to that of 1998, reducing funding for social assistance and mental health services, refusing to cooperate with the federal government's efforts to resettle refugees, and announcing reforms to municipal institutions in Ontario, including cutting the number of Toronto city councillors in half in the middle of an election campaign— a move recently overturned by the courts. Ford's style and rhetoric have drawn comparisons to those of President Trump, and, like Trump, his party holding a majority of votes in the legislature means there are very few checks on his power.

FPTP systems produce highly partisan and often antagonistic two-party systems. In a jurisdiction where majority governments are the norm, parties have less incentive to work together, as they are less likely to require the support of other parties to form government. While there is a degree of intra-party consensus-building which goes into the development and maintenance of these (typically-big tent) parties in such two-party systems, bi- or multi-partisanship and collaboration are deprioritized in favour of seeking majority status in the legislature, and so holding unchecked power in the legislature. The incentive to capture ridings through increasingly partisan politics that aim primarily to secure plurality-level turnout in a core constituency in targeted ridings—rather than reach as many voters as possible—motivates an extremism of its own, pushing parties into increasingly partisan strategizing.

One can point to evidence that suggests FPTP systems produce quite extreme outcomes themselves. In cases of false majorities or lopsided majorities, parties winning a share of legislative seats that far out-distances their share of the popular vote distorts the declared political preferences of the citizenry. The familiarity of these outcomes doesn't make them less of a distortion, and the relative unfamiliarity of more proportional electoral outcomes doesn't make them extreme.

Pro rep will improve local representation for voters.

Adopting Pro Rep will improve the translation of voters' preferences to electoral outcomes, not make it worse. Though opponents to Pro Rep in BC are stating that adopting a new proportional system will lead to loss of local MLAs, all three systems on offer to British Columbian voters are hybrid systems that keep local representatives. And by allocating legislative seats more closely to popular vote totals, Pro Rep gives voters a better chance to have their vote influence seat allocation regardless of who they vote for, and no matter which riding their voting in. So, if this complaint is based upon prioritizing voters' representation, Pro Rep works to do just that.

The referendum is simple and fair. So is Pro Rep.

Some have argued that the referendum process is complicated, and so too are the three Pro Rep systems on offer. Really, the referendum is quite simple. And fair. One question asks whether voters support FPTP or Pro Rep, and the second question asks them which of the three Pro Rep systems they prefer, permitting them to rank their preferences if they choose.

As to the complexity of the three systems themselves, while it is true that two of the three don't have examples elsewhere in the world to point to, there are numerous articles, blog posts, and publications—including this report—which clearly explain the the three systems on offer and provide examples of how they'd function in British Columbia. What's more, Pro Rep is the most common democratic system in the world. If citizens from of other democracies can figure it out, so can British Columbians.

The referendum requires a clear majority to pass.

The argument that the referendum is biased toward Pro Rep because it doesn't require that any particular system receive majority support objects to the referendum's second question, where British Columbians will select between the three different Pro Rep systems. Since the referendum doesn't require that any one system receive greater than 50 percent support, the objection is that the referendum is biased in favour of Pro Rep.

But, this objection conflates the referendum's two separate questions. For any Pro Rep system to be chosen, the first question of the referendum—whether B.C. should move from an FPTP system to a Pro Rep system— *does require* more than 50 percent support to pass. For any change to be made to our electoral system, more than 50 percent of voters must choose Pro Rep over FPTP. The second question—which Pro Rep system to implement—only matters if the first question receives majority support. What's more, the second question isn't decided by a simple plurality—voters are

allowed to rank their first, second, and third choice.

Second, the hypocrisy. The crux of this objection— that a plurality of votes is not enough to substantiate a democratic decision— is the very one raised against FPTP electoral systems. An opponent of Pro Rep who made this objection would therefore be arguing that, while a plurality of votes is not enough to determine the outcome of a referendum question that only matters if its preceding question receives majority support, *it is enough* to elect representatives to the provincial legislature from every riding in every election in the province.

Pro Rep is not partisan.

There is nothing in Pro Rep systems that inherently benefits parties of a particular ideological stripe. In a very direct way, Pro Rep permits voters to support the party of their choice with the knowledge that their vote will influence the number of seats that party receives in parliament, and therefore influence the balance of power in the forthcoming legislature. If this means particular parties are to receive more votes in elections held under a Pro Rep system, it only reveals that British Columbians already wanted to vote for those parties, but were prevented from doing so because of FPTP and its distorting effect on electoral outcomes.

Under Pro Rep, since voters can cast their ballot for whichever party they prefer, we are likely to see an increased seat count for parties that typically receive fewer seats in the legislature than their portion of the popular vote. This could then encourage increased electoral support for smaller parties, which are less likely to receive enough votes to take the plurality in any ridings. However, in the same way that a Pro Rep system would benefit those parties, FPTP benefits parties with geographically concentrated or plurality-level support, parties which typically receive a greater share of parliamentary seats than their portion of the popular vote.

Electoral systems are political institutions. As such, their structure affects the character of political outcomes they produce. As one of, if not the fundamental political institution in a democratic regime, electoral systems bear immense implications for our ability to make decisions as a group. Choosing an electoral system means identifying both our principles and our priorities. Choosing a Pro Rep system means accepting that we prefer a fair, inclusive, and engaging system—and that we expect our politicians and the laws and policies they produce to be the same.

6.0 WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

At the time British Columbia joined Confederation, the province existed in a world where FPTP made sense. The system was used throughout Canada. It was used in the United Kingdom. It was simple and safe for a new democracy. Democratic needs were limited because democracy itself was limited—only white men could vote, government responsiveness was limited, and much of the province was run by patronage from smoke-filled backrooms. But that was a long, long time ago. Things have changed. We have changed. We expect more from our democracy. So, it's time for our electoral system to change, too.

This fall, British Columbians will have a chance to do just that. In October, voters will receive a mail-in ballot asking them two questions: First, "*Which system should British Columbia use for provincial elections?*" And, second, "*If British Columbia adopts a proportional representation voting system, which of the following voting systems do you prefer?*" Folks will then get to choose one of the three systems on offer, described previously. If 50 percent plus one or more elect a change, B.C. will join the majority of the democratic world in using proportional representation to elect their legislature.

Today, we have the rare opportunity to adopt an electoral system better suited to the preferences, challenges, and standards of the 21st century. We ought to use that opportunity to choose an electoral system that is fair, representative, inclusive and engaging. British Columbian democracy and those who live under it deserve nothing less.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Top-up Seats - Top-up seats are used in several mixed systems to ensure that the electoral results are roughly proportion. They are additional seats that are awarded to parties to fix any discrepancies between the number of seats they won from local ridings, and the number of seats they should win, based on the popular vote.

Open/Closed List - Open/closed lists refer to how the MLAs who fill the top-up seats a party wins are chosen. With a closed list, the party ranks their own lists, putting their top candidates at the top of their list. With an open list, when voters vote for a party they want to win the popular vote, they also vote for the candidate in that party they want to fill one of their top-up seats.

District Magnitude - A riding's "district magnitude" the number of MLAs who will be elected from that riding. If a riding elects five MLAs, it's district magnitude is five. Ridings with higher district magnitudes are more proportional.

Threshold - This refers to the percentage of the vote a party must receive in order to qualify to win a top-up seat. For example, Germany has an MMP system, and an electoral threshold of 5 percent. That means that a party must receive at least 5 percent of the votes in order to be awarded a seat. Thresholds ensure that parties with very small percentages of the vote do not end up in the legislature. They can also be used to keep very extreme parties out.

Quota - In STV, this refers to the number of votes a candidate must win in order to win their seat. This is calculated by the Droop formula.

Single member - A single-member electoral district is a jurisdiction that sends only one representative to the Legislature. A single-member district has a district magnitude of 1.

Plurality - This term is used to refer to the largest amount in an election or poll that is less than 50 percent. Under FPTP elections, many ridings are decided by only a plurality of voters.

False majority - This terms refers to cases when a political party wins enough ridings in an election to form a majority government, but receives less than 50 percent of the total votes cast in the election. Thus, the majority that the party wins in the election is false, in that it is not awarded due to majority support among the voting public.

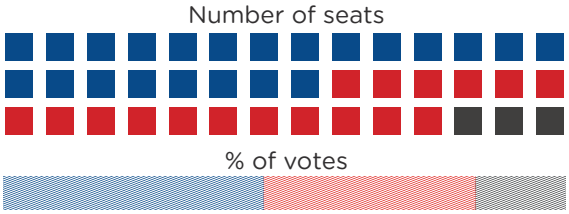
Lopsided majority - This term refers to cases when a political party receives more than 50 percent of the votes cast in an election, but due to the geographical distribution of the votes wins a sum of ridings that far exceeds their portion of the popular vote. For example, if a party receives 57 percent of the vote, but wins 94 percent of the seats, the party will form a lopsided majority.

Wasted votes - Refers to votes cast in an election which do not materially impact the outcome of the election. In FPTP elections, every vote cast in a riding that is not for the candidate which ultimately wins the riding could be considered a wasted vote. As well, every vote which is cast for the winning candidate beyond one single vote more than the second-place finisher could also be considered a wasted vote.

APPENDIX B: B.C. Elections and False Majorities (in bold), 1903-2017

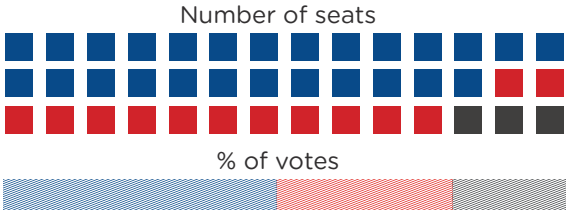
(Elections B.C. 1988; Legislative Library of B.C. 2002; Elections B.C. and Legislative Library of B.C. 2014)

1903



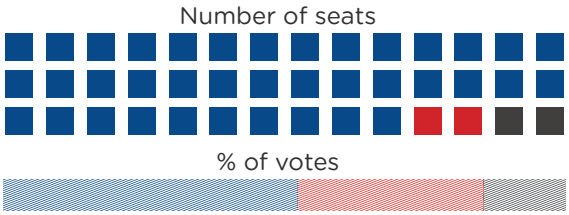
Conservatives: 22 of 42 seats with 46.3% of the vote
Liberals: 17 of 42 seats with 37.8% of the vote

1907



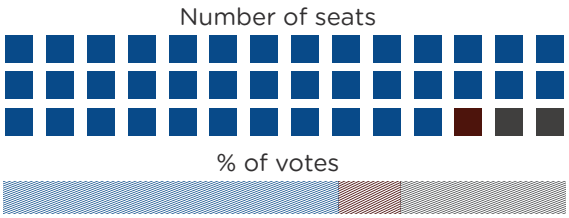
Conservatives: 26 of 42 seats with 48.7% of the vote
Liberals: 13 of 42 seats with 31.2% of the vote

1909



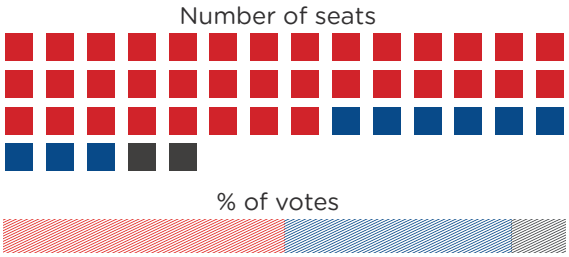
Conservatives: 38 of 42 seats with 52.3% of the vote
Liberals: 2 of 42 seats with 33.2% of the vote

1912



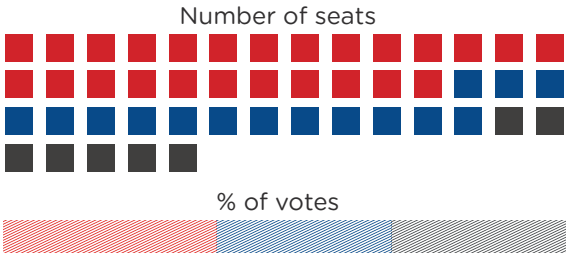
Conservatives: 39 of 42 seats with 59.6% of the vote
Socialists: 1 of 42 seats with 11.1% of the vote

1916



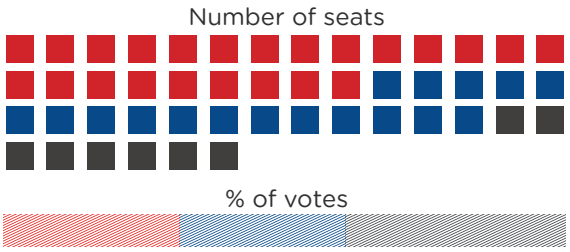
Liberals: 36 of 47 seats with 50% of the vote
Conservatives: 9 of 47 seats with 40.5% of the vote

1920



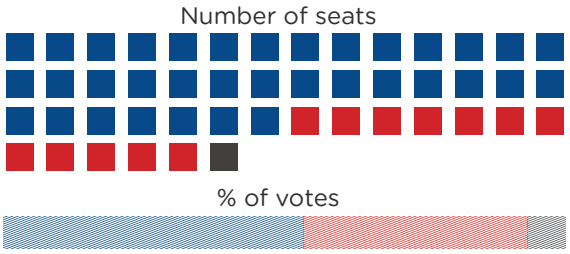
Liberals: 25 of 47 seats with 37.9% of the vote
Conservatives: 15 of 47 seats with 31.2% of the vote

1924



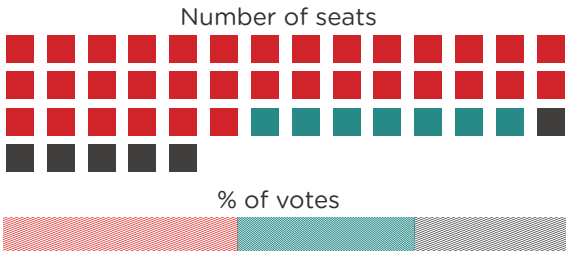
Liberals: 23 of 48 seats with 31.3% of the vote
Conservatives: 17 of 48 seats with 29.5% of the vote

1928



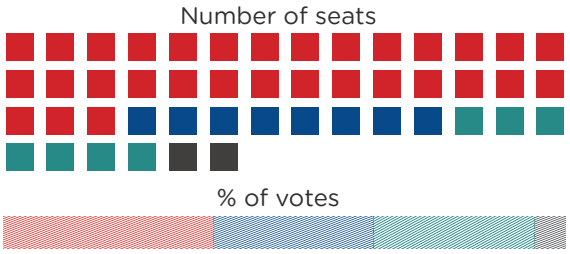
Conservatives: 35 of 48 seats with 53.3% of the vote
Liberals: 12 of 48 seats with 40% of the vote

1933



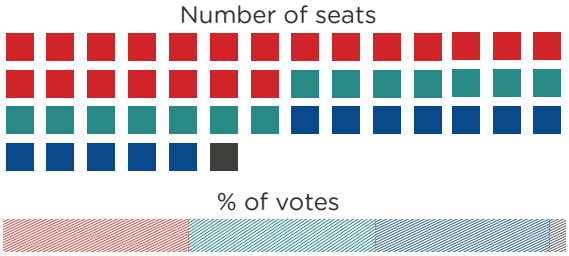
Liberals: 34 of 47 seats with 41.7% of the vote
CCF: 7 of 47 seats with 31.5% of the vote

1937



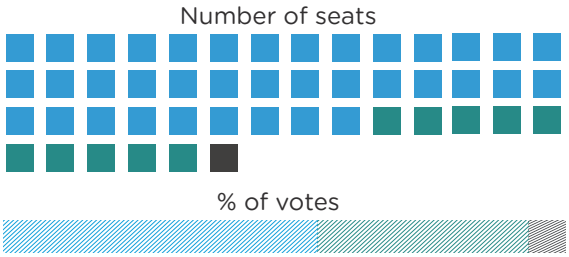
Liberals: 31 of 48 seats with 37.3% of the vote
Conservatives: 8 of 48 seats with 28.6% of the vote
CCF: 7 of 48 seats with 28.6% of the vote

1941



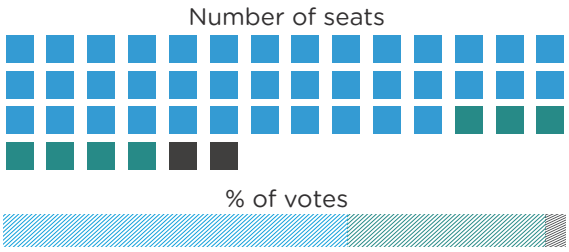
Liberals: 21 of 48 seats with 32.9% of the vote
CCF: 14 of 48 seats with 33.3% of the vote
Conservatives: 12 of 48 seats with 30.9% of the vote

1945



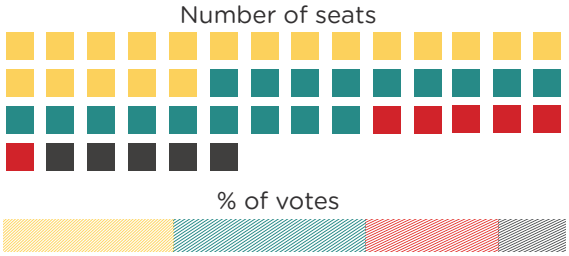
Liberal/Progressive Conservative Coalition: 37 of 48 seats with 55.8% of the vote
CCF: 10 of 48 seats with 37.6% of the vote

1949



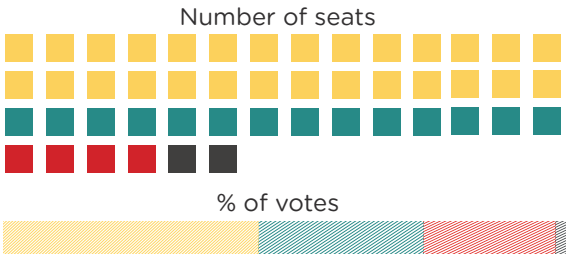
Liberal/Progressive Conservative Coalition: 39 of 48 seats with 61.3% of the vote
CCF: 7 of 48 seats with 35.1% of the vote

1952



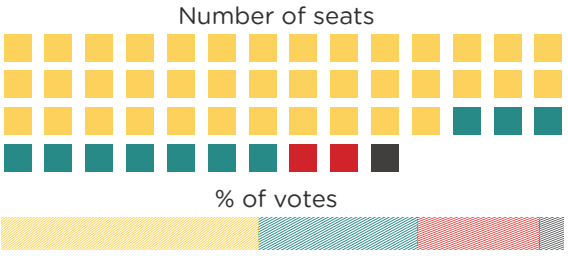
Social Credit: 19 of 48 seats with 30.2% of the vote
CCF: 18 of 48 seats with 34.3% of the vote
Liberals: 6 of 48 seats with 23.5% of the vote

1953



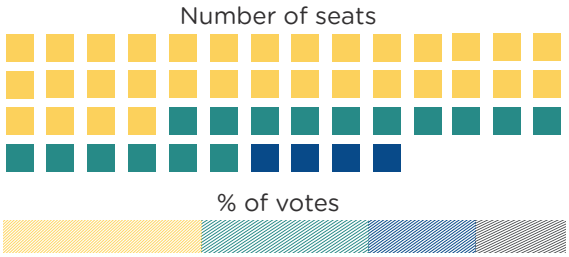
Social Credit: 28 of 48 seats with 45.4% of the vote
CCF: 14 of 48 seats with 29.5% of the vote
Liberals: 4 of 48 seats with 23.4% of the vote

1956



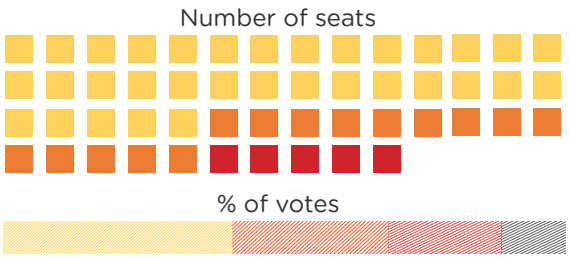
Social Credit: 39 of 52 seats with 45.8% of the vote
CCF: 10 of 52 seats with 28.3% of the vote
Liberals: 2 of 52 seats with 21.7% of the vote

1960



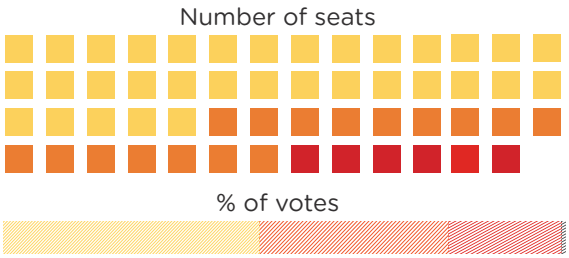
Social Credit: 32 of 52 seats with 38.8% of the vote
CCF: 16 of 52 of seats with 32.7% of the vote
Conservatives: 4 of 52 seats with 20.9% of the vote

1963



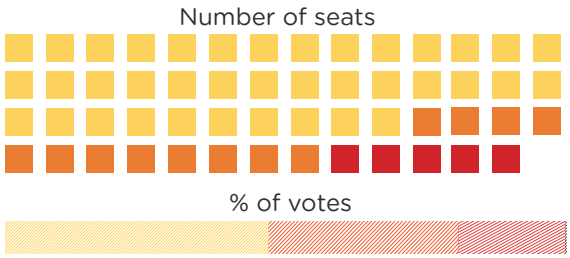
Social Credit: 33 of 52 seats with 40.8% of the vote
NDP: 14 of 52 seats with 27.8% of the vote
Liberals: 5 of 52 seats with 20% of the vote

1966



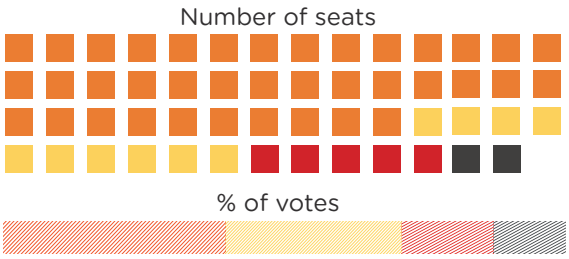
Social Credit: 33 of 55 seats with 45.6% of the vote
NDP: 16 of 55 seats with 33.6% of the vote
Liberals: 6 of 55 seats with 20.2% of the vote

1969



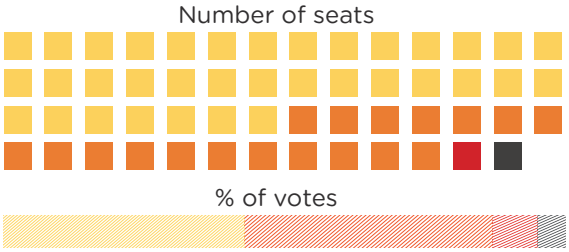
Social Credit: 38 of 55 seats with 46.8% of the vote
NDP: 12 of 55 seats with 33.9% of the vote
Liberals: 5 of 55 seats with 19% of the vote

1972



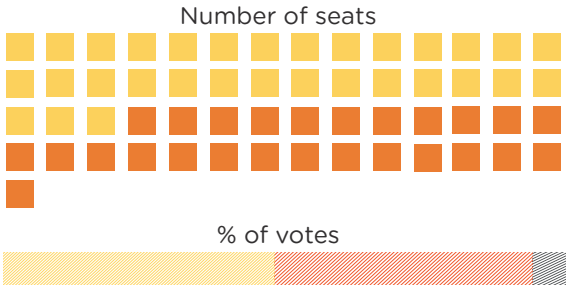
NDP: 38 of 55 seats with 39.6% of the vote
Social Credit: 10 of 55 seats with 31.2% of the vote
Liberals: 5 of 55 seats with 16.4% of the vote

1975



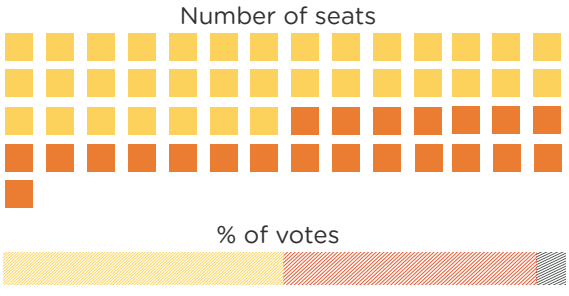
Social Credit: 35 of 55 seats with 49.2% of the vote
NDP: 18 of 55 seats with 39.2% of the vote
Liberals: 1 of 55 seats with 7.2% of the vote

1979



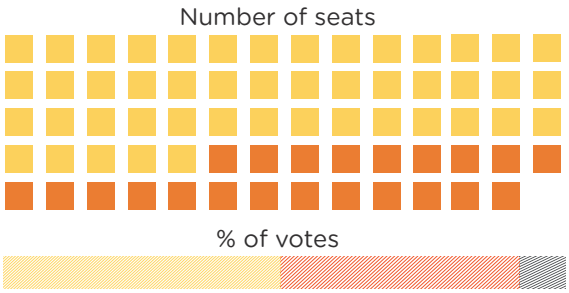
Social Credit: 31 of 57 seats with 48.2% of the vote
NDP: 26 of 57 seats with 46% of the vote

1983



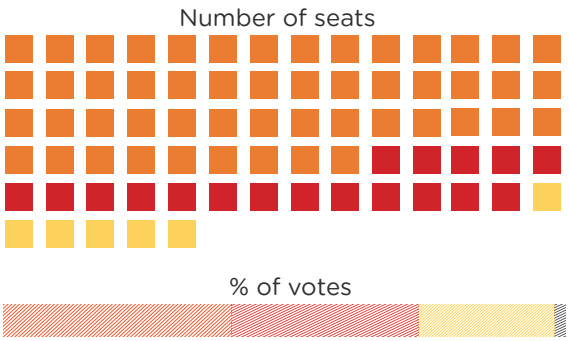
Social Credit: 35 of 57 seats with 49.7% of the vote
NDP: 22 of 57 seats with 44.9% of the vote

1986



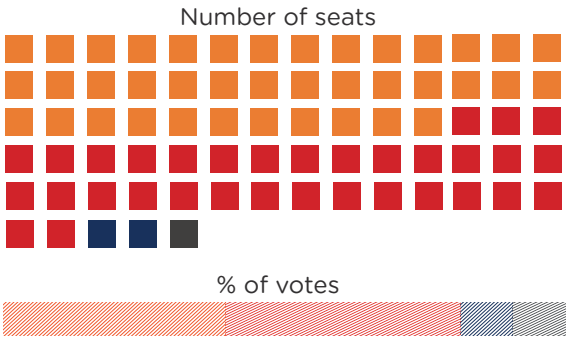
Social Credit: 47 of 69 seats with 49.3% of the vote
NDP: 22 of 69 seats with 42.6% of the vote

1991



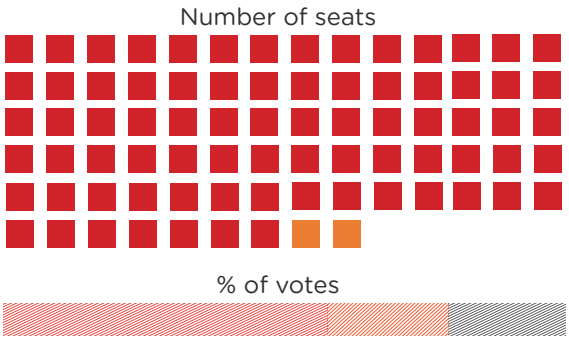
NDP: 51 of 75 seats with 40.7% of the vote
Liberals: 17 of 75 seats with 33.3% of the vote
Social Credit: 7 of 75 seats with 24.1% of the vote

1996



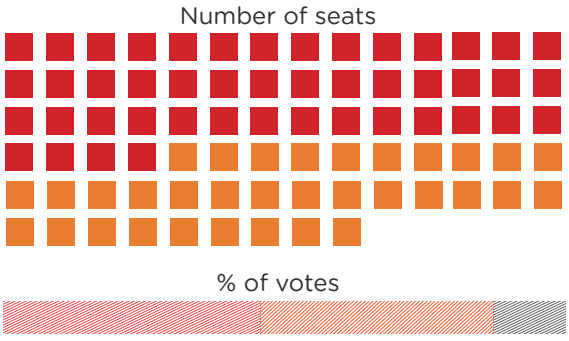
NDP: 39 of 75 seats with 39.5% of the vote
Liberals: 33 of 75 seats with 41.8% of the vote
Reform: 2 of 75 seats with 9.3% of the vote

2001



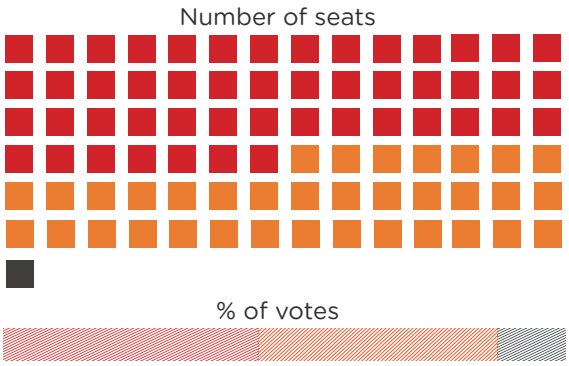
Liberals: 77 of 79 seats with 57.6% of the vote
NDP: 2 of 79 seats with 21.6% of the vote

2005



Liberals: 46 of 79 seats with 45.8% of the vote
NDP: 33 of 79 seats with 41.5% of the vote

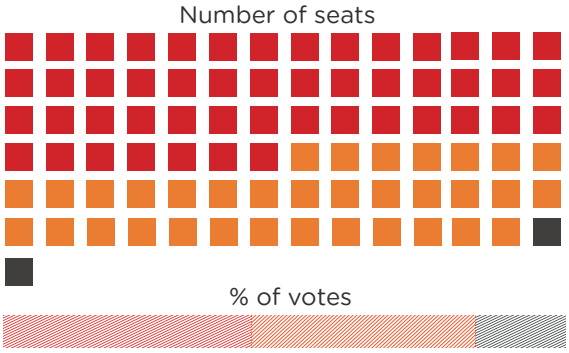
2009



Liberals: 49 of 85 seats with 45.8% of the vote

NDP: 35 of 85 seats with 42.2% of the vote

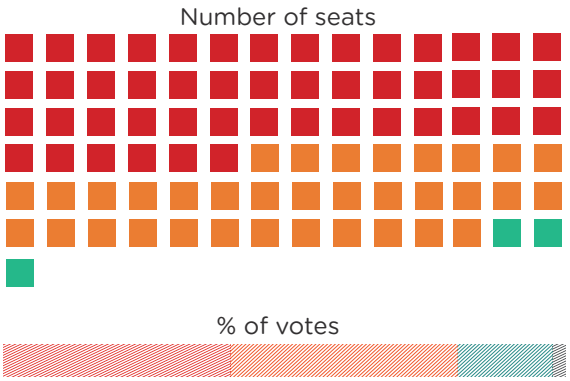
2013



Liberals: 49 of 85 seats with 44.1% of the vote

NDP: 34 of 85 seats with 39.7% of the vote

2017



Liberals: 43 of 87 seats with 40.36% of the vote

NDP: 41 of 87 seats with 40.3% of the vote

Green: 3 of 87 seats with 16.8% of the vote

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