

This month BC decides ... PR or FPTP

By Brian Kieran

The BC referendum on electoral reform is fully underway.

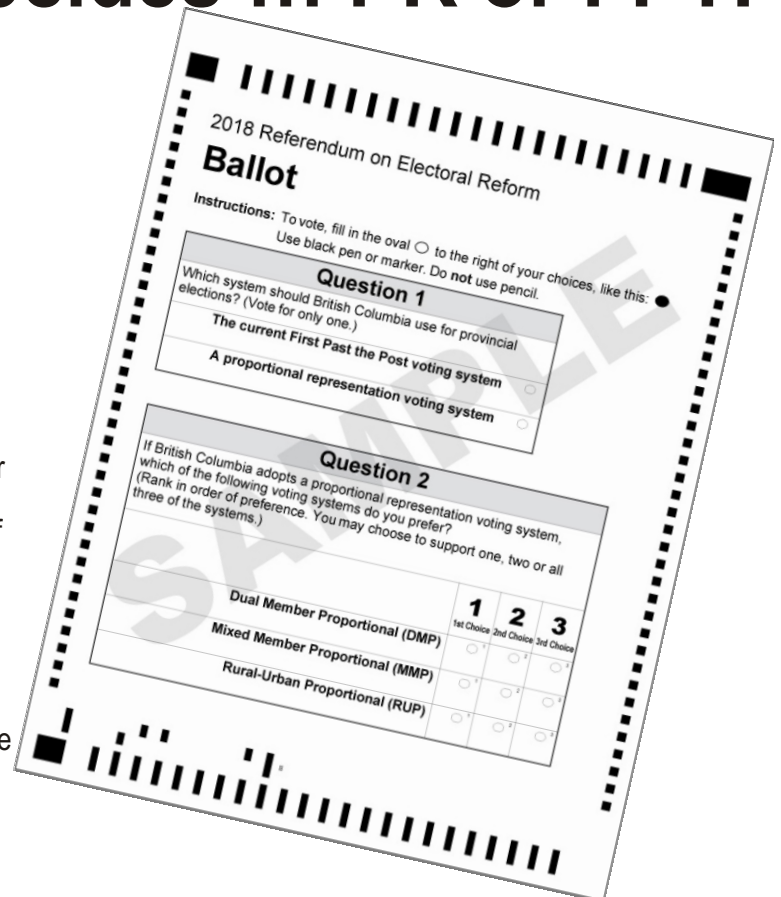
Elections BC mailed a referendum information card to every household in the province between Sept. 10 and 28, and a voter's guide between Oct. 15 and 26. Voters received their referendum voting package in the mail between Oct. 22 and Nov. 2. The voting concludes Nov. 30.

Voters are being asked two questions: First, what electoral system should be used to determine election results – the existing first-past-the-post (FPTP) system or a proportional representation (PR) system; and second, what type of proportional voting system should be used if PR is chosen. In the second question, voters will be asked to rank three proportional representation voting systems: dual-member proportional representation, mixed-member proportional representation, and rural-urban proportional representation.

This year, Orders of the Day has devoted considerable space to this vital issue of electoral reform. In October, we ran a poll showing BC residents split as to whether they prefer to keep the FPTP system or change to PR. Significantly, fully one-third of British Columbians were undecided as to how they would vote on this key question. While slightly more BC residents chose PR over FPTP, this advantage is well within the margin of error.

In October, I invited NDP Premier John Hogan, Liberal Opposition Leader Andrew Wilkinson and Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver to submit their best arguments for change or for the status quo. Horgan's and Wilkinson's staff assisted promptly. (See Page 8.) As we did not hear from Weaver's staff, we did our best to reflect the Green position from the party's website.

The official campaign began July 1, 2018. Groups had until July 6 to apply to Elections BC to be named the official proponent or opponent group and receive \$500,000 in public funding. On July 12, Elections BC announced that Vote PR BC would be the official proponent group and the No BC Proportional Representation Society would be the official opponent group.



In the event a proportional system is adopted, the independent BC Electoral Boundaries Commission will need to determine the number and location of new electoral districts. A legislative committee will need to determine whether the number of Members of the Legislative Assembly should increase, and if so by how many (to a maximum of an additional eight). Some other aspects of how the new system will work may need to be determined by a legislative committee.

If a form of proportional representation is adopted, the government has also committed to holding a further confirming referendum after two general elections. Voters in that future referendum (no later than Nov. 30, 2026) would have the option of maintaining the form of proportional representation adopted or switching back to the first-past-the-post electoral system. If voters decide to keep the existing first-past-the-post system this year, a second referendum would not take place.

Her Honour

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

Thank You and Miscellany

Orders of the Day is published regularly throughout the year, and is circulated to Association members, all MLAs now serving in Legislature, other interested individuals and organizations.

Material for the newsletter is always welcome and should be sent in written form to:

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Association Membership (former MLAs) dues are \$60.00 per year. Annual subscription rate is \$40.00 for those who are not Association Members.
Payment can be sent to the above address.

Thank you to those of you who, when sending in your Member dues or subscription renewals, add a donation to help cover production costs for the newsletter. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

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Bruce Strachan, Vernon

From the Editor's Desk

In short order, I believe we are going to look back on this November and realize that the electoral reform referendum before us represented a defining moment in our political history.

I hope when the votes are counted after Nov. 30, you will not be regretting that you did not pay enough attention to the consequences of this vote. Heaven knows I have gone overboard this year to lay out the options offered and the positions taken. Maybe, I did this because I have been so profoundly undecided about the promise of proportional representation vis-à-vis the comfort of first-past-the-post. Probably, that is where I deserve to be in my role as the religiously bipartisan editor of OOTD.

With that in mind, I hope you will forgive me for having devoted so much space in this issue to all the competing views on this question. It is the eleventh hour. I want to thank the staff of Premier John Horgan and Opposition Leader Andrew Wilkinson for promptly seizing the opportunity to place their leaders' views before the readers of OOTD. For the record, I emailed Andrew Weaver directly a month ago and spoke to his staff twice by phone, but was obliged to cobble together the Green referendum position from available online sources.

I also want to thank the Speaker's Office for bringing us up to date on the governance consultation process that some members of the AFMLABC had an opportunity to contribute to in September. And, finally, my thanks go out to the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians for allowing me to reprint an article by Hon. David Kilgour in "Beyond the Hill." It is a compelling essay on the state of democracy globally and on the opportunity for former parliamentarians to get engaged.

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The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia is strictly non-partisan, regardless of members' past or present political affiliation. Founded in 1987, the Association was formally established by an Act of the British Columbia Legislature on February 10, 1998.

Orders of the Day was conceived, named and produced in its early stages by Bob McClelland, former MLA and cabinet minister, following his retirement from office. Hugh Curtis ably helmed this publication up through May 2014.

President's Report

Well, it is fall, the leaves are turning color and dropping, the air is crisper, and we have come through municipal elections. As a former elected person, I know the time and effort campaigning takes; I would like to thank all the candidates who put their names forward and congratulate those who have won office.

Despite the sometimes-negative commentary, public service is a noble calling. Our towns and cities, province and country are better because of those who choose to serve.

To that end, I would like to remind our faithful members and subscribers of the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund. It was established in memory of Hugh, himself a former mayor and MLA/minister. He was also the heart and soul of the Former MLAs' Association for years. The Fund is designed to support two delegates each year to attend the annual Youth Parliament in Victoria. Hugh believed in encouraging and supporting young British Columbians to engage in politics and public life.

The Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund is managed by the Victoria Foundation. See below for all the details on how you can send in your generous donation.

As always, our newsletter, Orders of the Day, benefits from stories, articles, essays, pictures and comments from you, our readers.

A big thank you to all who attended our dinner at Government House. This is always a special event, and we were so pleased to have Her Honour, The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC in attendance. As always, Keith Baldrey was an amazing speaker with tremendous insight into the happenings "at the Leg." We are already planning for next year's event.

Finally, this is your association and publication. If you have ideas for strengthening the association or the newsletter, please feel free to contact me directly at jeff.bray@shaw.ca.



Jeff Bray, President, AFMLABC

An invitation to donate to the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund

The Victoria Foundation looks forward to receiving donations to the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund from all of Hugh's well wishers and friends.

By phone: Call 250-381-5532 to make a donation by credit card directly via the Victoria Foundation.

By cheque: Send cheques to the Victoria Foundation at #109 645 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1G2. Please ensure they are made out to The Victoria Foundation. Note the name of the fund in the memo line or in a cover letter.

Online: The Victoria Foundation's mechanism for online donations is [CanadaHelps](#) and the steps are:

Go to www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca

Click on the [Make a Donation](#) button and then on the "Online" link and then the [CanadaHelps](#) link which will take you to the Foundation's page on the CanadaHelps web site.

Click to indicate whether you want to donate now or monthly and you will be taken through the steps to make your donation.

In the section for designation of your gift, click on the drop down menu to select the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund.

You may pay with VISA, MasterCard, American Express, Interac or through a PayPal account.

After you pay for your gift, CanadaHelps.org will send you an online receipt.

There are several privacy permissions available. If you choose to include your name and address in the information which is sent to the Victoria Foundation, the Association will be pleased to acknowledge your gift.

If you have any questions about how to make a donation to the Victoria Foundation, please contact Sara Neely, Director of Philanthropic Services, at 250-381-5532 or sneely@victoriafoundation.bc.ca

Speaker's Forum elicits "impressive" feedback

By the Honourable Darryl Plecas
Speaker of the BC Legislative Assembly

The Speaker's Forum on the Role of MLAs is nearing completion of Phase One, which officially began in February of this year. To date, the Speaker's Forum has held roundtables with political scientists, members of the Legislative Press Gallery, youth, educators, the 2018 BC Legislative Interns, and former Members of the Legislative Assembly.

The calibre of participants' feedback during the first year of this project has been nothing short of impressive. I appreciate that participants have come to Forum roundtables with well thought out and substantive feedback and ideas.

A summary report is produced after each roundtable, which will be publicly available once the current phase concludes, with the publication of a Phase One report by the end of the calendar year. I very much look forward to sharing the feedback that we received from all roundtable groups in addressing themes that the Speaker's Forum has set out to address.

This Phase One report will be key to shaping Phase Two, which will unfold during the course of 2019, as we try to address the notions and feedback that were identified by Forum participants during Phase One.

On September 21, some members of the Association of Former Members of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia took part in our latest Speaker's Forum roundtable. They were:

1. Bill Goodacre (MLA for Bulkley Valley-Stikine, 1996-2001)
2. Jim Gorst (MLA for Esquimalt, 1969-1975)
3. Dave Hayer (MLA for Surrey-Tynehead, 2001-2013)
4. Ken Jones (MLA for Surrey-Cloverdale, 1991-1996)
5. Penny Priddy (MLA for Surrey-Newton, 1991-2001)
6. Cliff Serwa (MLA for Okanagan West, 1986 - 1996)
7. Doug Symons (MLA for Richmond Centre, 1991-2001)

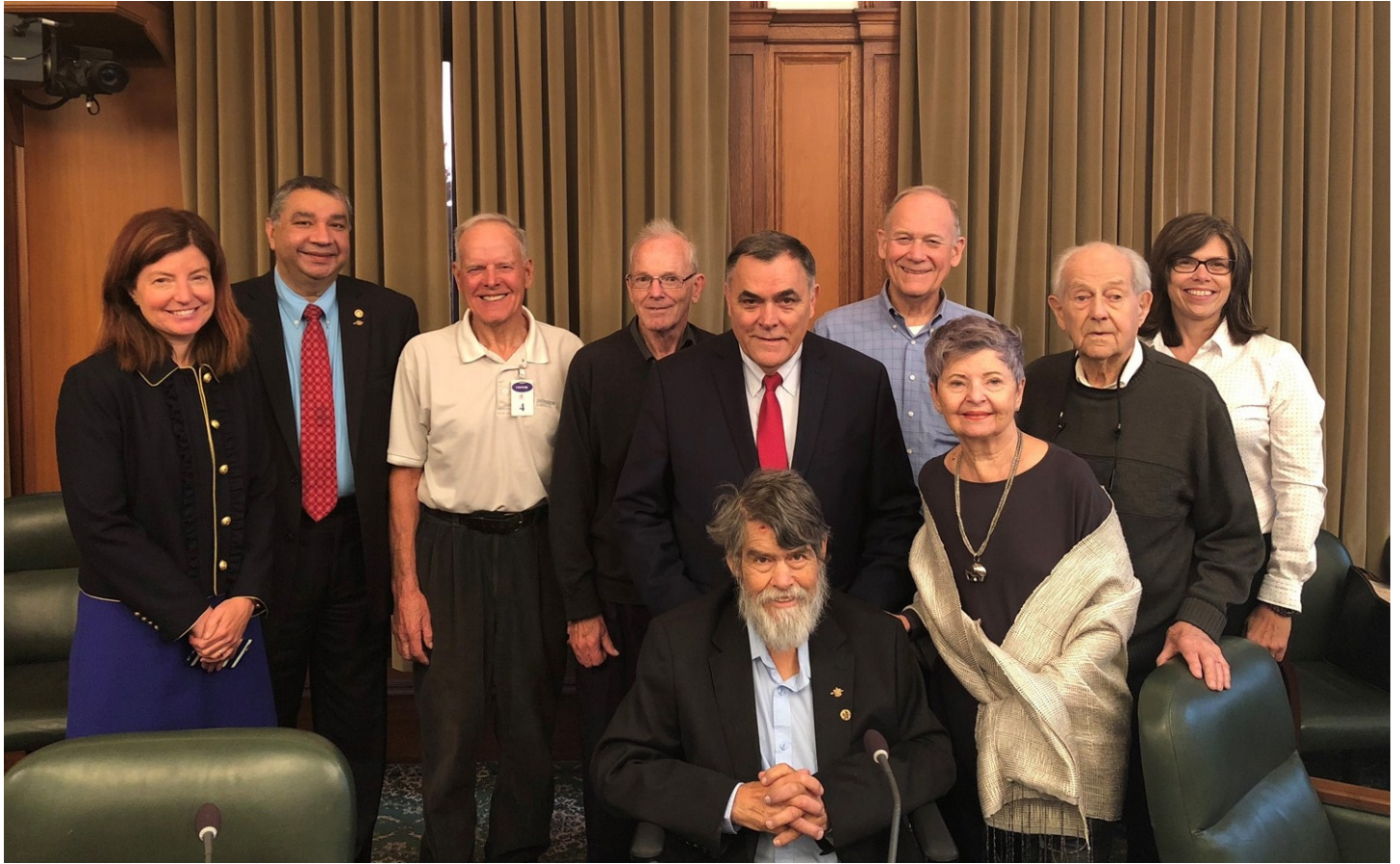
I am very grateful to these members of the AFMLABC for taking the time to participate in this roundtable. Former MLAs were included as a roundtable group given that they have firsthand experience in British Columbia's political system, in caucus dynamics, and in the operation of parliamentary democracy in our province. This makes them particularly well-suited to address the key themes of the Speaker's Forum. I was delighted with their contributions at the September 21 roundtable, and look forward to engaging with members of the AFMLABC in the coming years as this project continues.

I would be equally happy to hear from members of the AFMLABC who may not have had an opportunity to participate in the roundtable. I welcome feedback from all British Columbians on this initiative, and kindly ask that they send their comments to SpeakersForum@leg.bc.ca.

Over the course of the past year, I have mentioned the Speaker's Forum to nearly every individual that I have met in my capacity as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. I have been heartened by the feedback that I receive in support of this initiative.

As I read reports produced by the Samara Centre for Democracy and others, I am further convinced that we are on the right track. If readers of the Orders of the Day are not familiar with the reports produced by the Samara Centre, I strongly encourage them to read these publications.

Samara conducts comprehensive surveys with sitting and former Members of the House of Commons of Canada, and produces reports on their findings. The latest findings in *The 2018 Member of Parliament Survey: Evaluating the House of Commons and Options for Reform* certainly echoes many of the concerns that we have heard over the course of Phase One of the Speaker's Forum. I look forward to seeing what this project will continue to produce in the year ahead.



Former MLAs met with the Honourable Darryl Plecas, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, this past September. Left to right: Kate Ryan-Lloyd (Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees), Dave Hayer, Cliff Serwa, Doug Symons, Mr. Speaker, Ken Jones, Penny Priddy, Jim Gorst, Dr. Martha Dow (Academic Facilitator) and Bill Goodacre seated.

Moments to remember



Ray Parkinson (left) and Beverley Sharp share good times with former MLA and cabinet minister Norm Levi .

The September OOTD newsletter report of the death of former MLA Dr. Ray Parkinson inadvertently omitted mention of the 40-year marriage of Ray and Beverley Sharp. In the official family obituary Beverley is referred to as Ray's "beloved second wife." Ray and Beverley attended many of our Former MLA dinners. Beverley would like to thank people for their remembrance and sympathy in Ray's loss. If you so wish donations in his memory can be made to the BC Youth Parliament through the Hugh Curtis Memorial Fund administered by the Victoria Foundation.

Encouraging democracy ... a niche for former parliamentarians?



By Hon. David Kilgour
In "Beyond the Hill"
Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians

In 1989, as the Berlin Wall came down, it appeared that totalitarian governance was mercifully gone and a peaceful and rule of law world was finally attainable. Government of, by and for citizens was thought to have won the great ideological battle of the 20th century.

Unfortunately, it is democratic governance that is today under attack in many of the world's almost 200 independent nations. According to the Freedom in the World report recently published by the U.S.-based non-governmental organization, Freedom House, democracy faced its most serious crisis in decades during 2017. Seventy-one countries suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties, with only 35 showing gains. Since 2006, 113 nations have experienced a net decline, and only 62 have seen an overall improvement.

Nations that a decade ago were democratic success stories – Turkey and the Philippines, for example – today face authoritarian if not totalitarian misrule. Some long-established democracies are also mired in seemingly intractable problems at home, including rapidly widening economic disparities, cynicism among citizens and terrorist attacks.

Populist leaders who appeal to xenophobia and offer short shrift to civil and political liberties gained votes and parliamentary seats in France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria during 2017. They were kept out of government in all but Austria, but their success at the polls helped to weaken established parties from across the political spectrum. Centrist newcomer Emmanuel Macron handily won the French presidency, but in Germany and the Netherlands, mainstream parties struggled to create stable governing coalitions.

Basic human rights are also reported to have been diminished in almost two-thirds of the 113 countries surveyed for the 2018 Rule of Law Index. There continues to be widespread concern that there is a rise of authoritarian nationalism and a failure of governments to meet international legal obligations. Venezuela is last on the list and the Philippines fell 18 places to 88th.

Non-discrimination, freedom of expression and religion, the right to privacy and workers' rights were all acknowledged when calculating the index. The respondents' belief in the protections afforded by such rights dropped in 71 of the 113 countries measured.

Not coincidentally, the world's largest dictatorships, China and Russia, have not only increased domestic repression, but have exported their practices. Beijing recently proclaimed that it is "blazing a new trail" for developing countries to follow; one that in practice does not provide rule of law, free and fair multi-party elections, gender equality or social inclusion. Instead, it fosters crony capitalism, official corruption and state violence against disfavoured communities.

Carl Gershman of the U.S.-based National Endowment for Democracy noted: "Russia, China, and other authoritarian countries are using sophisticated soft power techniques and multilateral coalitions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to subvert the global norms contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to replace them with the norm of unlimited state sovereignty." He added: "They're using trackers, trolls, and other instruments to subvert the integrity of the media space in Europe and elsewhere, to spread confusion and divisions and to undermine the institutions of the West."

The spread of anti-democratic practices internationally also poses economic and security risks. When more nations are free, all countries are safer and more prosperous. When more are autocratic and repressive, treaties and alliances weaken, nations and regions become unstable, and violent extremists have increased room to operate.

Worrisome, too, is that some young people, who have little memory of the long struggles against totalitarianism in various forms, might be losing faith in democratic governance. A determined struggle to rebuild it must begin immediately.

Canada, as an internationally respected parliamentary democracy is not carrying its weight in encouraging multi-party democracy. Our government allocates a mere 1.4 per cent of its international assistance project budget to strengthening parliaments and political parties.

Among the issues raised at a February 2018 joint event of the House of Commons' all-party Democracy Caucus and the Carleton Initiative for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Engagement:

Canada as a respected nation is well placed to “up its game” significantly in helping to strengthen parliamentary democracies and civil societies around the Commonwealth and in other nations, with significant help coming from former MPs and senators. One expert told those present at the event that Canadians working internationally on governance issues for Canadian NGOs are virtually non-existent.

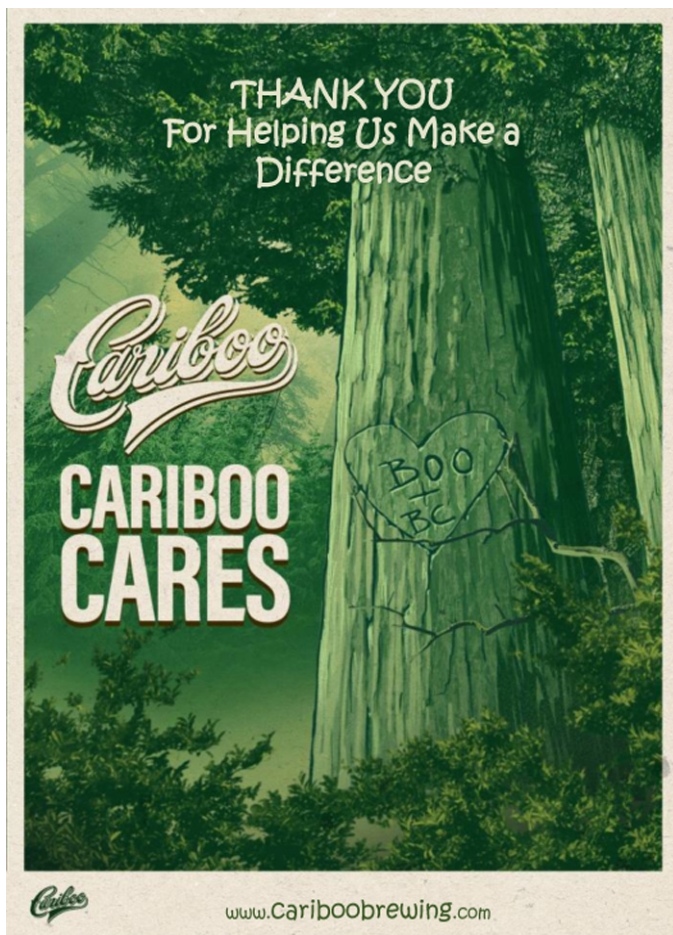
Globally, political participation remains the sphere where the least progress has been made in closing the equality gap between women and men. Women are especially effective at negotiating security and social issues. Jacqueline O’Neill, president of Inclusive Security, a Washington-based group that works to increase the number of women in peace and security activities internationally, noted that currently only 24 per cent of parliamentarians globally are female (the same percentage as in our House of Commons). Only 14 heads of state are women. How can parliaments and political parties make measurable progress for greater participation of women in politics?

Parliamentary and election support initiatives are cost-effective “force multipliers,” in the sense that those involved interact daily with MPs, programs, and the executive branch of governments. Parliaments of other major nations are able to work directly with legislators abroad.

Francis Le Blanc, executive director of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, noted that as part of offering “more Canada” to strengthen democracy elsewhere, our ex-MPs, having been in Parliament, are now available to programs expanding across the globe.

In short, if ever there were a good time for Canada to do significantly more in this area of international cooperation, it should be in the realm of democratic governance, and now.

(The Hon. David Kilgour was a member of Parliament for 27 years (1979-2006), on two occasions serving as a secretary of state. He served under the Progressive Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and sat as an independent.)



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Where the party leaders stand

Premier John Horgan **Leader of the BC New Democratic Party**

This fall, British Columbians have an historic opportunity to change our politics and have a system where everyone's vote counts.

I'll be voting for proportional representation and a fairer, more responsive kind of government with better outcomes for people.

Proportional representation means exactly that. Whatever proportion, or share, of the vote a party wins, it gets that many seats in government. It's a system that's used by some of the most stable, progressive countries in the world — and it's my hope that when the ballots are counted this fall, BC will take its place among them.

For too long our old, outdated voting system has put too much power in the hands of too few. It leads to polarization and extreme partisanship. It alienates people and makes a lot of people feel as if their vote doesn't count. Voter turnout keeps going down. And, young people are not participating.

Someone asked me recently, 'What's the biggest change with a pro-rep government?' The answer is simple: it puts people front and centre.

Under proportional representation, governments can't win 100 per cent of the power with less than 50 per cent of the vote. We've seen that happen in BC, and across Canada, many times before and it reduces people's faith in democracy.

Proportional representation is people-focused.

Governments elected by proportional representation better reflect the diversity of the people they represent. They elect more women and more women of colour. They give more power — not less — to rural and remote areas. Their elections see increased voter turnout, especially among younger people.

Most importantly, their parties in government work together for people. There's less space for parties to be arrogant and unaccountable. Governments elected under proportional representation need to do

what so many of us do every day - work together to get things done.

Some of this means working with people with different opinions and values — which is a good thing, I believe — and the BC NDP and BC Greens have shown that great things can happen for people when parties work together. Listening to people from other parties makes governments stronger, and more representative, and it's good for democracy and for BC.

If you believe that governments should work for people; if you believe working together makes governments stronger; and, if you believe every vote should count, then I ask you to join me in voting for proportional representation this fall.

Opposition Leader Andrew Wilkinson **Leader of the BC Liberal Party**

All MLAs ever elected in British Columbia share one thing: they were all directly elected by the people they represent. Citizens went into a polling booth and made their choice clear – I wish to be represented by candidate X.

Those votes were not about complex mathematical equations. They were not based on a ranked list of party insiders. They were always about someone putting his or her name forward, campaigning hard, and winning the support of the greatest number of people in the constituency.

Proportional representation will hand constituencies to an MLA who has no connection to the area and is elected only by virtue of his or her connection to the party bosses. This is a radical change from the past, where even if an MLA lived in a different constituency, he or she had to campaign and compete for support and win ballot box approval.

When people talk about politicians, they talk about "the" Premier, "the" Minister, and "the" Mayor. But, more often than not, they talk about "my" MLA. They have a sense of ownership. "Their" MLA represents "their" community.



Citizens have expectations of MLAs. They expect us to know the issues playing out in the community. They expect us to live the same impacts. And when they walk through our office doors, they seek advice and assistance on dealing with the sometimes difficult-to-navigate ways of government services. As MLAs, we are there to help citizens.

Now imagine who could end up “elected” under proportional representation. A candidate could finish third, fourth, or even fifth in a riding and still be handed a seat. A downtown Vancouver resident could become the new MLA for the Kootenays. One can imagine the sign that would go up on the office door – “the MLA is visiting today.”

Right now, citizens have the power to hold MLAs directly accountable. They can unelect them in the next vote. They can launch a recall campaign. And, they can share their concerns with the rest of the electorate in local media. But that’s gone with parachuted politicians selected from backroom political lists.

Proportional representation risks shattering the ties between the citizens and the people they choose to represent them – and that’s a blow to the very foundation of our democracy.

The BC Green Party **(Extracted from the party’s website)**

The BC Green Party holds proportional representation as a foundational aspect of its platform and is committed to implementing the system in British Columbia.

“We support proportional representation because it is a fairer voting system, which encourages democratic participation and accurately reflects

voters’ choices in the make-up of government,” says Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver, MLA for Oak Bay-Gordon Head.

“I am working to prove that politicians can and should be held accountable to their commitments. I hope to demonstrate that elected officials can serve the public with evidence-based policies and honesty, and still be successful. And, as a party, we are evidence that parties can ban corporate and union donations and still be effective.

“The BC Green Party is seeking a mandate to govern from British Columbians, and the only way to do this is to earn their trust, through showing that we stay true to our principles and will deliver on our commitments.”

BC is currently divided into 87 individual districts (also known as ridings), each of which elects a single representative for that riding. The candidate who gets the most votes in that district is elected, even if that candidate does not get a majority or over 50 per cent of the votes. As a result, many British Columbians don’t have a representative that they voted for, and BC provincial governments have received 100 per cent of the power with as little as 39 per cent of the vote. This means all the decisions for a four-year term are made by politicians and a party that less than half of British Columbians support.

Additionally, many voters live in “safe” ridings that typically go to one party, so they believe their vote is wasted. Others think they must vote strategically so that the party they least like doesn’t get into power. Because FPTP is a winner-takes-all system that usually produces false majority governments, parties tend to focus on negative campaigning because sabotaging their opponents is their best shot at getting 100 per cent of the power. These features of FPTP contribute to public cynicism and low voter turnout.

BC think tanks weigh in on the PR/FPTP issue

While the Fraser Institute and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA-BC) would bristle at the descriptors ‘right wing’ and ‘left wing’ respectively, that is the widely accepted perception of these two well-established and respected think tanks ... through the political lens. Headquartered in Vancouver, the Fraser Institute “produces research about government actions in areas such as taxation, health care, aboriginal issues, education, economic freedom, energy, natural resources and the environment.” The CCPA-BC investigates “the key challenges facing our province – the high rate of poverty, economic insecurity, the extreme concentration of wealth and threats to our environment and climate.” In this issue of OOTD, they go head to head on PR/FPTP.

The Fraser Institute

Changing British Columbia’s voting system to a form of “proportional representation” would likely lead to bigger, costlier provincial governments, finds a new study by the Fraser Institute.

“Coalition governments – a staple of PR systems – regularly have to secure smaller, niche parties by funding their pet policy projects, which means more expensive government paid for by taxpayers,” says Lydia Miljan, Fraser Institute senior fellow, associate professor of political science at the University of Windsor and co-author of *Electoral Rules and Fiscal Policy Outcomes in British Columbia*.

Research by the Fraser Institute finds that changing British Columbia’s voting system to a form of proportional representation would give rise to smaller, single-issue parties, would lead to more coalition governments, and would increase uncertainty in Victoria.

Analysis of election data from 30 countries finds that PR systems have more minority governments, more political instability, more polarization, and more frequent elections than systems where elections are determined by simple plurality or FPTP. Despite claims by its proponents to the contrary, PR electoral systems often lead to poorer representation of voters’ views, while also making it more difficult for citizens to hold their politicians to account.

Election data suggests the average government spending of countries with PR electoral systems is 30.3 per cent of GDP compared to 23.7 per cent in countries with plurality or majoritarian election rules (including first-past-the-post). Put another way, governments elected under PR are nearly 30 per cent bigger than governments elected under first-past-the-post.

“There’s a heavy fiscal price to pay if British Columbia adopts proportional representation, and that’s a bigger more expensive government in Victoria,” Miljan says. “Before British Columbians decide how they want to elect members to the legislature, they should be aware of the consequences of any new voting system.”

The complete Fraser Institute report can be found at <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/research>.

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC

We at the CCPA-BC are big fans of proportional representation (PR). Our research on and analysis of election issues have led us to determine that PR would much better reflect the real preferences and backgrounds of BC voters – and we’re so excited for the possibility of a system where all our votes count, our politicians cooperate, and our governments get only the power they deserve.

For too long, powerful groups have had a voting system that privileges their interests. Our current system fosters “winner-take-all” competition and concentrates political power in the hands of parties that do not necessarily have the support of the majority of voters – which means less representation, less accountability, and less collaboration between elected officials. BC can do better.

The ‘No’ side, however, has been telling us otherwise: that the whole affair is frightfully confusing and “too complicated” for British Columbians to navigate; that first-past-the-post has been the only thing preventing far right “extremist” political parties from taking power; that our governments will be forever unstable.

One of the most significant costs of any winner-take-all approach is that it promotes adversarial politics, as each of the major parties seeks to win a majority in which co-operation with the others would be unnecessary. That often yields polarized politics reflected not only in negative election campaigns but also in an adversarial parliament (witness question period).

The adversarial approach often means major policy lurches when the government changes. These policy lurches belie the claims that our FPTP system offers stability. They undermine our capacity for long-term planning, even long-term thinking, and waste considerable legislative time effectively going around in circles. Such policy lurches are far less common in countries with more proportional systems, where cross-party co-operation is the norm.

The complete CCPA-BC report can be found at <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/newsroom/updates/debunking-myths-about-proportional-representation>

Canadians split down party lines over the Governor General

After weeks of critical news stories that prompted Governor General Julie Payette to apologize for how her office's work has been perceived in its first year and to reiterate her commitment to the job, a new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians with an opinion about the matter are more polarized about a traditionally apolitical figurehead and institution than might be expected.

Relatively few are following the news about Payette's performance closely, but those who are following tend to hold more negative views of the Governor General.

While most are unsure how to rate Payette's performance as the Queen's representative in Canada after 12 months in the role, the Governor General today enjoys little of the implicit goodwill the institute recorded for her initial nomination to the post last year (at the time, 55 per cent approved of her appointment).

Instead, those who have an opinion on the former astronaut are divided along political lines, with past supporters of the Conservative Party of Canada especially inclined to say she is doing a bad job (41 per cent) and that she is poorly suited to her current position (47 per cent). Past Liberal and New Democratic Party supporters are less likely to have an opinion on Payette, and those who do have an opinion are more evenly divided.

Julie Payette's term as Governor General began with controversy. In a November 2017 speech, she took a mocking tone when describing debate about creationism and climate change. Critics pointed out that – regardless of the merits of her arguments – they served to undermine the role of the Governor General as an impartial embodiment of the state, politicizing what is supposed to be a non-political role.

More recently, criticism of Payette has centred on her lighter-than-average schedule and reports that she dislikes the spotlight that comes with the job.

The findings of this poll suggest some justification for fears about the role of Governor General becoming politicized.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appointed Payette, and those who voted for his Liberal party in 2015 are more likely to say she is performing well than poorly, though not by a huge margin. Meanwhile, those who voted for the opposition Conservatives are more than two times as likely to perceive Payette's performance in a negative light as they are to view it in a positive one.

Overall, despite the recent spate of bad publicity, most Canadians (57 per cent) are uncertain about Payette's performance as Governor General. Those who have an opinion are split fairly evenly.

It's possible that right-of-centre voters would be more inclined than most to be displeased with any Trudeau-appointed Governor General, but the depth of their displeasure with Payette is both new and notable.

Regionally, Payette is better received in her home province of Quebec, where those who think she's doing a good job outnumber those who think she's doing a bad one by almost two-to-one. In every other region, this pattern is reversed, with more rating her performance as poor than good.

A question raised – either explicitly or implicitly – by much of the reporting about Payette's first year in her vice-regal appointment is whether her struggles in the role are part of the adjustment period experienced by many governors-general in the past or an indication of a misalignment between the post and the person who fills it.

The complete survey findings can be found at <http://angusreid.org/payette-governor-general-performance/>.

Winnie-the-Pooh has China in a flap

A new film inspired by AA Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh books has reportedly been denied a cinema release in China, where the cuddly bear is seen as a symbol of political dissent.

Since last year, references to the character have been banned on the Chinese social media site Weibo, after a spate of posts comparing the "bear of very little brain" to the country's President Xi Jinping.

No reason has been given for the decision to block Disney's new film *Christopher Robin*, but it is believed to be part of a nationwide clampdown on references to the beloved children's character.

In 2015, a picture showing Xi in a motorcade alongside an image of Winnie-the-Pooh in a toy car was called "China's most censored photo" by political analysis company Global Risk Insights.

Other political figures have also been drawn into the joke. When Xi met with Barack Obama, the former U.S. president was compared to Tigger the tiger on social media, while the Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe was drawn as Eeyore the donkey.

After HBO's satirical news show, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, poked fun at Xi's sensitivity to Winnie-the-Pooh jokes, the U.S. channel's website was blocked by Chinese censors.



The new film stars Ewan McGregor as a middle-aged Christopher Robin, whose mundane life is interrupted when he is unexpectedly reunited with Pooh, Tigger, Piglet and the other talking animals of the Hundred Acre Wood.

Missing a Chinese release could have a significant impact on the film's financial success, as the country represents an ever-growing share of the global box office. In the first quarter of this year, China's total ticket-sales came to an estimated \$3.17 billion, overtaking North America's gross of \$2.85 billion for the same period.

What's in a name? Lots of guffawing in India

Umniuh-Tmar Elaka Village (Northern India) – Italy, Argentina, Sweden, and Indonesia have already voted and chosen their representative to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

And, if you wonder how these countries have voting rights in this hill state in India's northeast, you are in for a surprise. Italy, Argentina, Sweden, and Indonesia are the names of voters in the Umniuh-Tmar Elaka village in East Khasi Hills district. Sisters Promiseland and Holyland Dkhar and their namesake neighbour, Jerusalem Khiewtam, also participated in recent elections.

"Many Khasi names have the potential to make you smile but finding hundreds of such names in a small village has people guffawing for hours," says village chief Sirdar Premiere Singh. He said about 50 per cent of the villagers

have a fondness for English words that sound good even though they do not know exactly what they mean.

The sleepy village, close to the Indo-Bangladesh border, even has a 30-year-old woman voter whose mother "Sweater" named her "I Have Been Delivered." Office items like Table, Globe and Paper, members of the solar system like Venus and Saturn as well as Arabian Sea, Pacific and Continent have also been taken.

Three sisters were found aptly named Request, Loveliness and Happiness by their mother Shuki, a Khasi word that translates to chair in English. Their neighbours are sisters Goodness and Unity. Some of the candidates, who contested the elections in Meghalaya, are named after famous politicians, like the two Nehrus – Nehru Suting and Nehru Sangma.

Len Norris



November 9, 1965

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Member News

Please send news about your activities to ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com for the next newsletter.

Where are they now?

Each issue we ask a former Member of the Legislative Assembly a series of questions: What drew them to public service; what lessons have they taken away; and, most important, what are they doing now.



This month we welcome Diane Thorne, the NDP MLA for Coquitlam-Maillardville from 2005 to 2013. She served as the Deputy Opposition Critic for Education and Housing Critic.

What prompted you to seek public office?

A series of things, really, like most people. I was living in Trail in the '70s and went to hear Dave Barret speak at the high school, and that was it. I was smitten and I ended up knocking on doors for Chris Darcy who, at that time, was running for the NDP. He won.

Later, I became involved in the women's movement. We started the first transition house in the Trail area. We ran programs at Selkirk college in support of women's issues. When my husband and I moved back to the lower mainland, I continued my involvement, opening the first women's centre and transition house in Coquitlam. I also ran for and was elected as the South BC representative for the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Then in 1989, Dawn Black convinced me to run for city council. I ended up being on council for nine years.

So, really, by the time I went to Victoria in 2005 as the MLA for Coquitlam-Maillardville, it was just a continuation of my 20-year involvement in public affairs.

Which political figure most influenced you?

That would have been Dave Barrett, definitely. Rosemary Brown was also a huge influence; she was not just a woman but a black woman.

Was it hard making the transition from private life to public life?

With being on the National Action Committee and on Coquitlam council, I hadn't had a private life for 30 years. I also worked at SHARE Family Community Services and Society and wrote a weekly family issues column for the local paper.

What was your biggest challenge returning to private life?

My biggest challenge going back to private life has been not being at the centre; not being in the heart of things – part of making things happen. That is still hard; it's been five years and I still really miss it.

What is the biggest lesson that has stuck with you since being an MLA?

The biggest lesson – it's not over until it's really over. Even if you're not at the heart of things, keep caring and stay active. I still want to encourage women and youth to get involved. Getting new people involved is more important now than ever.

Tell us a bit about your active or part-time professional interests.

I still do volunteer work with SHARE, and I'm on both the volunteer community committee and the city advisory committee for the Riverview lands project, where our goal is to keep the land in public hands for public health purposes rather than have it sold for private development. More than half the land has been sold off. Coquitlam is unlike many other communities. We want hospitals and mental health facilities in our community.

Finally ... pet projects? Hobbies? And, the value of remaining involved in the Association and OOTD.

I love the OOTD newsletter; I read it all the time. And, I have been a member of the same book club for 21 years. All the club members are women I have known for 40 years through the women's centre and the transition house. I also love to go for walks a couple of times every day with my Westie, Abby.

Finally, compensation for Woodlands' survivors

By Jim Hume
The Old Islander

Dates to remember:

- 1872 – British Columbia opened its first Asylum for the Insane in Victoria. Built on the Songhees reserve, it held 16 patients admitted for “disorders, nervous trouble, masturbation, injury to the head, intemperance, fright, (or) ‘unknown.’”
- 1878 – With the Victoria facility overcrowded and shadowed by scandal, the BC Provincial Lunatic Asylum was built on 100 acres of Crown land in New Westminster at a cost of \$24,000. It eventually became known as Woodlands Hospital for the Insane and later, the BC Public Hospital for the Insane.
- 1892 – Asylum connected to city water mains. Resident population – 135.
- 1896 – Clean bathing water available for each patient. Resident population – 171.
- 1930 – Patient per capita costs estimated at 72 cents per day. Resident population – 500+.
- 1940 – BC’s Mental Hospital Act amended to delete all mention of “lunatic” and “insane.”
- 1982 – Government announces Woodlands to be closed. Resident population – approximately 900.
- 1999 – Government relinquishes any interest in the property for major health purposes, and the site reverts to surplus status.
- 2003 – Government apologizes to former residents of Woodlands for any mental, physical or sexual abuse. Many hearings, inquiries, and a class action lawsuit follow over the rates and times of compensation until:
- October 8, 2018 – British Columbia’s Minister of Health, Adrian Dix, announced: “This year, the BC government moved to finally do the right thing to extend compensation to Woodlands’ survivors denied redress for the abuse they suffered.”

Jane Dyson, former executive director of Disability Allowance BC, said she was thrilled that “after all these years of being told no, our Province is saying yes to the survivors of Woodlands.”

Time for rejoicing indeed – but with a great wave of sadness for the early victims of what our ancestors thought appropriate treatment for those who were mentally frail, and who died before public conscience could demand humanity and reform.

An example from Ken Scott’s research on the BC Public Hospital for the Insane: “In nineteenth-century British Columbia, both the medical community and the local public believed strongly in the importance of separating insane patients by gender. In 1869, two middle-class sisters, both school teachers, had been deemed insane. These ‘insane ladies’ were noisy and physically violent, and one refused to wear any clothing. They were kept locked in a bare brick cell in the Victoria city jail with only male staff supervision.

This challenge to Victorian respectability drew public attention to the severe lack of local psychiatric facilities. Eventually, a third sister, who was of sound mind, was permitted full-time access to the jail to care for her siblings. She wrote to the newspaper appealing to public respectability and arguing for gender-segregated facilities for the insane: ‘Men should be appointed to look after men – women to look after women. The cells for men and women should be in separate parts of the building ... Men and women of Victoria, let us not rest until the evil is remedied.’”

It took a while but “the evil was remedied” as were many others with the passage of time and flutters of conscience.

More disturbing than Scott’s grim picture of humanity at its worst are the comments from former Ombudsperson Dulcie McCallum who conducted an independent review of Woodlands’ care. She was careful to stress that while many Woodlands workers were honourable and dedicated, “there was a code of silence among many employees including those who were not engaged in abusive behaviour.”

The good guys disapproved of what some colleagues were doing, but balked at being a whistleblower and branded as “a snitch.”

Seems to me we all have a bit of that reluctance in our make-up which suggests that, while we can rejoice at the forward progress made as a society, we have some old and still nasty shibboleths to shake off.

100 years ago

BC buys the Pacific Great Eastern Railway

"There was a time in this fair land when the railroads did not run. When the wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun."

Gordon Lightfoot, Canadian Railroad Trilogy

Construction of the historic Pacific Great Eastern Railway (PGE) was an epic undertaking vital to the development of 20th Century British Columbia. Promises it would transport endless stands of timber north of Squamish to Howe Sound, open up vast Cariboo ranchlands, and join the cross Canada railway system in Prince George fueled a landslide victory in the provincial election of 1912.

Private investors planned that the PGE would cross the Fraser River at Lillooet and they began construction in two sections – a commuter line serving North and West Vancouver, and connecting the steamship docks at Squamish northward to Clinton. By 1915, the tracks reached Lillooet but bypassed the town by crossing the Fraser on a wooden trestle south of the Seton River.

The wild, remote, and rugged Coast Range terrain proved to be "no child's play" to cross and very expensive. Despite fiscal management that could "squeeze a nickel 'til the beaver screamed" and a \$10 million loan from the BC government in 1916, the investors defaulted. By 1918, the government owned the PGE. They pushed the rail bed north to Quesnel by 1921, but the dream to reach Prince George became sidetracked.

In 1928, some of the bridges of the North Shore line were condemned and abandoned. The PGE infamously became "the railway from nowhere to nowhere" but images of the superlative scenery it traversed in the Saturday Evening Post drew tourists from across the continent.

In 1931, a steel bridge with a 600-foot continuous deck truss span, 200 feet above the Fraser River, replaced the old wooden trestle. The railbed was re-routed through Lillooet and a two-story train station built to serve the town.

The opening of gold mines in the Bridge River area in 1933 brought a local boom to the PGE. To bridge the road system gap between Lillooet and Shalalth, gas-electric cars sidelined by the closure of the North Shore line were put back into service to tow flat decks loaded with automobiles.



The government earmarked \$20 million for PGE development in 1949 and, on November 1, 1952, 40 years after it was first planned, the PGE formally arrived in Prince George bearing the shield "Hello! Prince George, We're Here." Four years later, on August 27, 1956, the PGE completed a connection to Vancouver, giving it a through route stretching 462.7 miles.

The same year, the first of 12 Budd Cars arrived, and the PGE began dedicated passenger service. Barring rock fall, landslides, floods, snowstorms and forest fires, Vancouver was now only five and a half hours from Lillooet.

The next three decades saw the construction of spur lines to several northern towns and the main line pushed northward as far as Fort Nelson. BC now had a railway that traversed the province from corner to corner.

In 1972, the PGE was renamed the British Columbia Railway. A new train station was built in 1986 to serve the public including students from the rural communities of Seton Portage and Shalalth, who commuted to school in Lillooet in a dedicated passenger car.

Following the 2001 provincial election, the Budd Cars were sold and their place taken by an excursion train and, between Seton Portage and Lillooet, the Kaoham Shuttle. As the town's only connecting public transit, the Budd Cars are fondly remembered and keenly missed in Lillooet.

The provincial government sold BC Rail to Canadian National Railway in 2004.

Source: <http://www.lillooetbc.ca/Recreation-Activities/Golden-Miles-of-History/The-Pacific-Great-Eastern-Railway.aspx> and <https://www.american-rails.com/pacific-great-eastern.html>