



# BC-STV: A Voice for Communities



From left: Supporters of BC-STV include Briony Penn, Saltspring Island; Phil Hicks, Campbell River; Jean Crowder MP – Nanaimo Cowichan; Bruce Whittington, councillor, Ladysmith; Fritz Zens, Port Alberni

## Tired of being ignored if you're outside the Lower Mainland? Vote BC-STV

Yes, the ridings will be larger. But each region will still have the same number of MLAs, and representation will improve. British Columbians are frustrated with MLAs who just report back on what has been decided in Victoria. We want champions for our communities. Our current system doesn't allow that. BC-STV does.

### First Past the Post

**Shuts whole regions out of cabinet:** When a region elects only opposition members, it has no voice at the cabinet table.

**Imposes excessive party discipline:** MLAs, once elected, represent their parties first and foremost, and their constituents second.

**Creates a large number of "safe" seats:** One party often wins the most votes election after election. When MLAs are chosen at nominating meetings, not the ballot box, they owe their loyalty to their party and not their constituents.

**Serves only the largest community:** Since only 40-50% of voters elect somebody, MLAs usually reside in, and serve the largest community.

**Wastes votes:** A majority of voters do not have an MLA that represents their perspective.

**Undervalues MLAs from outside urban centres:** With the majority of seats in urban areas, MLAs from outside the Lower Mainland are unable to stand up for their communities, even when in government.

### Single Transferable Vote (BC-STV)

**Gives regions a voice in cabinet:** Most districts would elect at least one member from the governing party. No region would have to be left out of cabinet.

**Encourages more independent-minded MLAs:** Knowing that popular independents can get elected allows an MLA to push back against excessive party discipline on critical local issues.

**Creates competition for all seats:** The voters have the final say on which of a party's candidates they prefer. Parties can take no district for granted.

**Promotes MLAs across the district:** It takes around 20,000 votes to get elected, so MLAs need votes from smaller communities. MLAs can come from across the district, not just the largest centre.

**Presents real choice:** If one MLA doesn't serve their community, voters can choose another without having to switch parties. Only the best MLAs will be elected.

**Makes more votes count:** In 2 or 3-member ridings, 66% to 75% of voters help elect an MLA. A majority of voters will have representation.

How will BC-STV make smaller communities more "valuable" to political parties?

*Keep reading to find out. →*

# BC-STV: Rebalancing Power

**BC-STV will make Interior, Northern BC and rural communities more valuable to political parties than they are now.**

Here's why: regardless of the district size, virtually every STV district has one swing seat.

Just compare the Lower Mainland to an area with smaller centres: In Vancouver-West Side, the Liberals will likely win 3 or 4 seats, the NDP 2 or 3 seats and the Greens 0 or 1 seat. The same swing situation will occur in Kootenay-Columbia where the Liberals will likely win 1 or 2 seats, the NDP 2 or 3 seats, and the Greens 0 or 1 seat.

**In each case, for each party, one seat is effectively up for grabs.** When a seat hangs in the balance, its area increases in "value" to

political parties. With BC-STV, virtually every district will contain one swing seat.

**Northern, Interior and Rural ridings will be of equal political value to parties as those in the Lower Mainland**

The electoral stakes for a party in a district outside the Lower Mainland are equivalent to those in an urban district. Therefore, under BC-STV, smaller communities will become more "valuable" to political parties than they are under First Past the Post.

## Local Representation: A Top Priority for the Citizens' Assembly

The Citizens' Assembly knew that local representation is extremely important for all of BC, and critical in the North and Interior. Members were surprised to hear voters from across the province tell them that our current first past the post system fails to deliver effective local representation.

*"Coming from the north, I was extremely pleased by how seriously the entire Citizens' Assembly took the challenge of considering the issue of local representation."*

Anna Rankin, Quesnel, Citizens' Assembly member

British Columbians told the Citizens' Assembly that they wanted a fair and proportional system,

with more responsive local representation and greater voter choice.

There are many proportional systems, and some have local representation based on our current failed model.

Only STV provides voters with greater choice at the local level. Only STV makes local contests more competitive, and MLAs more accountable to their constituents. Only STV gives MLAs some leverage to champion important local issues with government.

The Citizens' Assembly chose BC-STV in large part because it puts the voters in charge at the local level.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Will the Interior, North and smaller centres lose MLAs?**

*"Multi-member constituencies, with MPs and candidates competing not merely against other parties, but against members of their own party, are much keener on being in their constituencies pursuing local issues."*

Commission on the Voting System, UK

Each region of BC will have the same number of MLAs as they do with FPTP. BC-STV simply groups the same number of seats into multi-member districts.

**Will MLAs all come from the largest town?**

MLAs will come from across the district rather than clustering in the largest centre. How come? Since 80-90% of all voters elect MLAs, votes from the smaller communities make a difference.

**Will the districts be too large?**

Regardless of the electoral system there will always be large spread-out regions in the north and other parts of BC. These new districts are no larger than federal ridings, but they have 2 or 3 MLAs and the quality of representation increases.

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