



Fair Vote Canada **Le Mouvement pour la représentation équitable au Canada**

GREATER VANCOUVER CHAPTER

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NATIONAL VOTING REFORM GETS A VANCOUVER VOICE

VANCOUVER – Buoyed by growing public support for voting reform across the nation, members and supporters of Fair Vote Canada, a national citizen's group promoting electoral reform, launched the Greater Vancouver Chapter at a meeting June 4. About 25 people crowded a room at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House to elect the chapter's first board of directors, adopt bylaws, and discuss ongoing efforts to improve the voting system.

"This represents a major step in promoting a national dialogue on the federal voting system in Canada," said Arn Keeling, interim chair. Keeling was acclaimed as a director of the Greater Vancouver Chapter, along with Stephen Broscoe, Karen Etheridge, Stuart Parker, Sara Irvine, and Trent Payton.

"Canadians are tired of seeing a Parliament that does not reflect how the people voted," Keeling added. "Fair Vote Canada is giving them a voice."

Formed in August 2000, Fair Vote Canada, a non-partisan, grassroots citizen's group, boasts active or budding chapters in 10 cities across the country. A number of prominent Canadians, including Members of Parliament Ted White (Canadian Alliance), Carolyn Bennett (Liberal) and Lorne Nystrom (NDP), as well as eminent University of Victoria political scientist Norman Ruff, have endorsed the organization's "Make Every Vote Count" campaign.

The movement to change the voting system is gaining momentum across Canada, according to Dr. Julian West, a Fair Vote Canada national director who teaches at Malaspina College in Nanaimo, who addressed the meeting. West described how Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and Ontario have joined British Columbia at the centre of efforts to change the current "first past the post" voting system provincially.

In this system, inherited from Britain but used in a shrinking minority of countries around the world, the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes in their riding wins, no matter how low the percentage of voters they attract. Critics argue this system discounts ballots cast for "losing" parties in each riding and radically distorts election outcomes.

The Greater Vancouver Chapter will now begin its public education campaign that will bring its message to local social groups and public interest organizations, as well as to major public events such as the upcoming Canadian Labour Congress convention in Vancouver from June 10-14.

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