



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

GREATER VANCOUVER CHAPTER

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MOST CIVIC CANDIDATES BACK VOTING REFORM FOR VANCOUVER: SURVEY

VANCOUVER – City council and mayoralty candidates in Vancouver's civic elections overwhelmingly favour changing the city's much-maligned at-large electoral system. That's the result of a candidate survey conducted by the Greater Vancouver Chapter of Fair Vote Canada, a national organization promoting voting reform.

The survey found three of five mayoralty candidates and 13 of 14 council candidates rejected the current "at-large" system, whereby voters cast ballots for every seat on council, rather than in a local area. Four parties, the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE), the Green Party, vcaTEAM, and the Vancouver Independent Party, indicated changing the system is part of their platforms.

"The politicians are finally listening to the people," said Arn Keeling, chair of Fair Vote Canada's Greater Vancouver Chapter. "The broad discontent among voters with the current inequitable system is making parties and candidates seriously consider the electoral options." In 1996, 59.43% of Vancouver voters indicated that they would like to see a change to the method of electing city councillors, but no change to the voting system was made.

Political parties, council and mayoral candidates were asked four questions by Fair Vote Canada:

1. Do you favour keeping the existing system of electing city government in Vancouver, with no change?
2. If you do not favour keeping the current system, what changes would you advocate if elected?
3. How important is it to you that Vancouver's voting system should include a degree of neighbourhood representation, that is that different parts of the city should vote separately for candidates representing their area?
4. How important is it to you that Vancouver's voting system should include a degree of proportional representation, that is that minority views of Vancouverites should be represented on council in relation to the number of voters who express them?

Most parties and mayoral candidates favour change

COPE and the Vancouver Independent Party suggested replacing the current at large system with single-member wards. The Green Party and vcaTEAM both advocated a mixed system where half of city councillors are elected from single-member wards and half are elected at-large by proportional representation.

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Two of the three leading mayoral candidates indicated they support changing the way Vancouverites elect their representatives. Jennifer Clarke of the Non-Partisan Association (NPA) advocated keeping the current system, noting "many voters want to vote for candidates by issue not geographic area," in response to Question 3. Independent candidate Raymond Chang also supported the current system. Larry Campbell's COPE party supports a ward system, while vcaTEAM candidate Valerie MacLean, who did not personally respond to the survey, is publicly on record as looking at wards or a mixed system in which there would be five councillors from wards and five from the city at large (Vancouver Courier, October 30, 2002). Vancouver Independent Party candidate Thomas Reekie also rejected the current electoral system.

Over 90% of council hopefuls call for reform

Desire for voting reform crossed party and ideological lines in the council candidate survey: at least one NPA council candidate supports change, and candidates from all other slates indicated the current system must go. Seven vcaTEAM candidates backed some version of reform. "The at-large electoral system in Vancouver has marginalized certain areas of the city, and continually encourages low voter turnout at the polls," commented vcaTEAM candidate Barney Hickey.

NPA candidate Duncan Wilson suggested a public consultation process to determine the best system for the city, noting "the status quo is not an option." But fellow NPA candidate Don Lee rejected change. Both COPE incumbent councillors, Fred Bass and Tim Louis, favour changing Vancouver's electoral system. Two Green candidates, Connie Fogal-Rankin and Doug Warkentin, also expressed their support for change, as did Ryan Millar of the Dance Party Party.

Candidates indicated the at-large system makes elections difficult for both candidates, who have to campaign across the city, and voters, who must make sense of well over a hundred candidate platforms and position. Virtually all the candidates who support electoral reform listed as "very important" the need for a degree of neighbourhood representation in their responses to Question 3.

Proportional representation gets support

Despite the general consensus for change, answers to Question 4 were mixed. Just over half the survey respondents supported a system that includes proportional representation to ensure a diversity of parties and viewpoints were represented on council. (In a proportional system, some or all of the seats on council would be allotted to parties based on the percentage of the popular vote they receive in addition to ward representation.)

Others preferred a single-member ward or neighbourhood constituency system, which represents geographical areas only – the same system roundly criticized at the federal and provincial levels. Nearly all survey respondents who backed changing the system advocated a public consultation process to determine the best way to make votes count in Vancouver. None indicated whether another referendum should be held.

Fair Vote Canada is a non-partisan, grassroots organization, founded in 2000, which is building a nationwide campaign for voting system reform in Canada. The Greater Vancouver Chapter was officially launched in June.

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For complete results and more information on the chapter please visit:

<http://www.alternatives.com/fvc>

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Fair Vote Canada's main website is <http://www.fairvotecanada.org>