



Electoral Reform in BC: Take three

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Former Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia

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9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary

Between 2005 and 2018, British Columbia conducted three referendums on electoral reform, at a cost of between \$15 million and \$20 million. The referendums were proposed by different governing parties, were administered quite differently, asked different questions, and even had their outcomes determined by different standards. And yet, each referendum produced a result in favour of the status quo.

In this one-day workshop, join Dr. Keith Archer, former Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia, to examine electoral reform through the lens of British Columbia's three recent referendums on the topic, and use this material to reflect on the future of electoral reform in Canada.

Outline

1. What is an electoral system?
2. Why have an electoral system, and what effect does it have?
3. Criteria for designing electoral systems
4. Electoral system families
 - Plurality/majority
 - Proportional representation
 - Mixed
5. Why change an electoral system? Impacts of electoral systems
6. How do you change an electoral system?
 - The role of public consultation
 - Referendums
 - Citizen assemblies
7. Electoral Reform Referendum in BC 2005
8. Electoral Reform Referendum in BC 2009
9. Electoral Reform Referendum in BC 2018

Questions for discussion:

- Is electoral reform dead? Should it be?
- Can we agree on how to change an electoral system (assuming the answer to the previous question is no)
- Can we simplify the electoral reform options?



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Required Readings*

- Carty, Ken. 2017. "Evaluating How We Vote – Again," in Andrew Potter, Daniel Weinstock and Peter Loewen, eds. *Should We Change How We Vote?: Evaluating Canada's Electoral System*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, pp. 3-13. <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF39A0>
- Archer, Keith. 2017. "Public Consultation on Electoral Reform Through Referendum or Plebiscite: Recent Experience in British Columbia," in Andrew Potter, Daniel Weinstock and Peter Loewen, eds. *Should We Change How We Vote?: Evaluating Canada's Electoral System*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, pp. 155 – 165. <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF39A1>
- Elections BC. 2005. *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 38th Provincial General Election and the 2005 Referendum on Electoral Reform*, available at <https://elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/2005-CEOreportRefOnElectoralReform.pdf>, pp. 35-46.

Additional Resources

- Elections BC. 2009. *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 39th Provincial General Election and Referendum on Electoral Reform*, available at <https://elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/2009-GE-Ref-Report.pdf>, pp. 30-37.
- Reynolds, Andrew, Ben Reilly and Andrew Ellis. 2005. *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*. Stockholm: International IDEA, available at <https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/electoral-system-design-new-international-idea-handbook?lang=en>.

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