Hi,

As a former Member of the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform, I would like to extend my best wishes to the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly. I know how much work all of you are doing and how dedicated you are to your communities and your province.

This January, I had the opportunity to sit in on three of the Ontario Assembly’s public hearings. It was interesting to see how similar the concerns of citizens are across the country. Of course, many of us in BC grew up in Ontario. So, I suppose, our common Canadian concerns shouldn’t really be a surprise.

Being randomly selected to learn about electoral systems, consult with the public, thoughtfully deliberate and then make a recommendation to your fellow citizens can, at times, seem to be a daunting task. But I know, from our experience in British Columbia, that your hard work will be very much appreciated by the people of Ontario.

When we began our work, most of us were only vaguely aware that “Electoral Reform” was even a topic. We were busy with work, families and volunteering in our communities. When we were asked to serve, we said “Yes”. To be honest, I don’t think that very many of us understood the importance and historical relevance of the journey we were embarking on.

Through the BC Citizens’ Assembly process, especially the public consultation process, we learned about the great discrepancy between the theoretically perfect democracy we assumed we had, and the not so perfect system that we actually have.

After determining that fairness, effective local representation and voter choice were critical values to British Columbians, we examined in detail all categories of electoral systems. Generally, MMP and STV seemed to satisfy these key values. We then custom designed an MMP and an STV system for BC. We compared these two custom systems and evaluated their performance with respect to our BC values.

We determined, in a vote by BC Assembly Members, that STV was preferable to MMP (80% to 20%). We then compared STV and FPTP, and 95% of us agreed that we should recommend that the current FPTP system be replaced by BC-STV. We were able to reach this incredible consensus, not because we abandoned our values, but because STV addressed them so much stronger than any other system.

Because there was virtually no publicly funded education campaign, many former Members of the BC Citizens’ Assembly came together to form an “Alumni” group. We gave hundreds of presentations and interviews, throughout the province, in an attempt to help British Columbians understand the issues and to make an informed decision. I have attached a transcript of a presentation I made to Vancouver City Council, as both an example and to help you understand why we were so enthusiastic about STV.
The Presentation to Vancouver City Council includes:

1. **A description of the current FPTP system and its flaws:**
   - Wrong winners.
   - Exaggerated majorities.
   - Inconsistent and unfair MLA / Voter ratios.
   - Wasted votes.
   - Limited voter choice.
   - MLAs seem to represent parties and the government to the voter rather than representing the voters to the legislature.

2. **Questions about what we should expect from a democracy:**
   - Does everyone in BC have the right to representation in Victoria?
   - Do all of us live in a democracy?
   - Is there an electoral system which will result in everyone having a representative in the Legislature?

3. **Description of recommended Single Transferable Vote system.**

4. **Fun things about STV:**
   - Members from same party will be running against each other as well as against candidates from other parties.
     - No safe seats for candidates.
     - Possible to get rid of undesirable candidates while still supporting your favourite party.
     - Participation by all voters in parties’ candidate selection process.
   - Better gender balance.
   - Greater diversity of candidates.
   - Allows different kinds of constituencies (other than just political party within a geographic area).
   - Independents can get elected (gives MLAs more ability to dissent from party and government policy).
   - Ballot can describe a multi-dimensional voter, more than just right or left leaning, and will be counted that way.
   - Honest voting instead of strategic voting.
   - MLAs will compete with each other in local area during term of office, instead of disappearing for 4 years between elections.
   - Multi-member, multi-party local caucus can represent common interests of district.
   - Representation of district and other constituencies by both government and opposition MLAs.
   - Improved accountability. Can vote against either a flawed party or against a poorly performing candidate from party of choice.
   - Possibility of electing majority, minority and coalition governments.
   - Benefits of coalition governments:
     - Greater consent of the people, >50% of the voters.
     - Tendency to have more consensual.
     - Tendency to have more moderate policy.
     - Tend to produce more consistent and durable policies.
     - Reduced right-left policy swings.
More stable government.
Improved investment climate.
Less power in Premier’s office.
Less power in political parties.

- Tendency to shift power to legislature, MLAs and ultimately the voter.
- Prospect of more thoughtful policy decisions.
- Parties will retain strength to provide structure to political system.
- Both province wide and local proportionality.
- Almost all voters in province would get preferred representation in Victoria.
- Prospect of more thoughtful and inclusive policy development and implementation.

5. Summary of Assembly's process and consensus (95%) achieved.

6. Questions from Vancouver City Councillors.

Some of the “Fun (& often the most important) things about STV” that I didn’t have a chance to describe to the Vancouver City Council include:

- **STV doesn’t discriminate like FPTP & MMP against women and others who want to become constituency or government MPPs.**
  - Because Mixed-Member Proportional systems retain the single-member plurality (SMP) constituency districts, they also retain the discrimination that SMP creates. Most government members come from MMP constituency seats. This combination hurts women.
  - In STV’s multi-member districts, the major parties will have the greatest opportunity to provide diversity in each district. They will also be the most likely to form government. This helps women.
  - Under STV, all MPPs are the same type. All STV MPPs represent essentially the same number of voters. All STV MPPs are elected using the same electoral system. All STV MPPs are equal.

- **The STV counting system tries its best to make sure your highest preferences get elected. It doesn’t just look at your ballot, throw it in a pile and then forget about you.**
  - After stacking all the ballots up with the first preferences, the counting system picks up your ballot and ask how you would like to proceed.
  - If your candidate has received twice the votes she needs, the counting system asks if you would like to use your whole vote to get that candidate elected, or only the amount of your vote needed, freeing up a portion of your vote to help elect a subsequent preference. In this way, your vote is not wasted and you don’t have to vote strategically.
  - If your first choice doesn’t stand a chance of winning, the counting system will ask who your next preference is, and your vote will be transferred to that candidate.
  - The counting process continues until all the seats are filled and the most preferred candidates in the district are elected.
  - Because STV electoral districts have multiple-members, even if your ballot gets stuck on a candidate who can’t get elected, it’s reasonable to assume that you will have an MPP available to represent you from a party that reflects your point of view, and that you support.
- The STV counting system is more involved than that of FPTP’s and MMP’s. However, the added care and attention given to your ballot is worth the extra algebra that a computer handles so easily.
  - “Next Preference Votes” are important and will be sought out by most candidates.
    - This means that there will be a tendency to avoid attack ads and confrontational election campaigns which will turn off voters whose second preferences a candidate needs.
    - Extremist candidates, who cannot gain second preferences, will find it more difficult to get elected.
  - With STV’s multi-member districts and preferential voting, every voter has a direct say in the candidate selection process of the political parties.
    - In each district, parties will put forward more candidates than they think they’ll win. This allows all voters to do the final candidate selection for the political parties. Over time, voters, and not just the political party leadership, will help shape the nature of each party and its policies.
    - By helping to select the parties’ candidates, the voter will have more control of political parties’ policies.
    - With STV, a voter truly gets to vote for both the person and the party they support. And the transferring process allows for honest voting. Strategic voting is not needed.
    - Currently, in safe districts for a political party, the real decision about who will be your MPP happens in the political party’s candidate selection process. Your vote on Election Day is often irrelevant. With STV, there are no safe seats for candidates. Elections in every district are meaningful.
  - STV is simple to use.
    - STV is different and it is new to us. But we learn about new things all the time. Microsoft is bringing out a new operating system. We will all learn how to use it. Most of us have figured out how to use cell phones. We don’t have to know exactly how a compressor works to use a fridge. I have no idea what’s under the hood of my car, but I drive it at 100 kph down the highway.
    - People who want to keep our current system or who prefer a system which keeps power in the hands of the political parties (MMP) often characterize STV as too complicated. These are usually cleaver people who are being disingenuous. They are using fear to accomplish political goals.
    - If people in Ireland, Malta and Australia can understand and use STV, people in Ontario certainly can.
  - STV is a much simpler system to understand than MMP.
    - Neither STV nor MMP are too complicated to understand. However, if you think MMP is straight forward, take a look at the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly Submission # 1249. MMP is definitely not simple.
    - If you think FPTP is straight forward, try to explain how a party that doesn’t get the most votes can form a majority government.
o The effectiveness of local representation increases everywhere with STV, including sparsely populated rural districts.
  ▪ Multi-member districts make local proportionality possible. This ensures that several points of view will be represented from each district in the Legislature.
  ▪ Even in large rural districts, adding three districts together makes it possible to add a component of local proportionality.

o STV reduces “False Representation”.
  ▪ On average in FPTP, about 50% of the voters in a district do not vote for the winning candidate. This results in constituency representatives that falsely represent half their voters. It means that only half of the people in any FPTP district are actually getting “local representation”.
  ▪ STV, by providing local proportionality and MPPs who are each elected by the same number of voters, results in much less false representation and a significant increase in the number of voters who are actually represented in the way they would choose.

Our recommendation went to a referendum with a double 60% threshold. Almost a million voters supported BC-STV. It got more votes than have ever been received by a political party in BC. It got 175,246 more votes than the party that won the concurrent provincial election and that then went on to form a majority government.

Our recommendation passed by more than 50% in 77 of 79 districts, indicating both urban and rural support. Unfortunately, it received “only” 57.7% of the overall provincial vote, so the double 60% barrier was not met. Because the result was so close, and the will of the people was so evident, a second referendum has been scheduled by the BC government for May of 2009.

When we recommended STV to British Columbians, who voted strongly in favour of it despite a limited educational campaign, it changed from being a somewhat esoteric system, to being the choice of BC Citizens. If you recommend STV to Ontario, I think it will establish STV as the electoral system Citizens in Canada will select, if given the choice. It could become the Citizens’ Choice. But that, of course, is up to you.

I have no idea which electoral system makes the most sense for Ontario. Only you will have had the education about Ontario’s history, demography, politics and culture(s). The public presentations and submissions in Ontario might be quite different than the ones we enjoyed in British Columbia, or, as Canadians, they might be quite similar.

The in depth discussions between yourselves will give you the wisdom to make the right choice for Ontario. Good luck in your deliberations, and thanks for all of your hard work.

Sincerely,

Craig Henschel
Burnaby, British Columbia   (Formerly of Scarborough, Kingston and Markham, Ontario)
henschel@telus.net
Attachment: Transcript of Presentation to Vancouver City Council, 11 May ’05
Hi, my name is Craig Henschel and I am one of one hundred and sixty members of the British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform. 

My goal this afternoon is to provide Council and the citizens of Vancouver with information about the Recommendation of the Assembly and answer any questions which you may have, so that you might make a more informed decision on May 17th. 

The Citizens’ Assembly, as you may know, was created because our current electoral system, called “First Past the Post” has some serious flaws:

- **The party with the most votes doesn’t always win**, which is a little odd. 
  - This happened in 1996 when the Liberals got more votes than the NDP, but the NDP got more of the seats and was able to form a majority government. This is the problem of the “Wrong Winner”.

- **In the 2001 election, there was another unfair result. This is the problem of the “Exaggerated Majority”**.
  - The Liberals got 58% of the vote but received 97.5% of the seats.
  - The NDP got 24% of the vote and got 2.5% of the seats.
  - 42% of the voters did not vote for the Liberals but the Liberals won 77 seats and the opposition won only two.
  - The Green Party got 197,000 votes and got no representation.
A little bit more on that, in the province it took 12,000 voters to elect a single Liberal MLA. For the NDP, 131,000 individuals were being represented through each NDP MLA.

So, it is that basic issue of fairness.

These are two examples of how the electoral system is not fair. The percentage of seats a party gets is not an accurate reflection of the percentage of votes a party received. A more fair system would ensure that the percentage of seats be roughly equivalent to the percentage of votes. In other words, the election results should be proportional.

- Currently, in almost every electoral district, there are a large number of people who did not vote for the winning candidate. I’m sure that we’ve all voted for a looser. For these 40 to 60% of voters, it would be fair to say that they will not have their point of view represented in the legislature in Victoria. These votes might be considered to be wasted votes.

- The victorious MLA represents the people who voted for him or her, not the people who voted for someone else. The MLA doesn’t show up in Victoria and say, “The people who voted for me think this, and by the way, the people who didn’t vote for me think this”. They don’t do that. And we don’t expect them to do that.

- But this begs the question:
  - Does everyone in the province have the right to have their point of view represented in Victoria or only those 40 to 60% who vote for the winning candidate?
  - Do all of us live in a democracy or only those 40 to 60% of us who vote for that winner?
  - Is there an electoral system which will result in everyone having a representative in the Legislature?

- In our current system, there is very little choice.

  - The choices we have when we go into the voting booth are quite limited. We can put an “X” in front of the name of only one candidate from a single party. As voters, we have no say in who that candidate is. We have to vote for the candidate the party put forward, even if the candidate is not someone who will do a good job.

- In our current system, we think that we have local representation. And it is, and has been, an important feature of our current electoral system. Unfortunately, it seems that our local MLA goes to Victoria and they then tend to tell us what Victoria thinks, instead of telling Victoria, what we think as voters.

The Citizens’ Assembly addresses all of these problems with its recommendation.

You may have received our final report, in which our recommendation is written, to replace our current electoral system with a different system that is used in Ireland, Australia, Tasmania, and Malta.
It is a system called the “Single Transferable Vote” or “STV” for short. In this system, there will still be 79 MLAs, just like today. The difference is that MLAs will come from multi-member districts. What will happen is that:

- From two to seven of our current districts will be added together and each of these larger districts will then have from two to seven MLAs.
- The number of voters per MLA will remain the same. But by having multi-member districts, the electoral system will be able to be proportional.

In other words, the percentage of seats a party gets will closely mirror the percentage of votes the party receives. All proportional systems require multi-member districts. Whatever the system is, they need multi-member districts, and STV has multi-member districts.

This will reduce the possibility of having wrong winners, like in 1996, and will eliminate the exaggerated majorities like in the 2001 election, when 42% of the voters were represented by 2 MLAs.

- The other key feature of the Single Transferable Voting system is that as few votes as possible are wasted. This is done by using a special voting and counting method which is fair and ensures that almost every voter will have a representative in Victoria who they actually voted for.

Instead of marking an “X” in front of one candidate, the voter will be asked to rank candidates in order of their preference.

  - In other words, you put the number “1” next to your first choice, you put the number “2” next to your second choice, and you put the number “3” next to your third choice.
  - You can rank as many or as few candidates as you wish.
  - They can be all from the same party or you can vote for candidates from different parties.

- The counting process looks at your first preference first and tries to get that candidate elected. If this is not possible, your second preference is looked at, and the counting process tries to get that candidate elected. This process continues until all MLAs for the district are elected.

- The actual counting process takes about a half an hour or an hour to explain and so I’m not going to get into the details right now, but for those who are interested in the math, and it’s just a math and a bookkeeping algorithm. It’s quite simple when you look at it, but it takes a little bit of time, just like algebra took a little bit of time, and trigonometry. We all managed that in high school. But, if you are interested in the math, you can find out the details on the web site, the Citizens’ Assembly web site.

Now, aside from making the electoral system fair and improving local representation, and increasing a voter’s choice, there are some fun things about STV. I’m surprised I’m saying this, a year and a half after beginning this process, but there are actually fun things involved in STV.

- Members from the same party will be running against each other, because there will be multi-member districts. So, there may be four candidates from
the same party running against each other, probably to get three seats. And this brings up some interesting possibilities:

- First of all, there will be a greater diversity of candidates. They’re not going to put up four white guys looking like me, because they won’t be able to get a various bunch of people voting for them in that party. They’ll have to put up a diversity of candidates. They’ll have to put up women in there.

They can’t do the same thing that happens in single-member districts right now, where they put up the most likely person to win; who happens to look like a middle aged white guy. They’re going to have to put up more people from diverse backgrounds and more women.

And these candidates will have a real opportunity to win. They won’t be stuck in ridings in which they don’t stand a chance of winning. They’ll be in a situation in which they actually can get elected.

- The ability of the voter to have a say in who from their party will be elected. So, if the party puts up four candidates, and one is a dud, the voter gets to choose which of those three will get elected, because they vote for the dud last. So, if you have an incumbent MLA who is not doing a good job, that incumbent MLA can be dropped off of the list. And this means that there are no safe seats for candidates. There may be safe seats for parties, but not safe seats for candidates.

- There is the possibility of different kinds of constituencies. Right now, constituencies are just geographic. With STV, there can be different types of constituencies; that might relate to the environment, the arts, cultural relations, social or business issues.

- There is the real possibility that independents might get elected. In Ireland almost 8% of their MPs are independents.

- Instead of portraying yourself as a sort of one dimensional, right-wing or left-wing person to the voting system, voters can portray themselves in a multi-dimensional way. For instance, a person might portray himself, or herself, as fiscally conservative first. A person might then say that they are an environmentalist second, socially progressive third, and a health care advocate fourth. And so, that multi-dimensional sketch of who you are will be put on your ballot and then counted. The counting system will take this into account when it looks at your ballot.

- And, one great thing about STV is that the best strategy for a voter, is to vote honestly, to vote your preferences honestly, because strategic voting doesn’t work in STV. There is no strategic voting except to vote for your first preference first, your second preference next and not actually voting for someone who you don’t want to get elected.

- During their term of office, it won’t be possible for your MLA to just take off to Victoria and show up, back in your riding, in four years. Because it is a multi-member district, there is going to be more than one MLA in your district and they’re going to be back in your local area arguing with each other. They are going to be fighting over issues, and the press and the media and the radio shows, they are going to be, maybe, cooperating. But they are going to be in
your neighbourhood, discussing issues, because they will be running their campaigns for the four years in between elections; not just in the 28 days before the election.

- There’s also the possibility that MLAs from different parties, but from the same district, might come together and take a united stand on issues that are important to the local area; for instance, the closing of a hospital.

- A good thing for voters is that, if they have a particular issue that needs to be addressed, there will usually be an MLA from the government and MLAs from opposition parties that they can go to, so they can make their case to both sets of MLAs, and, they will almost always be able to find an MLA who has a sympathetic ear, to address their concerns.

- Accountability improves under STV, because you will be able to support your party of choice, but you will be able to vote against a candidate from that party who has not been doing a good job. So, accountability of individual MLAs will increase. You can also vote against your party of choice, or party that is an incumbent governing party, if they haven’t been doing a good job. Now, there will be two ways to hold people accountable, both the MLA and the government.

- There has been some discussion about majority governments, minority governments and coalition governments. I think it is important to understand that with STV, you can elect, and this has happened in Ireland, you can elect minority governments, you can elect majority governments and you can elect coalition governments.
  - Usually, you will be electing coalition governments, and that’s when two or more parties come together and through dialogue and discussion, either before or after an election, they make an agreement to govern the province and they have a majority of seats in the legislature. So, that coalition will have enough power in the legislature to carry on a program of policy development and governing, in much the same way that majority governments do right now, but with more consent of the people.
  - Coalition governments tend to result in more consensual decision making. This is seen throughout the world wherever there are proportional governments, which tend to have coalition governments. There is more of a consensus decision making process.
  - So, instead of having in BC, we’ve all seen this, have wild swings from the right to the left, back again. Policy is undone, made over. The labour policy is changed. The forestry policy is changed. Environment policy is changed, and that creates, not a stable governing situation, but an unstable governing situation for policy. It creates a province where investors don’t know what to expect.

When coalition governments work, they tend to have more moderate policy, more middle of the road, more consensus based, addressing all the concerns, or most of the concerns of a greater number of people in the province, so the policy swings, when governments change, may be
a little bit in the middle, but they won’t be wild swings from one side to the other.

○ With coalition governments, there should also be, or there will likely be, less power in the Premier’s office and more power in the hands of the MLAs, and therefore, more power in the hands of the voter.
  - Because the Premier will have to reach across party lines for support, it will be less likely that ill-considered ideas that pop into the Premier’s head will actually see the light of day.
  - There will be someone else in the room to add balance to the decision making process. Buying “fast” ferries and selling BC Rail come to mind.
  - STV will tend to reduce the power of the Premier’s office and the political parties in determining what government and party policy will be.
  - This power to influence policy will tend to devolve to the MLAs and to the legislature.
  - However, political parties will still remain strong, continuing to provide a useful structure to our political system and culture.

○ Finally, and this is important I think, STV results in both province wide proportionality and also local proportionality.
  - This is a unique feature of the STV electoral system. It means that from a multi-member electoral district, there will be a variety of viewpoints represented in Victoria. Typically, we would expect there to be both government and opposition MLAs. This would result in all view points of the district being represented.
  - This is very important because for our communities to flourish, the concerns of all residents need to be listened to and incorporated into public policy, not just the desires of those few who vote for the winning party.

The 160 randomly selected members of the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform developed this recommendation over the course of 11 months work. We listened to the public at 50 public hearings, where we heard over 380 submissions / presentations. We read over 1,600 written submissions.

And, at the end of our process, 95% of the Assembly agreed that the Single Transferable Vote system would be a better system than our current one. That’s an incredible, non-partisan, consensus, from such a varied group of British Columbians.

I hope that you will take time to become more informed about our recommendation and vote in the May 17th referendum for the electoral system that you prefer. Information is available online at the Citizens’ Assembly website, www.citizensassembly.bc.ca and the Citizens’ Assembly Alumni website, www.bcstv.ca.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak. Any questions?
Mayor Campbell: Councillor Louie. Tell me you’re not going to explain the background of this.

Councillor Louie: I’m not going to explain. In fact, I need some explaining too. Thank you for coming today, I’ve had a chance to go through quite a bit of the material. There’s a couple of outstanding questions that I have regarding this.

You talked about proportionality, and in your documents, it talks about proportionality as well, but this is not proportional representation. This is single transferable vote, which doesn’t actually guarantee a true proportion of the percentage votes go to each of the parties. Is that correct?

Craig Henschel: No. This is a proportional system. There are three proportional categories of electing people.

- There is a purely proportional system like they have in Norway.
- There is a Mixed Member Proportional system like they have in Germany and in New Zealand, which is a compensatory method, where you have constituency seats and a compensation tier which corrects for the errors of the constituency seats, which are First Past the Post.
- And then there is this method which works by having local proportionality, and those individual areas which are proportional, in and of themselves, are added together and that gives a proportionality province wide. So it is a proportional system.

Councillor Louie: But you’re talking about geographical proportionality, not party proportionality.

Craig Henschel: It works out to be party proportionality as well.

Councillor Louie: So if the Green Party gets 5% of the vote, will they get 5% to the Legislature?

Craig Henschel: Yes.

Councillor Louie: 5% of the overall population vote in British Columbia, they will have 5% of the 79 seats in the legislature, is that part of this?

Craig Henschel: In Ireland, where this system has been used since 1922, looking back to 1949, I believe, parties which gained three and a half percent of the vote, nation wide, gained seats in the legislature roughly equivalent to their proportion of the vote, so even at small percentages. The way that works, is that parties with limited support tend to be concentrated in small areas.

Councillor Louie: No, no. Not what may happen, but does it guarantee that it will happen?

Craig Henschel: This is the future; there are no guarantees at all.
Craig Henschel, 13 of 24

Councillor Louie: I’m asking, if you get 5% of the vote, will you get 5% of the seats, as a guarantee?

Craig Henschel: Absolutely not.

Councillor Louie: OK. So that’s what I’m saying, in terms of proportionality. This is not a true proportional, like you describe the three different versions, and this version doesn’t guarantee true elector proportionality in terms of the parties that are out there, perhaps on a geographical basis, but that is my next question.

How do you decide upon the multi-member ridings, like what’s appropriate to have two, three, four, five and when you get into a seven member riding, a super riding, where you have seven representatives, what’s to say that a specific geographic area of the area that has the most population doesn’t override the six remaining. For instance, if we were to have a super riding of British Columbia, which would have 79 MLAs, the Lower Mainland constitutes approximately half the population, we could potentially take over the entire province, and so my fear is that you lose some of geographical local representation with some of these super ridings.

Craig Henschel: No, it doesn’t actually work like that. It is a good question.

The first question is: How are the districts set up and how are they formed?

- They are formed the same way that our current electoral boundaries are established, through Electoral Boundaries Commission which every two elections, every ten years, looks at the boundaries and re-jigs them in consultation with the public, in a public process, in a non-partisan way. The same system would be used to establish where there would be two member districts, where there would be three member districts, and where the boundaries would be.

As far as your concern about one group of people having an overriding amount of power over other areas:

- It’s important to realize that in STV, every single MLA will be elected by the same number, a very close number of people. So, each MLA will have, because they have to reach a quota, or a threshold of votes in order to get elected, they’ll all be voted in by essentially 20 to 24,000 people. So, those 24,000 people, they drop their votes with that person, they can’t express more voting with other people because their vote is there.

- So, you can’t have one group of people having dominance over other groups, because everyone gets one vote and the votes are counted equally. And every MLA has 20,000 people behind them, unlike now, where an MLA can have, they could have got 70% of the vote in their district or they
could have got 35% of the vote in the district, and widely varying numbers of people actually supporting them.

So, this system is more fair.

**Councillor Louie:** My last question would be, on your second choice, the quota allocates, or dictates, that you get “X” amount in order to get elected. If there are remaining votes, say you need a thousand votes, you get 1,200 votes, 200 votes extra, who's second choice out of that 1,200 gets transferred? Is it the 200 that's left over, or is it the first 1,000, whose second vote gets transferred?

**Craig Henschel:** Good question.

In Ireland, when they were doing this, since 1922, without computers, they just grabbed the 200 votes off the top of pile, and they looked at them and redistributed them, according to their next preference, and that works out in Ireland, and once in every couple of elections, one individual candidate will be incorrectly elected.

We looked at that and said, well, we’ve got the technology now to count the votes by computer, so we can look at all the votes in the pile, and look at all the next preferences, in a kind of a fractional way, and transfer a portion of every everyone’s second preference to their next preferences. So that means, in Ireland, it was basically fair, but not reproducible all the time in every single election.

Our system is a little bit more complicated and we’ve been criticized for adding complexity to it, but it makes it completely fair to all voters and perfectly reproducible.

**Councillor Louie:** Thank you.

**Mayor Campbell:** Councillor Roberts.

**Councillor Roberts:** Well Councillor Louie asked the start, I think, of a question. I want to go back to it. It seems to me that in Vancouver we would have a multi-member riding of seven people, right, probably, or two, how would that work?

**Craig Henschel:** That would be up to the Electoral Boundaries Commission and the people of Vancouver. It could be five, dividing Vancouver into five and five, or seven, if you hooked up with Burnaby, and did seven and seven.

**Councillor Roberts:** OK, so if we have, let's say five or two sections, we’d have very similar to all; it seems to me, very similar to all the problems we’ve already experienced with our existing At-Large system. One, a huge geographic area with enormous numbers of people, and that would mean that you would have to have tremendous amounts of money. How would you get your name known and all the problems that exist with the At-Large system? Voters have a very long list of people to choose from, very difficult to become educated about the entire list of who they prefer and, so, I don’t
see you solving our problems of the at-large system. I just don’t see where STV works.

Craig Henschel: It’s different in the way votes are counted. In the way that the votes are counted, because votes are transferred, and you only get one vote, in the At-Large system people are getting ten votes, in this system, you get one vote, and that creates an entirely different dynamic.

Parties aren’t going to put up a full slate of candidates. If the party thinks it will get three members elected, they’ll probably put up one more. This is the way it works in other STV jurisdictions. They put up one more, just on the off chance that something happens in the election, they do really well, they’ll want to have a candidate to be able to suck up those votes and get that extra person elected. So, there won’t be a situation where you have huge ballots like you have in the City of Vancouver, unless a tonne of independent candidates run, which happens.

The way the ballot is designed, is under each party name, there will be a list of candidates underneath them. So, it is quite clear. And under “Independent”, there might be those people like those who are running for Vancouver City Council.

Councillor Roberts: But you see the problem with that, of having such a large multi-member riding and the difficulty for the voter, and connected to that, is that it then puts people into a situation of needing a lot of money in order to run, because you are going to have to advertise and get your name known.

Craig Henschel: Funding for campaigns is usually supplied in part by the party. Parties will now be running fewer candidates. They won’t be, for instance, in a seven member district, a Green Party will not run seven candidates. They may run two, or maybe three. The Liberals won’t even run seven. They’ll run fewer candidates. So, there should be less expense that way for these candidates.

Additionally, you don’t run and try to get everyone in your district to elect you. You run intelligently and try to get the people who will vote for you to elect you. So, if you’ve got a constituency which does not run in broad geographic lines, but filters through a portion of society, that if you’re an environmentalist, then you focus your campaigning on that group of people. So, the expenses, you don’t have to spend money getting everyone in the district to elect you. You only need 20,000 people.

Councillor Roberts: Yes, I see that. I mean obviously, I’m quite excited about having a more fair system, and I don’t think First Past the Post is something that we want to keep, but I also don’t want to end up with a system that replicates the problems we have with an At-Large system, that unfortunately, we are now stuck with.

Craig Henschel: It is a very different system.
In the last, I think the last Irish election, we ran some numbers to see what the cost of, were for the different campaigns. The cost per candidate there, they spent less money campaigning then we did in our current First Past the Post system.

Councillor Roberts: Did you look, so you did explore, besides proportionality and geographic representation, you explored those issues about campaign financing and all. And so that was part of your conclusion that this is the best way to go.

Craig Henschel: Absolutely. We spent eleven months looking at everything we possibly could and reading all of the submissions that came in. We did look at everything. It’s difficult to express that in 10 or 15 minutes.

Councillor Roberts: Right. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Craig Henschel: Thank you.

Mayor Campbell: We have 5 more minutes before we have to adjourn for the Banner Program. Councillor Bass.

Councillor Bass: Thank you Mr. Mayor Campbell. Please blow the whistle on me, because I have a lot of questions.

Mayor Campbell: You have a lot of questions?

Councillor Bass: Yes. Is it true that this is really a very rare opportunity in the history of our species? That this has not happened very often before?

Craig Henschel: We have no knowledge that this has happened anywhere on the planet before; where people, regular citizens, are actually coming to an understanding, and deciding how they will elect their politicians.

Councillor Bass: And is it true that changing, radically changing an electoral system has not been put before a population in a referendum very often?

Craig Henschel: Radically changing, or even moderately changing. Coming from the voters, that hasn’t happened. Referendums often happen in changing electoral systems in other jurisdictions.

Councillor Bass: Is it true that you might consider the Citizens’ Assembly a jury of our piers that has come in with a verdict on an electoral system?

Craig Henschel: We, the Assembly, sees itself as providing a service to the voters, of doing the research and the study and the in depth discussion to make a recommendation to the voter, that this is the best system that we could find. Not perfect, but better than the current system.

Councillor Bass: One of the criticisms has been that you didn’t give a bunch of choices. Why did you come down to one method? Why STV?

Craig Henschel: Two reasons for that:
• One is our mandate was to recommend an alternative, if we thought an alternative was warranted. That’s the first.

• The second is that it took us eleven months to come to a strong understanding of what the electoral systems were, and I mean, we look at the education campaign in the current referendum, which is non-existent government funding, how on earth would you gain, or educate people in the province enough to be able to make a considered choice?

Councillor Bass: Would it be fair to say that you probably know a lot more about electoral systems than most politicians and certainly more than most backroom political types?

Craig Henschel: I would say that I know more about other systems than the current system that they know, yes, probably, as well as all the rest of the other Assembly members.

Councillor Bass: It seems to me that one of the points that you’re making is that we have basically a non-representative assembly, in our assembly in Victoria, and wherever, with the First Past the Post system, the current system, we have basically a non-representative system, and that is one of the reasons that you went in the direction of a proportional system. Is that correct?

Craig Henschel: Yes.

Councillor Bass: Now, would you tell us why the Assembly went in the direction of the Single Transferable Vote rather than the more traditional kind of proportional representation, the two types you mentioned before?

Craig Henschel: Yes, that is a good question. Through our public hearings and our public consultation process, it was clearly established to us that people in the province wanted to have local representation. Local representation was seen to be an important feature of our current system and they wanted to keep that, especially in northern areas, rural areas, it was critical for them. So, a pure system, like in Norway or the Netherlands, was ruled out, leaving two systems; a Mixed Member Proportional, and the STV.

• Mixed Member Proportional still has half of MLAs being elected under First Past the Post, with all the same issues about the MLAs not actually representing 60 to 40% of their constituents. So, MMP tries to correct that problem with another tier of MLAs who are kind of floating out there without any constituents.

• STV does it all very concisely, and cleverly and directly, by having multi-member districts.

Councillor Bass: So, in the Norway system, it’s totally At-Large, and it’s proportional to how each of the parties voted. Is that correct?

Craig Henschel: Yes.
Councillor Bass: In the Mixed Member, you have First Past the Post for half, and then who chooses the other half? Do the voters choose them or the parties choose them?

Craig Henschel: That’s a good question. What we did in the Assembly process, is, we designed, we said, OK, here is the current reigning champion, the First Past the Post system is the reigning champion. We wanted to find the best alternative so we set MMP and STV against each other, and we designed for British Columbia very specific systems which we thought British Columbians could support for both of those alternatives, and then compared them both. STV won by 80% to 20%. But, what was the –

Councillor Bass: The question was do the parties pick?

Craig Henschel: Yes, yes. In our deliberations, there are closed lists and there are open lists to select those second tier corrective MLAs. From all of our discussions around the province, for most people, closed lists, where the parties decide on who would be on that list, that idea was anathema to the people in the province and to members of the Assembly, for most members of the Assembly. So we would look at MMP with an open list, but that creates its own problems, because parties cannot zipper their lists, with man, woman, man, woman, to bring in more women into the –

Councillor Bass: So in the STV system, everyone who gets in the legislature has been elected. Right?

Craig Henschel: Yes.

Councillor Bass: And the voting system is such that if my first vote doesn’t elect somebody, it is likely that my second, third, fourth or fifth vote will place somebody in Victoria.

Craig Henschel: Yes. Absolutely.

Mayor Campbell: And on that note, we will adjourn to the foyer.

Craig Henschel: Thank you very much.

(Resumption after Banner Ceremony)

Councillor Sullivan: First of all, I want to thank you and, I guess, the 160 other members, randomly chosen citizens who did the hard work for the rest of us in really delving into the issues of electoral systems.

I have observed the process for a year, that you were in it, and sort of, I see the questions coming to you and these are questions that you all dealt with in the first month or two, and you know these are things that you struggled with and you came to a conclusion on, over the year and so, what I think is the most remarkable about this is the process, the citizens’ assembly
deliberative process. I know that, I think Professor James Fishkin of the Austin Texas University was the person who developed that whole model and so I guess the one area, the one critique that I’ve heard is based on the writings of Schumpeter, Joseph Schumpeter, the long dead economist, or I guess as they say around here, accountants with bad personalities, and basically he said that the real role of an electoral system is, well democracy itself is a method, or it is an institutional arrangement to choose a leader, and I guess that is the common critique you hear.

You know, you will get coalition governments although I thought you brought up a very good point, that majority governments can actually be less stable because they feature flipping from agenda to agenda, you get a strong right and then a strong left, and so you can actually make it more difficult to make investment decisions.

Now, in Ireland, is that the case, that they have a more stable flow of policy. Are you aware of that?

Craig Henschel: The policy, I’m not certain of. In New Zealand, that has been the case, since they adopted a proportional system. Their policy is more consensus-based and more middle of the road.

As far as stability of government goes, since 1949, in Ireland, they have had fewer minority governments than we have had in Canada.

And, I guess another interesting piece of information is the United Nations Human Development Index. Canada used to be on the top of that list a few years ago, and now we’re number four, but of the top ten countries on the Human Development Index of the United Nations, seven of them have proportional governments, which means that they are they are to be having a continuous run of coalition governments. Two of them are First Past the Post, the United States and Canada, and one is Japan, with a kind of First Past the Post quirky kind of system. But they’ve got seven out of the ten are proportional with coalition style governments and “Triple A” or “Double A” credit ratings, so, we looked at that.

Councillor Sullivan: One of the problems of the district system is that you can get the variations by regions, so in Canada, you know it is very regionalized, one part of the country seems to vote this way, although when you actually pick apart the votes, you find that many many people who voted another way but they just never got any people elected. So, is this system likely to reduce the regional differences or is it the same?

Craig Henschel: It would. As any proportional system, it would tend to reduce the regionalism. In our federal parliament, the First Past the Post system has created extremely regional parties. The Conservative Party, the Liberals in Ontario, the Block Quebecois, and the whole country is regionalize and breaking apart,
because, as a result, as a direct result I think, of the First Past the Post electoral system.

If there was a proportional system you would have Liberals and NDP being elected in Alberta. You would have more Conservatives in Ontario. You would have more Liberals and Conservatives being elected in Quebec, and that regionalism and the Quebec separation phenomenon, which is ongoing, would not exist. You wouldn’t have the Block forming the Official Opposition in the Parliament.

So, First Past the Post creates regionalism.

Proportional systems, they reflect the communities, how the communities are, and communities are varied in and amongst themselves, and STV does that.

Councillor Sullivan: Well, thank you for all the hard work you guys did trying to get through all the technical details. I know that many people get stuck on the technical details and I believe that that really shouldn’t be what we look at, we look at the broad directives and I think you have done a wonderful job and I hope we can use this citizens’ assembly system for more decisions. Thank you.

Craig Henschel: Thank you.

Mayor Campbell: Councillor Woodsworth.

Councillor Woodsworth: Well, I'd like to thank you and other 159 people who worked so on presenting us with another option than the one we have which we know does not represent a fair proportion of the votes.

My concern is, that from what I’ve heard is that really does not alter the fact that at present we have 21% of elected officials being women and many of us know that this is another part of the unfairness of the existing system in Canada, whether it is at the federal or the provincial or even at the municipal level, and I’m wondering how you can argue that in fact this new proposal is more fair to women, and I long to hear of examples like you said the upper chamber in Australia has a fairer proportion representation of women.

Craig Henschel: We looked at this in great detail. There were maybe thirty or forty of us who were strongly trying to find a way to increase diversity in the legislature but also the numbers of women being elected to the legislature, and we researched this as much as we possibly could. We asked for a special speaker to come in, who is an expert in the problem in women getting elected into office, a professor from Alberta. And there isn’t anything in our electoral systems which can force the issue to bring more women into the legislature, but there are barriers which exist.

Councillor Woodsworth: Well, that’s not quite true. In India and some other countries, there is affirmative action, so one third of local members must be women, and that seems to work.
Craig Henschel: Yes, you can have quotas in an electoral system, but that was not in our mandate to be able to define a quota. That would be outside of our mandate.

But within the issue of translating votes into seats, where we were only allowed to concentrate our effort, there was nothing that we could do, except remove one of the biggest barriers to women and to other cultural groups from becoming represented in the legislature, and that is the First Past the Post system.

- In First Past the Post, a party will tend to put up the most likely winner, and for some reason, they think that's going to be a white male, and so that is who the candidates selected by the party become, in First Past the Post.

- In a multi-member district, parties will have the opportunity to say, well, if we put up four white men, then people will say, “Well, that kind of party is not representative of us.” So, the party is going to say, let's put up at least a woman or two in there. Progressive parties will maybe want to try to balance their candidate selection, the candidates that they put up for election.

By changing from single-member districts, to multi-member districts, that barrier is removed. And that is the only thing that we could find within our mandate to do anything about.

So much of the issue happens around the party candidate selection process and in cultural values.

In Australia, in the upper house, there are elections where, I think the last one, 41% of the MPs, or the senators I think, were women. In the Irish system, 38% for the European Union Representatives, elected through STV were women. So, STV allows more women to be elected. It's not a barrier.

Councillor Woodsworth: And, don't you think that this barrier with the fairly large ridings, preclude women running and preclude that kind of more accountability you have in the smaller riding?

Craig Henschel: We talked about that. We don’t really see that as an issue, in that you run to get support from the 20,000 people who are going to vote for you. You don’t, and there isn’t a necessity to canvas everyone else in your district. You represent the people who you are representing, who vote for you. And so, that issue is not something that we saw, with STV, to be an important one.

Councillor Woodsworth: And so, where’s the accountability, if you’re just running to target that 20,000?

Craig Henschel: The accountability comes in, I guess, two forms.

- First of all, there is the accountability during your term of office, when you are actually representing those 20,000 people, and speaking for them.
In our current system, 40 to 60% of the voters aren’t being represented at all by their MLA, and so, I mean, they don’t even get the chance for accountability, because their voice is not even heard.

If you are being supported by 20,000 people and you start not saying the things that they expect you to say, then they are going to turf you out of office, and quite directly.

Councillor Woodsworth: And finally, it seems to me that the way it’s been framed, that 60% in 60% of the ridings mean that this exercise is doomed to failure and yet it feels to me like it’s just starting to open the door and get the discussion going.

Craig Henschel: I think it’s a legitimate barrier, but it is a very high threshold for support. I think I could speak for everyone on the Assembly to say that, at least myself, and probably most people on the Assembly, how extremely disappointed in the lack of support for educating the public about the different electoral systems.

When this sort of a process is done in other countries, there is a huge campaign of making sure that the voters have a clear understanding of the choices before them. And, there hasn’t been anywhere near enough money or resources put towards this to educate the public and that’s shameful, to tell you the truth.

Councillor Woodsworth: Thank you.

Mayor Campbell: Councillor Bass.

Councillor Bass: Thank you Mr. Mayor Campbell. In relation, you said something that proportional systems require multi-member wards.

Craig Henschel: Yes.

Councillor Bass: I mean ridings. Would you, now that is also true for the other systems?

Craig Henschel: Yes.

Councillor Bass: OK. In Ireland, you said before, you can’t guarantee that the proportion of people in the legislature will resemble the proportion who voted in terms of parties, but in Ireland, that has been true, hasn’t it, over the years?

Craig Henschel: In every jurisdiction where they use STV, the percentage of MLAs or MPs, or whoever is being elected, does reflect, quite closely, the percentage of votes for those people, yes.

Councillor Bass: And, my understanding is that where STV has come in, in terms of representation of women, that there has been an increase in the number of women representatives. Is that true?

Craig Henschel: Yes, that’s true. In existing jurisdictions, like Ireland and Malta, there haven’t been a change, but those jurisdictions are, they’ve had STV for a long time and they haven’t. It’s a cultural thing that seems to be precluding women from being involved.
Councillor Bass: OK. In terms of the seven member district, to get elected, you would need 12%, lets say 1 over 7 + 1, you’d need 12% of the vote, 12 to 13%.

Craig Henschel: Yes.

Councillor Bass: And so, that actually would allow people who could muster 12 to 13% to get elected, and then once they had gotten elected, the rest of the votes would go to somebody else. Is that correct?

Craig Henschel: Yes. And, the 12.5 % is the threshold for getting elected, but they would only need, and typically they would only maybe need 8,000, I'm sorry, 8% of the vote for first preferences and they would, if it’s a party which can get second preferences from other candidates who get knocked off, then those second preferences can be added on until the 12.5% threshold.

Councillor Bass: But at the end, when it’s all said and done, among all the people voting they end up with 12%?

Craig Henschel: Yes.

Councillor Bass: I was pleasantly surprised to go to, this is not exactly a web site, but it’s called “bcdemochoice.org”, the other day, and you have a chance to vote in this election as if you were voting for STV, so it’s, you don’t put www, you put “bcdemochoice.org” and it will take wherever you live in BC and present it to you as if it was STV. It was done by an engineer at UBC as I understand it. It’s quite an interesting exercise because; I had to think about what’s the order in which I want to rank these candidates. So I found it a very interesting exercise. Could you comment a little bit about the ranking process when you think about ranking, as opposed to just putting one “X”.

Craig Henschel: Yes, I’d love to talk about that.

Yesterday I gave a presentation to a high school group in North Vancouver, 60 students, and with virtually no education about what we were doing at all, their teacher gave a brief introduction to the Citizens’ Assembly and what was happening, and I launched directly into a voting process, to vote, and here’s the ballot, to vote for pizzas. We had a pizza vote. And we had a first-past –

Councillor Bass: We’ve done that here.

Craig Henschel: Ok. So, it worked with this class. Completely. Easily. They voted in both ways. The votes were counted up, and there wasn’t any confusion. They just ranked their choices, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. At the First Past the Post, less than half of them were satisfied with the choice, and the STV method, all of them were satisfied with the pizzas that were selected.

So, to vote, it is incredibly simple.
We know when we look at something, that that is our favourite choice, and that's our next and that's last, and I'm not even going to vote for them. So, it's not complicated.

Councillor Bass: OK. So, politics over pizza. OK. Thank you Mr. Mayor Campbell.

Mayor Campbell: Councillor Green.

Councillor Green: Very quickly, just a question. You know if the system would allow for more, I think you said, less radical policies by governments, it would be more of a balanced system. What would have happened when Tommy Douglas brought up Medicare, which was a very radical concept at its time, if we had this type of governance structure?

Craig Henschel: I think that, as I understand it, I was just a kid at the time, but as I understand it, Pearson was the Prime Minister at the time in a minority government, in a minority government in Ottawa, and through that minority situation, people had to come together and cut deals and talk about things, talk about the issues, and those important programs, and a lot of our social program infrastructure in our country was established at that time through dialogue between parties.

People brought forward good ideas and other people, they had to listen. In coalition / minority kind of situations that kind of thing has to happen.

So, we don't have the situation, won't have the situation now, where we've got a party that thinks it knows all the answers and is just going to go this way. They have to have a discussion.

I've always thought that democracy is strongly about the discussion we have and the results that come out of it. And you know here, there is deliberation, and there is a listening to the public and what they think, and by having that discussion you come to better solutions. And STV can accommodate that, and tends to be driven through that process.

Mayor Campbell: Thank you very much for coming today. It's much appreciated.

Craig Henschel: Thank you.