September 25, 2018 |

Op-Eds

Labour Cares about Fairness, and That’s Why I Support Pro Rep

I think we can all agree that government matters. And which political party controls the government affects the lives of working people dramatically.

Just look back at the 16 years of the BC Liberal government – stripping of collective agreements, erosion of employment standards and labour code protections, stagnant wages and the rise of precarious work, underfunded schools and oversized classrooms, hallway medicine and privatized seniors care, weakened health and safety rules…. the list could go on and on.

The actions and choices of the BC Liberal government hurt working people.

But what also hurts is the fact that the BC Liberals could govern unchecked for 16 years, despite tens of thousands of British Columbians never voting for them.

That is because our current voting system – First Past the Post – allows a minority of voters to give 100% of the power to one political party. It just isn’t fair.

So while government matters, how we elect our government also matters.

This fall we have a chance to change how we vote. And it’s an opportunity we can’t waste.

British Columbians are being asked if they want to move to a Proportional Representation (Pro Rep) model of electing our representatives.

Pro Rep is pretty simple at its core. The basic idea is that every vote counts--so if a political party gets 40% of the vote, they get 40% of the seats. Essentially, you get what you vote for!

Most democracies around the world use a Pro Rep model of electing representatives. Because the outcome reflects the actual will of the voters, political parties must be more accountable and cooperative on the issues that matter to people. No more governing for a powerful minority.
The referendum ballot you receive in late October will ask you if you want to replace the status quo model of electing representatives with proportional representation. Then it offers three Pro Rep models for consideration: Dual Member, Mixed Member, Rural-Urban.

I encourage you to learn about and explore the three models--they are each slightly different in how they account for local representation and regional breakdown.

What I want to stress – the outcome is what matters. No matter what Pro Rep system you prefer, the end result is a proportional breakdown based on how people cast their ballot.

All three made-in-BC Pro Rep models will strengthen our democracy, make political parties more accountable, and put people back in the driver’s seat when it comes to electing our government.

Working people, like you and me, have a lot at stake when it comes to electing our government. Our current voting system works against us, no matter how hard we organize. When votes don't count, people are discouraged. It’s no wonder voter turnout is so low--people don't believe that their vote counts. And under the First Past the Post model, that is often true.

By moving to a Pro Rep system, we are strengthening our voices-- as engaged individuals and as a collective movement. The issues we care about can no longer be pushed aside. Our rights cannot be undermined and eroded without consequence.

This is our chance to make a significant change to how we do politics in this province. A change for the better.

You should receive your ballot package in the mail by late October. Ask questions, get the information you need, and mail in your ballot by November 30. You can learn more about proportional representation voting systems and join the campaign for change at www.VotePRBC.ca.