

GUIDE TO RESPONDING TO THE GOVERNMENT'S SURVEY ON ELECTORAL REFORM

From Fair Vote Canada

“Please read this before you take the government survey,” says Fair Vote Canada’s Terry Dance Bennink. Why? Because on some important questions the government’s survey has missed the mark. Fair Vote’s full report can be found at <http://www.fairvote.ca/bc-government-consultation-survey-guide/> Below is a summary. Print this of and keep it beside your computer as you respond to the survey.

Question 5: *“Please select up to 5 values from the list below that are most important to you.”*

One of the choices is “a voting system that is easy to understand.” Be careful about picking “simplicity” as one of your five top values. All proportional representation (PR) systems are simple for voters to use, so by choosing “easy to use” you risk de-valuing more important choices.

Question 7c: *“It should always be clear which party is accountable for decisions made by the government, EVEN IF this means that decisions are made by only one party.”* This question is based on the faulty assumption that if more than one party forms the government, it is less clear who is accountable for decisions. This is false. Fair Vote **recommends** you “**strongly disagree**” with this statement.

Question 8: *“Which would you prefer?”* (asking about the type of question in the referendum)

The B.C. government is considering a two-part question, which is Fair Vote’s first choice, but unfortunately there is no option in the survey to choose a two-part question! Fair Vote **recommends** you select **option 2: “The referendum should offer voters the choice between the current First Past the Post voting system and MORE THAN ONE proportional system.”** Then enlarge on this in Question 9.

Question 9: *“Are there any other comments you would like to make about voting systems or the upcoming referendum? (Open-ended question.)* Please take the opportunity here to suggest a 2-part question, e.g., “I believe the referendum question should consist of 2 parts:

“Part 1. Do you want to adopt a proportional voting system in which the percentage of the votes equals the percentage of the seats and almost every vote counts? (Should you answer “No” to this question in the referendum you can still respond to Part 2.)

“Part 2. Please rank the following options in your order of preference: PR System A, PR System B, etc.”

Question 18b: *“A ballot should give voters lots of choices, EVEN IF it’s less clear how votes are turned into seats.”* This question is based on the faulty assumption that more choices for voters = an outcome that voters can’t understand. This is false. Fair Vote **recommends** you “**agree**” or “**strongly agree**” with this statement.

Question 18c: *“An election ballot should be easy to understand, EVEN IF it means voters have fewer options to express their preferences.”* This question is based on the faulty assumption that more options = an incomprehensible ballot. B.C. voters are just as intelligent and able to understand a ballot as voters in 80% of OECD countries where PR is used. Fair Vote **recommends** you “**disagree**” or “**strongly disagree**” with this statement.

Question 19: “Please indicate which you prefer” (one MLA per riding, more than one MLA in each riding, or some MLAs representing ridings and others representing regions). This question forces respondents to choose ONE PR system over others, but most PR supporters are happy with any PR system, or they might like a hybrid or customized system that includes features of several systems—it is not a single preference choice.

Fair Vote recommends you not pick option 1 (which describes First Past the Post). The only way to deal with this question is to check “**Prefer not to answer**,” then **use the open-ended question box in Question 24 to ask for flexibility and choice.**

Question 20: “If the government offers voters a choice of more than one proportional representation system, which do you prefer?” (asking about referendum question). Fair Vote strongly recommends you choose the **second option: “Voters should rank order their support for all the proposed systems.”**

Question 21: “Alongside the option of keeping the First Past the Post voting system, which system or systems of Proportional Representation would you like to see on the ballot?” There are three substantial problems with the list provided: 1) it omits some good options; 2) Mixed Member Majoritarian is not a truly proportional system and should not be included as such; 3) Mixed Member PR with closed provincial lists should be off the table.

Fair Vote **recommends** you check the “**Other**” box in the systems list to let the government know there are some customized or hybrid options worth considering.

Please also **ask the government that MMP systems with province-wide and closed lists be off the table.**

Question 24: “Are there any other comments that you’d like to make about voting systems or the upcoming referendum” (open ended question). Fair Vote **recommends** you use the box to tell the government a) you prefer a **two-part question** asking about support for proportional representation, followed by a ranked ballot of PR systems; b) there are excellent **hybrid or customized PR systems** for BC that should be included as options.

The **deadline for responding** to the government’s survey is **Feb. 28th 2018.**

Fair Vote Canada’s full guide to the survey is at: <http://www.fairvote.ca/bc-government-consultation-survey-guide/>

Now you’re ready to respond to the government survey, which can be found by searching: “B.C. Government, How We Vote” or <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/howwewote/>