

## Electoral Reform - Gary Young

There is much more than changing a manner of counting votes and how the votes are distributed. If we want real change in our “democratic” system we must look at all the issues involved.

1. Institute Electronic voting. This process is faster, simpler, and less expensive than the current process. This also would allow for “referendums” to be decided on by voters, especially with contentious proposals that could involve taxation, developments, urban expenditures, and “political” changes. With electronic voting there is no arbitrary review of a ballot to decide if the intent is properly noted. With this process we can have direct voter input without waiting for an election. Any holidaying or snowbird voters can use an electronic system. This process however would need a 3 person panel, not picked by government, not involved with any government agency to ensure that the referendum “questions” or ballot items are not verbally twisted or weighted like many polls are. The Ombudsperson can review the wording of the referendum question to ensure it is straight forward and relative to the subject. Ombudsperson also to pick the remaining two panel members from the general populace. Panel members would be citizens not involved in any “interest” that has a lobby group.
2. Every elected MLA/MP MUST sign a declaration of truth and honesty as a part of the Induction Ceremony. This is to be treated the same as a witness in a Court proceeding. For any MLA that does not respond truthfully when questioned about their jobs and decisions then adopt the same penalty for perjury. This may help in avoiding what we currently get in responses that do not reflect truth, facts, or openness. Penalties need to be clearly noted and enforced. The penalties must be severe as to helping to ensure honest, democratic responses. The Speaker seems unwilling or unable to keep the Legislature open and honest.
3. Every ballot must have at the end of candidate list an additional place to mark the ballot in the area stating “No Preferences listed” or “None of the above”. This move would bring more people to the ballot box to express their concern directly and to be counted. With often less than 50% of eligible voters not voting, we can revive some interest in the ballot. Parties do not want this to happen as current processes they use encourage people not to vote. All results would be published quickly without comment or scrutiny by the Parties to avoid interference, vetting, or political concerns for the Party.

4. Recall was designed to fail, as noted by a former Premier, and it sounds good but does not work. Recall needs some validity as we often have “election promises” ignored or rejected after the election. A workable, fast and efficient recall would establish a real form of democracy.
5. At no time can any person lead the Government or a Ministry without first being elected. Holding a by-election for a non-elected person to get in office is an insult to a democratic process. This has been done before and is NOT representative. Any defeated candidate must wait for a new election, not a forced by-election to achieve the Party purpose. All elected persons who decide to “quit” their party are now unelected and CANNOT stay on automatically as an Independent as they are NOT Independents. To be a legal and valid Independent candidate, each must go through the vetting process before being elected as such.
6. All candidates MUST live (principal residence) in the Constituency in which they are running in an election. This residence must have been in use by the principle as their primary residence for at least one calendar year before the election. No part-time residency, rental home, recreational or holiday residence counts. Ombudsperson to rule on this and not any Provincial Elections organization.
7. Limits to political donations must be amended. Maximums for individuals and no donations from private corporations or unions or Lobby groups.
8. Reduce and possible eliminate the number and times that Lobbyists get private meetings with Ministers or high placed bureaucratic employees. No Bureaucrats to meet with Lobbyists. No former member of government or former elected individual can be a paid or volunteer member of any lobby group until eight years after leaving their position. This allows for two terms to be concluded and properly separates these two opposing interests.
9. All candidates must have the same opportunities and rules to abide by. Currently any Independent Candidates have rules stacked against them to create an uneven playing field. For the first thirty years of British Columbia’s Government, all elected MLAs were Independent and currently Independents are unable to simply form a Constituency Association as any Party candidate can do.

10. Any MLA involved in any illegal activity, including expense fraud, should lose their position and their wages/benefits immediately. If the accusations are not proven, the MLA returns to duty and receive lost wages. This would be noted in the acceptance of position and responsibility that each successful candidate must sign and adhere to as per Induction Ceremony and Oath. See item 2. The Speaker would initiate and enforce this removal. If the Speaker will not do this then they as well are suspended without pay or simply let go. The person removed will not be allowed to run as a candidate Provincially/Federally in the next election, including any by-election. Crimes by an elected person cannot be tolerated and there must be consequences. There is no appeal process other than confirming the expense issue. The taxpayer does not pay for any legal representations for affected MLA.
11. As is now in BC and voted in by MLAs, remove the allowance for MLAs who lose their job to get paid for months after, including expenses and training allowances. You lose your job; you don't continue to get paid.
12. All expenses from elected persons to be reviewed for legality as a "bona fide" allowable expense. NO alcohol or tobacco products are allowable expenses inclusive of elected persons "hosting" visitors or other parties. ANY illegal claim or expense would suspend the MLA until cleared up.
13. When there is a monitoring or oversight Committee, ie BC Utilities commission, the mission of such bodies cannot be brushed aside by any serving govt. All such public protective organizations must be able to continue with their mission unfettered by ANY government agency or Ministry.
14. As in BC, we must stop syphoning of ICBC, which is a government imposed monopoly, and BC Hydro for general revenues. All "profits" are overcharges to citizens and taxpayers of hundreds of millions of AFTER TAX dollars.
15. The Speaker will present all expenditures every month for public scrutiny. This is important the Speaker is appointed, not elected, therefore as speaker has an obligation to the voters.
16. No elected MLA or MP can decide to leave their Party and sit as an Independent. They were not running as an Indie, did not pay any obligatory fees as an Indie candidate, and did not campaign as an Indie. Similarly any MLA or MP cannot simply change Party affiliation for the same reasons.

17. Have a truly independent committee review the alternative methods of vote counting, ie "Preferential" voting and present the facts and possible results to the Public. These findings would be available to anyone via internet options. While there are no "lost or wasted" votes, the results must reflect the desires of the voting public.

Submitted by Gary Young,  
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