

NEWS RELEASE

PR voting system would lead to bigger, more expensive provincial governments in B.C.

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Changing British Columbia’s voting system to a form of “proportional representation” would likely lead to bigger costlier provincial governments, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

Next week, voters will receive mail-in ballots for this fall’s referendum on electoral reform—the third in 15 years—to decide whether or not B.C. should switch from its current “first-past-the-post” voting system to a proportional representation (PR) system.

“Coalition governments—a staple of PR systems—regularly have to secure smaller, niche parties by funding their pet policy projects, which means more expensive government paid for by taxpayers,” said Lydia Miljan, Fraser Institute senior fellow, associate professor of political science at the University of Windsor and co-author of *Electoral Rules and Fiscal Policy Outcomes in British Columbia*.

Based on election data from 26 countries between 2004 and 2015 (the most recent year of comparable data), the study finds the average government spending of countries with PR electoral systems is 30.3 per cent of GDP compared to 23.7 per cent in countries with plurality or majoritarian election rules (including first-past-the-post).

Put another way, governments elected under PR are nearly 30 per cent bigger than governments elected under first-past-the-post.

“There’s a heavy fiscal price to pay if British Columbia adopts proportional representation, and that’s a bigger more expensive government in Victoria,” Miljan said.

“Before British Columbians decide how they want to elect members to the legislature, they should be aware of the consequences of any new voting system.”

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