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Referendum Blues:
The Third Attempt at Electoral Reform in British Columbia
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Abstract

On December 7, 2019 the British Columbia government closed voting for the third referendum on electoral reform. Of the 42 percent of eligible voters who cast a ballot, 61.3 percent endorsed the existing electoral system. Not only did this referendum have the lowest support for electoral reform, but also the lowest voter participation of the three campaigns. In this paper I explore how the design and implementation of the referendum contributed to the results. Specifically, I argue that the design of the referendum question solidified the status quo bias. As a contrast, the paper compares the B.C. experience with the successful electoral reform that was conducted in New Zealand in the 1980s.

Keywords: referendum, status quo bias, electoral reform

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Referendum Blues: The Third Attempt at Electoral Reform in British Columbia

Over the past two decades, electoral reform has been the focus of six failed referenda in three provinces. Additionally, the federal government as well as Quebec and New Brunswick have had commissions and all-party committee hearings on the issue. Despite these initiatives, there has not been any meaningful change to any electoral system in the country to date. Given the multiple attempts and multiple failures of adopting a new electoral system in any part of the country, it is not surprising, then, that Quebec's CAQ government has decided that it will pass new legislation without getting the public's overt consent. Despite not having a referendum Quebec Justice Minister Sonia LeBel asserted that the new bill would "have the largest consensus possible."

No doubt the Quebec government has seen the results of the multiple attempts at getting electoral reform passed by the public and has decided that the status quo bias is so strong that it cannot risk asking the public whether it would like to change the system. The most recent referendum results in Prince Edward Island (PEI), where the current electoral system received 52% of the popular vote has confirmed this position (Elections PEI, 2019).

However, for other provinces that have held multiple referenda on electoral reform the gap between reform and status quo has been much wider. Take for example, the case of British Columbia (BC). In the most recent referendum held on December 7, 2018, support for the status quo was 61.3 percent. This result stands out for several reasons. First, it was the third referendum in 15 years. Second, the governing NDP, along with the Greens campaigned vigorously in favour of reform. Third, polls going into the campaign showed widespread support for proportional representation (PR). With all those factors in favour of reform, how could the results be so different than what was expected?

One prevailing view is that of the status quo bias. In short, the status quo bias asserts that the public is risk averse and is more likely to reject initiatives such as electoral reform than support them. In this paper I argue that while the status quo bias did have an impact on the results, it was the way in which the question was posed as well as uncertainties regarding the options for PR that contributed to the results. Understanding question design, the campaign, and the specific type of electoral system offered may help to unpack the conditions by which the Canadian public might vote in favour of electoral reform.

In short, in this paper I argue that the design of the referendum itself made it much more likely for the public to reject electoral reform. Moreover, had the government not proceeded in such haste, they might have been able to put in conditions that would have made it much more likely to get a mandate to proceed with electoral reform.

History of Referenda in Canada

Referenda are important tools for government; they ensure that major changes have the consent of the governed and provide the necessary legitimacy for the government to act. As some scholars have noted, referenda have become more common in places where they have previously been used rarely (Bowler, Donovan, and Karp, 2002).

BC and PEI are unusual in that they each have had three referenda on electoral reform. However, compared with other jurisdictions, Canada has limited experience with direct democracy. On the occasions that Canadians have been consulted by referenda it has been on

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questions on constitutional matters and electoral reform. Electoral reform advocates, as well as the current Quebec and Canadian governments have been leery of using a referendum to decide on electoral reform. Justin Trudeau went so far as to say that “referendums are a pretty good way of not getting any electoral reform” (Siekierski, 2016). However, this has been well-established precedent and convention for taking this approach (Dutil, 2016). The argument in favour of conducting a referendum on electoral reform is that there needs to be meaningful consultation with the public regarding fundamental rules that determine who governs. Making it difficult to change the rules by which elected officials are chosen help ensure an open and transparent government. By adding the requirement of a majority, or in some cases a super majority to change the system helps preserve a stable democracy. If representatives themselves determine winners and losers, they are in a conflict of interest (Bowler, Donovan, and Karp, 2002). Therefore, the convention of asking the public to give their input on the matter ensures that changes don’t just happen for political advantage or because of a one-off election result. As Mendelsohn and his associates (2001) note:

... we take citizens seriously as responsible decision-makers. Differences between contending electoral systems are profound and important. Canada would look very different if elections were conducted under a mixed system or under the single transferable vote. There is no reason why Canadian citizens should not be given the chance to decide which type of new system they prefer, rather than being given a single “take it or leave it” option for reform. To do otherwise risks reproducing the result of the Australian referendum on the country’s head of state, where a reformist public voted for the status quo simply because it did not like the only option for change that it was offered.

In terms of BC’s political climate, the NDP and Green parties both committed to electoral reform in their confidence and supply agreement by which they formed the province’s government in 2017. In contrast, Quebec’s CAQ government is planning to change the legislation without referendum. While the Quebec government argues that they will be consulting broadly with Quebeckers, how they are doing it is not without controversy. The Quebec government provided the non-partisan group Mouvement démocratie nouvelle (MDN) a grant of \$225,000 to engage in the public consultation. Despite its non-partisan affiliation, it is not neutral about electoral reform. The group has been advocating for PR for the past 15 years and its mandate includes facilitating “dialog between civilian activists and political parties, particularly when it comes to ongoing discussions on how the new electoral system will be implemented, with reference to best practice studies done in Québec and elsewhere in the world.” (MDN, 2019). Even though the MDN has pledged to be “impartial”, the fact that a pro-PR group has been entrusted to provide the bulk of the consultation with the public puts the legitimacy of the reform in question. If a subsequent election, even one held under the new rules, resulted in a different party (or combination of parties) holding power, that new government could easily change back to the current system, or indeed, some other system, without bothering with a referendum. The overall result could be frequent changes to rules and an undermining of the whole system.

Changing the rules for political advantage is what happened in BC in 1951 (Jansen 2004). The coalition government of the Liberals and Conservatives changed the electoral system to a preferential ballot to keep the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) out of power. The 1952 election prevented the CCF from obtaining power, but it had the unintended consequence

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of denying power to the Liberals and Conservatives. In the second ballot counting it was Social Credit that received the most support putting them in a minority government. The 1953 BC election was also administered using the preferential ballot, but this time Social Credit received a majority mandate. The Social Credit government then changed the system back to FPTP. The ease at which BC governments were able to change the electoral system shows how disruptive this kind of reform can be.

All Canadian provinces have held non-constitutional referenda on various issues, but they do so only rarely. In total, since Confederation there have been only 52 provincial referenda and plebiscites. More specific to this discussion is that since 2003, five provinces have engaged in the question of whether to change the electoral system and three have conducted either binding or non-binding referenda to answer that question, in some cases going to the polls more than once to do so. As table 1 shows, PEI, BC, and Ontario took the question to the public, while New Brunswick, Quebec, and the federal government chose to keep the current system without further public consultation.

<Insert table 1 here>

Given current referenda results, the demand for electoral reform does not appear to be great and public dissatisfaction with the current electoral system may not necessarily be the reason that past governments promised electoral reform. As Ken Carty states, “In no case were the promises made because the issue was central to the competitive electoral process or because more than a few reform enthusiasts were generally concerned (or even knowledgeable) about it” (Carty, 2017: 9). This was underlined in the most recent mandate letter for the federal minister of Democratic Institutions. In that letter, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wrote, “A clear preference for a new electoral system, let alone a consensus, has not emerged. Furthermore, without a clear preference or a clear question, a referendum would not be in Canada’s interest. Changing the electoral system will not be in your mandate” (Trudeau, 2017).

BC’s appetite for changing the electoral system in the early 2000s was a result of several lopsided election results. In 1996, the NDP won a majority even though they had a lower percentage of the popular vote than the Liberals. The Liberals argued at the time that the result was because of the electoral system and that in the future they would investigate changing the rules to prevent a similar outcome. The Liberal return to power in 2001, with a 77 of 79 seat majority with 57.6 percent of the popular vote, convincing the New Democrats, now on the opposition benches, that the electoral system was flawed (Pilon, 2010).

What impact does the referendum question have on the results?

Some scholars and activists argue that the referendum question does not bias the outcome of the vote. For example, Matt Qvortrup (2014) sees no qualitative or quantitative evidence that the question has mattered for referenda on independence. For this camp, what matters more is the campaign (Hanspeter, Hanggli, and Marr, 2009; Hobolt and Brouard, 2011). This has been echoed by Bill Tieleman, (2019) the president of the official opponent group, who argued that “campaign strategy matters greatly.”

Despite this argument, there is a larger group of scholars who argue that question wording is very important. Moreover, both scholars and international organizations indicate that the question wording relates directly to the legitimacy of the vote. As the International Institute

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for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) states, “The wording of the question can have an important effect on the result and on its legitimacy” (IDEA, 2008: 54). Writing on the legitimacy of sovereignty referenda, Ilker Sen states that the ballot question was “of crucial importance in ensuring a legitimate and credible referendum” (Sen, 2015: 5). He argues that there are three principles in crafting a question: the wording must be unambiguous so that voters can make an informed decision, there should only be one question or single subject being voted on, and the ballot should not be biased in favour of the status quo.

In the reference case on the secession of Quebec The Supreme Court of Canada offered similar advice on crafting referenda questions. For the Supreme Court, “A clear majority vote in Quebec on a clear question in favour of secession would confer democratic legitimacy on the secession initiative which all of the other participants in Confederation would have to recognize” (*Reference re Secession of Quebec*, 1998). The Clarity Act, which was based on that decision specified that a “clear expression of the will of the population” would be needed for the federal government to proceed with secession. The legislation also indicates that for the question to be legitimate it must be a clear question with a clear answer (Clarity Act, 2000). Decades of public opinion research have shed much insight into the problems with question wording (Barber, Gordon, Hill, and Price, 2017; Schuldt, Konrath, and Schwarz, 2011; Reilly and Richey, 2009). Schaeffer and Presser (2003) have noted that small changes in the wording of a question can result in large differences in opinion. Yet, as Mieke Beckers and Jaak Billiet (2010) point out, rarely do legislators refer to this literature when crafting their own questions for referenda.

International organizations that deal with referenda such as IDEA and the Venice Commission offer simple advice on crafting referendum questions. IDEA argues that there only be one goal in the referendum and that the question “should not be vague or capable of different meanings” (IDEA, 2008: 54). The overarching goal is that the question is neutral in that it is not favourable to one side over the other. In a similar vein, the European Commission adopted the Venice Commission’s code of good practice for referendums which includes guidelines on the question wording itself. The principles are straightforward:

- The questions put to the vote must be clear, must not be misleading, and must not suggest an answer;
- Electors must be informed of the effects of the referendum;
- Voters must be able to answer the questions asked solely by yes, no, or a blank vote (Venice Commission, 2007: 7).

One problem with electoral reform questions is that there are many different electoral systems to choose from. Although Canadians are familiar with survey questions that have multiple responses, multiple options pose a problem in a referendum which requires a definitive answer to a clear question. Most Canadian referenda have made electoral reform a binary choice. For example, the first two BC referenda asked seemingly straightforward and clear questions with two options. However, as table 2 shows, they had quite different results.

<Insert table 2 here>

Could the change in support for electoral reform be a consequence of question design or the status quo bias? Part of the difference between the responses between the first and second referenda can be attributed to the question wording. A case can be made that the first referendum question suggested an answer. By framing the question in the positive, the question was biased in

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favour of the yes vote. Moreover, including the phrase, “as recommended by the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform,” implicitly endorsed the Assembly’s proposal, which also suggests an answer.

In the most recent B.C. referendum, Attorney General David Eby (2018) recommended not one, but two questions. This approach of providing multiple responses is arguably a better way to gauge the public’s true wishes (McDaniels and Thomas, 1999; Rosulek, 2016). In fact, that is part of the story of how New Zealanders were able to change their electoral system through referenda. Instead of asking voters for a simple yes/no response, the electorate was asked to choose between an affirmative vote for the current (FPTP) status quo option or an affirmative vote for a different voting system. Then voters were asked a second question: “If New Zealand were to change to another voting system, which voting system would you choose?” As Table 3 indicates, New Zealanders overwhelmingly chose to change the system. In the second part of the question, 71 percent of voters chose MMP. Clearly in this referendum there was little status quo bias. But to what extent was it the question design or the context of New Zealand politics that prompted the change?

<Insert table 3 here>

Unlike what we have seen in Canada, the road to electoral reform in New Zealand was part of a growing discontent with its electoral system in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1971 and again in 1981, the government was elected with fewer votes than the opposition (Vowles, Banducci, and Karp, 2006). When Labour formed government in 1984 it created a Royal Commission on electoral reform. The Commission’s recommendation was the adoption of a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. (Royal Commission on the Electoral System, 1986). It was not until 1992 when the National Party came to office that a plebiscite was held (Temple, 1995). The government argued that if the majority supported electoral reform, a second binding referendum would be held in 1993 and the electorate would be asked to choose between FPTP and the alternative that received the most support in the plebiscite.

Given that both Labour and the National party had a record of broken promises on electoral reform, the public had an appetite for change. As Philip Temple points out that the reasons for electoral reform in New Zealand might not have been because they disliked the electoral system, “but with politicians and both major political parties: Labour and Nation, over almost sixty years, had turned government and Parliament into a two-party club increasingly distanced from electors, and had departed from their fundamental ideological bases (especially Labour) in pursuit of electoral power at the centre (Temple, 1995: 238). Temple’s assessment is supported by the fact that the binding referendum that coincided with the 1993 general election saw a significant decline in support for electoral reform.

The wording for the 1993 referendum continued the practice of having voters choose between two affirmative statements: “I vote for the present First-Past-The-Post system as provided in the Electoral Act 1956” and “I vote for the proposed Mixed Member Proportional system as provided in the Electoral Act 1993.” Despite the increase in support for the current FPTP system, the referendum results were clear: 54 percent voted for MMP.

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New Zealand's experience with electoral reform is instructive for what happened in BC. Voters were given two chances to express their views on the electoral system. In the first plebiscite, there was a resounding desire for change, partly because of dissatisfaction with the way parties gained power. In the second vote, while the desire for change was not as great, a majority of the public still voted for change; however, they did so with the knowledge of what the new system would look like because time had been taken to craft legislation and to explain to voters the specific system that would be implemented. By having reduced the uncertainties regarding the proposed system, the status quo bias could be reduced.

Although the most recent BC referendum adopted the New Zealand model of asking two questions, it did not promise the follow up referendum to allow the public a chance to compare the existing system with a system that was most preferred by the public. The first question in the 2018 referendum was a straightforward two-response question that provided affirmative declarations in a non-biased manner. I contend that not promising the public a chance to have unanswered questions resolved in whichever system would replace the current system, amplified uncertainty and solidified the status quo bias.

For the second question voters were given a ranked ballot of three options: Dual-Member Proportional (DMP), Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), or Rural-Urban Proportional (RUP). because the first question did not garner more than 50 percent of the vote, the second question responses were not binding. That is not to say that the second question did not impact on the outcome of the vote. The second question was not only criticized for producing two electoral systems that have no precedent, but also for omitting the system endorsed previously by the Citizen's Assembly (BC-STV). More problematic for the pro-PR campaign was the ability of the No side to exploit the unknowns of the alternatives.

One of the key guidelines of referendum questions advanced by groups such as IDEA is that the public be aware of the consequences of their decision. In Eby's (2018) report, he noted numerous factors that would have to be developed regarding the electoral system after the vote. Those included major issues such as the size of ridings, the number of representatives of each riding, and the electoral formulae. The third BC referendum on electoral reform not only had the least support towards PR, but it also had the lowest voter turnout at 42.2 percent. Harlan Hahn's (1968) taxonomy of referendum results puts this in the "declining agreement" category. The fact that the Yes side focused their campaign and funding toward getting out the vote the inability to engage the public provides additional evidence that the public was not interested in reform. However, it is worth noting that the decline in turnout could also be attributed to the fact that the referendum was not held at the same time as a provincial election, but instead as a postal ballot that occurred during a rotating postal strike. The original date for the return of ballots was extended by one week to allow for delays regarding the strike. Nonetheless, the extension did not prove to increase ballot returns as there was no significant increase in ballots during that time.

Status quo bias

The "status quo bias" argues that "potential voters make their decision based on the status of the current policy" (Barber, Gordon, Hill, and Price, 2017: 152). This bias is heightened in cases when there is higher voter uncertainty, indifference, or lack of knowledge (Magleby, 1984). Some researchers point out that questions that highlight the status quo produce higher "no" votes because voters are risk adverse and uncertain about the consequences of change (Barber, Gordon, Hill, and Price, 2017). Rather than have voters explicitly vote "no," the

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questions offered voters a choice between two different systems. Nonetheless, by framing the responses as a choice between the existing system and one proposed by the Citizens' Assembly, it is argued that undecided or uninformed voters are more likely to choose the status quo rather than risk changing to an unknown system. However, the status quo effect is mitigated when the referendum itself is rare and high profile. That is because the novelty of the referendum leads to significant attention by media and the elites, so there are few undecided or uninformed voters on election day (Bowler and Donovan, 2000).

Given that all referenda to date in Canadian provinces have not seen support for electoral reform, it is instructive to examine the extent to which the status quo bias was at play. When one examines the various referenda, there is some evidence to support the view that the status quo bias may have been at play in the Ontario referendum, but there is less evidence for the PEI case. In reviewing the literature on the referenda in PEI and Ontario, Miljan and Alchin argue in both cases, "there wasn't much public appetite for change in the first place" (Miljan and Alchin, 2018, 10). Being informed about the electoral system is only one of the factors that voters in BC and Ontario used to decide on whether to adopt a new voting system. Scholars have found that knowledge of the new system was a factor in the support for it, but they also noted that the specific designs of the new systems were unpopular (Fournier, van der Kolk, Carty, and Blais, 2011). However, more important for the first two referenda in BC and the one in Ontario was the finding that the "public was not consumed by an urgent need for change" (Fournier, van der Kolk, Carty, and Blais, 2011: 134).

Therefore, status quo bias provides little explanation for the results of the Ontario and PEI referenda on electoral reform. There is even less evidence to support that the status quo bias was at work in BC for the second referendum. Given that BC was holding the second referendum on electoral reform in four years, it is unlikely that the status quo vote was the result of lack of knowledge or interest. After all, surveys found that three-quarters of British Columbians "were satisfied with the existing electoral system," leading researchers to conclude: "Considering the large impact of this variable on individual voting decisions, such widespread satisfaction may have made reform a non-starter from the beginning" (Fournier, van der Kolk, Carty, and Blais, 2011: 134). Furthermore, the Referendum Information Office had tried to educate the public on the new system; it placed advertisements in traditional and digital platforms. Content analysis of newspaper coverage of the referendum indicated that there were about four stories every five days during the first BC referendum, and one article every three days during the second (Fournier, van der Kolk, Carty, and Blais, 2011: 134).

While surveys, such as those done by Fournier and his colleagues, provide limited evidence about the status quo bias, they also note other factors that voters took into consideration, such as the specifics of the new system. Keith Archer (2017), the Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia, argued that there was more information provided to the electorate in the second referendum than in the first. The crucial difference between the two referenda was that in the first, the public did not know that the electoral boundaries would change if the province went to the BC-STV. In the intervening years, the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission proposed 20 BC-STV districts compared with the existing 85. The Fournier study does not test whether this additional information influenced the outcome. However, they do note that concerns about the complexity of how votes were to be counted in the new system coupled with unstable governments were determinants of a no vote (Fournier, van der Kolk, Carty, and Blais, 2011: 131). Rather than conclude that the public rejected the new voting system because

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they did not understand it, it is more evident that the public rejected the new system because they did not see its merits outweighing its costs.

Advocates for electoral reform often point to the Ontario, PEI, and BC referenda as proof that the status quo bias is so entrenched that either no referendum should be held, or that the question be modified in such a way as to “build consensus around a new system.” This was the approach advocated by FairVote Canada, which favoured a single question on proportional representation for the 2018 referendum. While this approach arguably could have helped secure victory for electoral reform, it is not clear that this approach would indicate the public’s preference. Moreover, by being too open-ended, such an approach might have had an even greater chance of being rejected because of status quo bias. The core element of a well-crafted referendum question is that it does not lead voters to one answer. More importantly, the premise of a fair referendum is that the public is aware of the consequences of their choice. An open-ended question regarding the desire for change to an unspecified system would not satisfy the criterion of informed choice.

Often advocates and scholars conflate the general question of whether we should have proportionality with support for any alternative system. They then blame the question, or lack of knowledge of the specific reform, as the reason for the failure of the public to accept change. However, the public may rightly be wary of giving government *carte blanche* to implement any alternative electoral system without knowing the details. Thus, a general question of whether the public wants change in a referendum could also fail either because of campaigning on the “no” side, or a real fear of the uncertainty of what a new electoral system might look like.

Bill Tieleman (2019), who was the President of the official No campaign, No BC Proportional Representation Society, wrote in an op-ed how the No side were able to use their advertising to deliver some key messages. The No campaign emphasized the uncertainties with the PR options on the ballot such as the complicated and confusing systems. Their ad campaign and website noted the risk associated with changing electoral system. As he states, the following were key messages repeated in ad campaigns and in debates and media coverage regarding PR:

- was complicated and confusing;
- led to extremists winning seats with a tiny fraction of votes as in Germany, Austria and other European nations;
- would lead to loss of local representation and more party-controlled seats coming from pools of candidates used to create proportionality; and
- could adopt systems proposed that were untried or little used – with two of the three B.C. models untested anywhere and mixed member proportional only in four countries – while most pro-rep countries use proportional representation list systems – which were never on the ballot or seriously considered;
- compared poorly to First Past the Post, which by comparison is simple, stable and successful – the foundation of democracy in the United Kingdom for centuries and many other countries around the world.

As Tieleman also acknowledges, the No side benefitted by missteps from the Yes PR campaign. In his view, the Yes side neglected to advertise their position on traditional and social

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media and instead focused their efforts on the get out the vote campaign. This may have been because of early polling showing they had the advantage.

Conclusion

The 2018 BC referendum on electoral reform was a flawed attempt to get a mandate for electoral reform. Although early polls suggested an easy victory for a yes vote, the rush to proceed with a postal ballot combined with a problematic question set led to an entrenchment of the status quo bias. There are several lessons to be learned from the failed BC experience, as well as from the successful New Zealand experience on electoral reform. Public support for electoral reform can be achieved assuming the desire for reform comes from the public and not activists or political parties. However, to classify the most recent BC referendum results being attributed to only the status quo bias neglects to provide the context and factors that lead to that result.

The minority NDP government made several miscalculations in their haste to enact electoral reform. First, they insisted that a new system be put in place by the time of the next provincial election. Not only did this give Election BC little time to prepare for such a vote, but it forced the government to have the referendum just only a year after they assumed power. Given the fact that the NDP government could be defeated at any time, this pledge was highly problematic. Second, the recommendation for the ballot question derived, not from a citizen's assembly as had been done in the past, but from a single report by Attorney General David Eby. In his report, Eby recommended to the government that they have two questions, with the second question a ranked ballot on three potential replacements for the existing system. Explaining how those three options, RUP, MMP, and DMP would be implemented was left to the Elections BC and the Yes side to explain. What made their task more difficult was the fact that only MMP has any real-world experience. Both RUP and DMP were theoretical and had no precedent. To compound the confusion was the fact that many details of any of the systems such as electoral districts and the number of representatives for each would be designed later by provincial parliamentarians. These unknown factors were opportunities that the No side could exploit.

Third, by conducting a postal ballot referendum the government gambled that the potential low voter turnout would benefit the yes side as they would be more motivated to vote. Previous postal votes such as the one held in 2011 had a voter turnout of 49 percent (Elections BC, 2011). This was seen by many as a crass attempt to bias the outcome. As former deputy premier and finance minister, Kevin Falcon (2018) argued,

Changing something as fundamental as our electoral system requires more than a simple majority in a mail-in vote with no participation threshold. We could see our entire democratic system changed on the basis of a fraction of voters mailing in their ballots. In contrast, we held the 2005 and 2009 referendums in conjunction with provincial elections, ensuring a higher turnout and greater voter awareness.

Although the status quo bias was a factor in the 2018 BC referendum results, campaign strategies and the options provided in the referendum question played a role in the outcome. Despite the argument by some advocates that such questions are always doomed for failure, we should not conflate the lack of support for electoral reform with the view that the public will

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always vote no in these kinds of referenda. The way in which the question is posed as well as the campaign and the activities of campaigners all influence voter decisions.

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Table 1: The Canadian Electoral Reform Experience

Jurisdiction	Date Initiated	Consultation	Referendum
Prince Edward Island	January 2003	Independent Commission on Prince Edward Island's Electoral Future recommends Mixed Member Proportional (MMP).	Yes
	Nov 2016	Ranked ballot plebiscite	Yes
	April 2019	Referendum	Yes
Quebec	March 2003	Citizens' Committee proposes an MMP system similar to Germany's	No
	March 2019	Grant to the non-partisan group New Democracy Movement (MDN) to educate public on MMP.	No
British Columbia	April 2003	Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommends MMP	Yes
	May 12, 2009	Second referendum	Yes
	December 2, 2018	Third Referendum	Yes
Ontario	October 2003	Citizens' Assembly recommends MMP	Yes
New Brunswick	December 2003	Commission on Legislative Democracy	No
Canada (federal)	June 2016	Special Committee on Electoral Reform	No

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Table 2: British Columbia First Two Referenda Questions and Responses

<p>May 17, 2005</p> <p>“Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform?”</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="397 472 604 550"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>57.59%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>41.18%</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	57.59%	No	41.18%	<p>May 12, 2009</p> <p>“Which electoral system should British Columbia use to elect members to the provincial Legislative Assembly?”</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="815 436 1414 701"> <tr> <td>The existing electoral system (First Past the Post)</td> <td>60.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The single transferable vote electoral system (BC STV) proposed by the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform</td> <td>39.1%</td> </tr> </table>	The existing electoral system (First Past the Post)	60.9%	The single transferable vote electoral system (BC STV) proposed by the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform	39.1%
Yes	57.59%								
No	41.18%								
The existing electoral system (First Past the Post)	60.9%								
The single transferable vote electoral system (BC STV) proposed by the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform	39.1%								

REFERENDUM BLUES

Table 3: New Zealand Plebiscite, September 19, 1992

Part A: Should New Zealand Keep The First Past the Post (F[PT]P) voting system?"	
I vote to keep the F[PT]P voting system	15%
I vote to change to another voting system	85%
Part B: If New Zealand were to change to another voting system, which voting system would you chose?	
Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)	71%
Preferential Voting (PV)	7%
Single Transferable Vote (STV)	17%
Supplementary Member system (SM)	6%