The Single Transferable Vote

History: The Single Transferable Vote is a proportional voting system developed in the 19th Century by English barrister Thomas Hare and others. Although it gives good proportional representation of parties or factions, voting is entirely for individual candidates, which makes it an ideal system for municipal or civil society elections where there are no formal political parties.

Voting: Instead of voting for a single candidate with an "X", the voter can order her preferences, 1, 2, 3, etc. Voters may number as many candidates as they choose. Strategic considerations are unnecessary, because the each vote counts for the highest available preference until that candidate is either elected or eliminated.

Quota: The "quota" is the number of votes required for a candidate to be elected. This depends on the number of votes cast and the number of candidates to be elected. For example, if there is only one candidate to be elected, the winner will need more than half the votes cast. If there are two candidates to be elected, then the quota is one-third of the votes cast, because if two candidates each have more than one-third of the votes, then obviously all other candidates must have less than one-third of the votes. And so on.

Counting: The first preferences are counted. Any candidate who has reached the quota is declared elected. If a candidate receives more votes than he needs to be elected, his "surplus" votes are distributed to the next preference on each ballot. When all the transfers have been completed, if there are more candidates to be elected, the candidate with the least votes is eliminated and all his votes are transferred to the next preference on each ballot.

Outcome: Almost every vote helps somebody to get elected. Therefore, every voter is represented by candidates they voted for, as opposed to the first-past-the-post system, where most of us vote for people who do not get elected, so most of us are "represented" by people we voted against.

Fair Vote Canada is a multi-partisan, citizens' movement to change the voting system in Canada.

http://FairVote.Ca   **416-410-4034**   **office@FairVote.Ca**