areas, ridings would be combined into larger multi-member ridings with five to seven MLAs elected using the Single Transferable Vote (where people rank candidates in order of preference).

All three proposed systems are, to some degree, new innovations. But that just means they're unfamiliar to British Columbians, not "too complicated." The systems on offer should be those that can accommodate the diverse nuances of B.C. and that reflect how we want to balance local representation with proportional outcomes, and urban and rural interests.

The large majority of democracies on our planet use some form of pro rep, many of which, like the options before us, combine local representation with proportionality in innovative ways. Surely British Columbians are as clever as all these other good folks. To imply otherwise is, frankly, insulting.

The current system stinks

In contrast to the three proportional models proposed, our current FPTP system distorts and wastes votes cast by people who happen to live in the wrong place, particularly in "safe ridings."

The FPTP system far too frequently grants winning parties false majorities; parties with about 40% of the popular vote get 100% of the power, and rule with virtual impunity for four years. A system that does that is a bad system, full stop.

If we do vote to change our system this fall (the referendum closes November 30), the benefits coming our way are great, regardless of which of the alternative models we choose. Pro rep will mean having a legislature that much better reflects the real preferences and backgrounds of the voters. It will also lead to far fewer safe ridings, and thus more meaningful competition and fewer wasted votes. And people will be liberated to "vote their values," which research shows plays a major role in the increased voter turnout that proportionality produces.

British Columbians deserve a democracy that ensures that you will have, in relatively close proximity, a local representative who shares your political values—and which gives you the voice you want in the halls of power. M

1. Which system should British Columbia use for provincial elections?

(Vote for only one)

- ☐ The current First Past the Post voting system
- ☐ A proportional representation voting system

2. If British Columbia adopts a proportional representation voting system, which of the following voting systems do you prefer?

(Rank in order of preference. You may choose to support one, two or all three of the systems.)	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
Dual Member Proportional (DMP)	☐	☐	☐
Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)	☐	☐	☐
Rural-Urban Proportional (RUP)	☐	☐	☐

IMRE SZEMAN | NATIONAL

Energy transition and the Canadian suburb

The tragic events of the past summer have finally brought home the reality that we have significantly altered the climate. We witnessed wildfires around the globe, including blazes in British Columbia that left Alberta cities more polluted than Beijing and produced hazy skies as far east as Nova Scotia.

Record temperatures across the whole of the Northern Hemisphere led to deaths from heat in Montreal and elsewhere. And in Arctic regions from Canada to Russia there were unprecedented levels of glacial melt, sea ice break-up and thawing permafrost.

While many governments continue to act as if everything is okay, the summer of 2018 is likely to go down as the moment when climate change switched from being a point of partisan debate to a real problem that we have to solve—immediately.

The causes of climate change are many, but the most significant is the burning of large amounts of fossil fuel, which generates CO_2 that builds up in the atmosphere where it remains for millennia. In many respects, the climate catastrophes that we are dealing with today are the consequence of CO_2 burned decades if not centuries ago.

A number of governments, NGOs and industry groups have identified dates, usually decades from now (2040 or 2050), as the point past which they will cease using fossil fuels. The G7, which includes Canada, has gestured to the end of the century for meeting that objective.

These targets suggest an end point to climate change—a cut-off date past which the issue of a heating planet will be fixed and the problem will go away. In fact, we're stuck with the CO_2 we've already created; stuck, too, with the

huge amount of additional carbon we add to the atmosphere every single day.

Though the use of fossil fuel energy isn't the sole cause of global warming, removing it from our energy mix is essential to slowing the growth of carbon emissions. At present, Canada has no policy on energy transition. Indeed, we may be moving in the opposite direction.

Through its support of the expansion of tar sands pipelines, the federal government has affirmed the maintenance of the status quo in relation to fossil fuel extraction. Saskatchewan and Ontario are in the midst of challenging the federal government's meek carbon tax scheme. And in the place of a jointly developed, forward-looking climate policy, the NDP governments of Alberta and B.C. remain locked in struggle over Trans Mountain.

To the degree that they have imagined energy transition at all, Canadian governments have placed their faith in market mechanisms, with a heavy reliance on tax schemes. If this doesn't work, many of us—including governments—believe that new technologies will save us from ourselves. Instead of having to alter or amend our high-energy lifestyles and their environmental or social consequences, we fantasize that solar power will allow us to leave things just the way they are, and so avoid making hard decisions about our environmental futures.

Real energy transition requires more than carbon taxation or cap-and-trade schemes. It requires social transition, too. To begin to address climate change, we will need to start making some big decisions about how we live day to day—not just what we do with our days, but the hopes, desires and anxieties that shape our lives.

These decisions will need to include where we live. A recent study led by Queen's University professor David Gordon highlighted how between 2006 and 2016, suburban population growth in Canadian cities was on average double that in their urban cores. "Auto suburbs," places that require cars for commuting, accounted for 75% of all urban growth during this period. This was as true of Toronto (83% suburban growth), where new condos have dramatically reshaped the skyline, as it is of Calgary (91%).

The continued, rapid growth of Canadian suburbs is unlikely to change anytime soon. In May 2018, Diana Petramala of Ryerson University's Centre for Urban Research and Land Development, released a report suggesting that over the next decade, 700,000 millennials in Hamilton and the Greater Toronto Area would be looking for their own houses. The vast majority hope to find "ground-related housing"—houses with safe backyards for their kids and space in which to host weekend BBQ parties for friends and family.

Yesterday's emissions, today's extreme weather (author's photo).

Between 2006 and 2016, suburban population growth in Canadian cities was on average double that in urban cores.

We are a suburban nation. And in an era of climate change, these suburbs are expanding rather than shrinking.

There are all kinds of reasons why people move to suburbs. It's expensive to live downtown these days. We have also learned to connect suburban space with family, community and safety. But that choice inevitably means the heavy use of automobiles and the need for expensive auto infrastructure, as well as the building of new schools and hospitals. These costs are externalized: they do not figure into mortgage payments or even property taxes.

It might be asking a lot of a country that has barely begun to make good on its commitments to the Paris Accord to take on the environmental impact of housing. And yet, if we are going to stop our forests from burning and our glaciers from melting, these are the kinds of difficult discussions Canadians will need to initiate—preferably sooner than the year 2100. M