

PARTYX PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

# DIRECT DEMOCRACY FOR A POLICY MANDATE

## WHO

PartyX Progressive Democracy  
Society

## GOALS

To show how a political platform  
could represent a fair  
compromise between people of all  
different political persuasions

## HOW

Ethelo invited citizens to evaluate  
21 high-profile policy "planks"  
from the election platforms of the  
4 major political parties in British  
Columbia

## OUTCOME

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Ethelo evaluated thousands of  
scenarios to identify a public  
policy platform that would attract  
the broadest voter support.

In the weeks leading up to the 2013 BC Provincial election, the non-profit organization PartyX Progressive Democracy Society wanted to identify a non-partisan policy platform that could provide a broad mandate for the next elected provincial government. Majority vote systems create polarization, and engender resistance from minority groups. But PartyX wanted to show how technology could help develop a policy platform that represents a fair compromise between people of all different political persuasions.

## APPROACH

Twenty-one high-profile policy "planks" were selected by PartyX from the policy platforms of the 4 major political parties (Liberal, NDP, Green and Conservative) as well as a number of leading civic organizations. These planks were organized into 5 different Issue areas: Natural Resources, Community Services, Finance and Taxes, Government and Law, Education and Health.

Participants were invited to participate by discussing the policy planks, scoring them to indicate support or opposition, and then weighing the relative importance of the 5 policy areas. Participants were able to see the Ethelo engine dynamically identify their personal "Top Choice" policy platform as they voted. Ethelo also allowed people to weigh how important the different policy areas were to them, and in calculating the group results, gave participants more influence on areas they felt were more important. For example, a participant might wish more influence on environmental issues, giving up some influence on social issues.

Some of the policy planks were not consistent with each other, for example "Oppose Pipelines" and "Oil Industry Expansion". Ethelo was configured to ignore possibilities which contained contradictions. Nevertheless, most policies were compatible, and even after inconsistencies were removed, there were more than 220,000 possible policy platforms.

## RESULTS

Of the 580 individuals either invited or registered, 350 voted and provided 121 comments on the specific policies.

The Ethelo engine evaluated more than 220,000 possible scenarios to identify the policy platform that would generate the most support, while ensuring that that support was distributed as fairly as possible.

The results that Ethelo generated showed that 16 specific policy initiatives, spread out across 5 topic areas - Natural Resources, Finance & Taxes, Education & Health, Government & Law, and Community Services - received the most support with strong unanimity across all areas. These 16 initiatives contained policy options from three of the political parties and a number of civic organizations.

By identifying a consistent non-partisan policy platform that would receive broad support, Ethelo demonstrated the ability of technology to harness the public's collective intelligence and achieve policy compromises outside the traditional political processes.