

## Voting System Options

By Nigel Grout

The current FPTP system has been disenchanting Canadian voters for several election cycles. In today's current economic and political climate, the electorate has to feel engaged and that their vote will count, even if their favored political party or candidate does not win power.

There are several alternatives to FPTP currently in effective practice around the world which provides the "stress-tested" options for examination in order to meet current Canadian political needs. The primary principle for selection must be voter engagement. An increased voter turnout will give legitimacy to the next election cycle and help make a majority of Canadian stakeholders in discussions of national and regional importance.

A secondary consideration must be that FPTP alternatives should not hold the governance of the entire country hostage to niche party dogmas; the most illuminating examples of national political dysfunction being the pure proportional voting that occurs in Israel and Italy. This will allow the Canadian electorate to move away from strategic voting that occurs when a FPTP vote forces citizens to vote against the ruling party but not for the party of their first choice in order to defeat the incumbent (and unpopular) party. The forced option of strategic voting penalizes smaller parties who have a legitimate national voice, but cannot be viewed as dominant enough under FPTP to form a national government from 40% of the electorate.

I strongly feel that the mixed-member proportional representation (MMPR) system is the best way to proceed, coupled with mandatory voting laws. The MMPR will allow a citizen to vote their conscience at the national level with their "party list" vote and at the same time, send the best person to represent their riding. These candidates may or may not be from the same party, but the overall effect would be to create a sense of national and regional engagement from the electorate. "Every vote counts." A national minimum vote percentage, to be determined, but I reckon at 5%, would minimize the chances of system capture by fringe one-issue parties.

As an alternative to the "stick" of the fines that mandatory voter laws like those in Australia, Canada could establish a tax credit for voting in municipal, provincial/territorial and federal elections. This would create the "carrot" for voter turnout, especially if the tax credit was 100%, the same as political donations.

Canada as a relatively young country has an opportunity to learn from other democracies around the world and establish a robust alternate to FPTP that reflects our shared values of decency, fair-play and concern for the less well-off and ensures minority voices are not silenced. A system of governance that allows all citizens to feel and see that their voice and vote counts is a powerful example to those authoritarian regimes throughout the globe, as well as to our fellow democracies.

I strongly urge the committee to examine the benefits of mixed-member proportional representation, coupled with mandatory voting regulations.