

To the Special Committee on Electoral Reform,

I have been interested in proportional representation (PR) for the past few years. All of the PR systems in use around the world elect legislators from Party Lists in order to achieve a legislature in which the representation of each party is proportional to the popular vote. Many PR systems also elect legislators that represent ridings, some systems elect one legislator per riding, and others elect multiple legislators per riding.

In Canada's Parliament, every Member of Parliament (MP) is the elected representative of a unique riding. I believe it is a strength of Canadian elections that every MP is tested by the citizens of Canada in a riding election. Can this positive aspect of Canadian elections be preserved while achieving PR? Attached is a proposal that does precisely this. I am not aware of any national legislature that has implemented such a PR system; however, nearly every publicly traded corporation uses precisely this form of governance. So it is well-tested. I would greatly appreciate any comments or criticisms the Special Committee may have on this proposal.

Yours sincerely,  
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## Achieving Proportional Representation

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On October 19, 2015, Canadians voted for change. But the change to party membership in the House of Commons was far more dramatic than the change in the popular vote.

Political Party	Popular Vote (%)	Seats Won	Seats Won (%)
Liberal	39.5	184	54.4
Conservative	31.9	99	29.3
NDP	19.7	44	13.0
Bloc	4.7	10	3.0
Green	3.4	1	0.3
Other	0.8	0	0

Though the Liberal Party received less than 40% of the votes, they won more than 54% of the seats in the House of Commons, forming a majority government. Here is an even more striking distortion of the popular vote. Though the Liberal Party received less than 13 times as many votes as the Green Party, they won 184 times as many seats as the Green Party.

Most democracies have responded to such distortions of the popular vote by abandoning Single Member Plurality (SMP) elections (also known as first-past-the-post or winner-take-all elections) in favour of Proportional Representation (PR) elections.

The primary objective of every PR electoral system in the world is to make the party membership in the legislature proportional to the popular vote. But achieving such proportional membership is not essential for proportional representation. The essential characteristic required for proportional representation is that the votes controlled by each political party in the legislature be proportional to the popular vote. This can be achieved by giving members of the legislature many votes instead of just one vote, and distributing these votes to achieve proportionality.

Here is a natural, direct way to distribute votes in the House of Commons to achieve proportional representation.

Political Party	Popular Vote	Seats Won	Votes per MP
Liberal	6,942,937	184	37,733.353
Conservative	5,613,633	99	56,703.364
NDP	3,469,368	44	78,849.273
Bloc	821,144	10	82,114.400
Green	602,933	1	602,933.000
Other	141,453	0	0

It must be understood that even though MPs exercise tens of thousands of votes each, when it comes to voting on a motion before the House of Commons, MPs have only 3 options: cast all their votes in support of the motion, cast all their votes in opposition to the motion, or abstain. Furthermore, if a Parliamentary motion is supported by more than half the votes cast by MPs, then it succeeds; otherwise, it fails.

We will refer to the operation of the House of Commons under this one-member/many-votes rule as the *Proxy Model* because MPs act as proxy agents for those Canadians who voted. Since MPs exercise nearly all the votes cast in the General Election, this is a proportional representation of the popular vote.

It is also worth observing that with the technology available today, large numbers, great accuracy, and the variation in the number of votes per MP do not impose any hurdles. Simply provide each MP with a “clicker” to record his or her vote. The computer identifies the MP, and automatically adds his or her votes to the tally. This provides no more of a hurdle for existing technology than simply adding 1s, as is done now in the House of Commons.

The strengths of this Proxy Model include the following:

- Under the current one-member/one-vote rule in the Commons, MPs represent only 48.2% of the popular vote; under the Proxy Model, they would represent 99.2% of the popular vote.
- Each MP is elected as the unique representative of a riding; determining the winner of a riding election is intuitive and simple.
- The Proxy Model puts the focus of political parties on policies that are national in scope, instead of policies pandering to tightly contested ridings.
- It reduces the need for strategic voting.
- It eliminates any unfair advantage resulting from gerrymandered ridings.
- Only a modest cost is required to implement electronic voting in the Commons.
- Advantage/Disadvantage: because Canadians elect MPs from 5 different political parties, it is unlikely that any party would form a majority government under this model.

The Proxy Model achieves proportional representation without necessitating any change to the SMP elections used in Canada since 1867. The question facing Canadians is whether the one-member/one-vote rule in the House of Commons is so fundamental to our democracy that it justifies adopting all the complexity of some other PR electoral system.