2016

Electoral Reform Brief

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Summary

We need to look at the cause of the problems that our current system has, in order to know what needs modifying. If we do not deal with the cause of our problems we are liable to keep the same problems in any restructuring we do.

FPTP problems;

Single-marked ballot – Any single-marked ballot will produces results where the majority of votes are too often ignored. The elected candidate has no quota of votes to be elected. This means that the elected candidate only needs a minority of voter support (around 30 – 40%).

Single-MP ridings – With single-MP ridings will always result in a disparity between the votes a party receives and the seats a party has in the House of Commons.

Reform;

Ranked ballot – The ranked ballot makes **every vote significant** to the election results. The elected candidate needs to reach a quota of votes in order to be elected.

Multi-MP ridings – Multi-MPs in the ridings will bring **proportional representation** to both the House of Commons and to the Local Ridings.

Single Transferable Vote addresses the two problems that FPTP has. STV uses both the ranked ballot and the Multi-MP ridings. The multi-MP needs to be a minimum of 3 MPs per riding, 2 MPs will only lead to polarizing the citizen, and 3 PMs give a true choice. STV also complies with the 5 principles of the Committee's mandate.

Mixed Member Proportional Representation fails to address the problems of FPTP. MMP does not reform FPTP; it just adds a 2nd vote to our current system. At best MMP is questionable when compared to the 5 principles of the Committee's mandate. MMP sacrifices the Local Representation for the Party to bring proportional representation to the House of Commons.

The 5 Principles of the Committee's Mandate:

Effectiveness & Legitimacy:

STV puts an end to the strategic voting as well as the vote splitting practice. With the ranked ballot every vote is significant to the election result.

With the end of strategically voting will allow the voter to truly express their views without **fear** of their vote being ignored.

Engagement:

STV has a large majority of voters actually electing a MP directly. With Multi-MPs per riding a large majority of votes will elect 1 of the riding's MPs.

In a 3 MP riding over 75% of the votes cast will elect 1 of the 3 MPs. This percentage grows with more MPs in the riding. With a 6 MP riding over 85% of the votes cast will elect 1 of the 6 MPs.

This will inspire more voters to actually participate as their votes will actually elect someone and have a direct affect on the election results.

Accessibility & Inclusiveness:

STV keeps the same ballot, just changes how the voter will mark the ballot. The voter is now **free** to express their preferred options, not limited to a single choice from a list of options.

STV does **not add** above-line & below-line or candidate & party votes.

STV keeps the election process simple and effective.

Integrity:

STV has a history in Canada. STV has been used successfully in Canada for over 30 years from the 1920s to the 1950s. The integrity of STV has been proven in Canada.

Ireland successfully uses STV for close to 100 years, since the end of World War 1.

Local representation:

STV with Multi-MPs per riding brings proportional representation to the riding as well as the House of Commons.

With proportional representation in the riding strengthens the local representation.

Online voting:

I do not support online voting. Online technology is only secure until it is hacked and then it is not secure. Online voting does not comply with #4 Integrity of the principles of the Committees mandate.

Mandatory Voting:

I am strongly opposed to mandatory voting and believe it will lead to more problems.

Electoral Reform

Why Reform our Electoral System?

The Electoral System is the heart of any true Representative Democratic system. It is through the Ballot-Box that the citizens are able to express their values and principles in how we are governed.

We need an Electoral System that will listen and will validate every citizen's vote.

Our Current Electoral System:

Our current system is referred to as First-Past-The-Post (FPTP). This system has been used for many decades and has **two** major flaws that need to be **reformed**.

1. The single-marked ballot, it is the Candidate with the most votes that is elected. There is no **quota** of support that a Candidate needs and is often elected with a minority of support (between 30 – 40%). **This means that 60 – 70% of the voters are not listened to nor have their votes validated.**
2. The single-MP per riding. This practice of single-MP leads to a **disparity** between the votes a Party receives and the Seats in the House of Commons that a Party has. It produces a **false majority** in the House of Commons.

To reform our Electoral System we need to address these two major flaws in our current system.

The Ballot;

There are only two methods how a Ballot can be marked;

Single-marked ballot;

It is the single-marked ballot that our current system uses. It promotes the minority of citizens to elect the representative. There is no **quota** of support that is required. The majority of citizens' votes are **ignored**.

Ranked ballot;

A ranked ballot, the citizen is able to **prioritize** the Candidates that are running. Every vote is listened to and is validated, there are no ignored votes. The elected representative needs to reach a **quota** of votes in order to be elected.

The Ridings;

The 2nd major flaw that needs to be reformed is the structure of the constituencies. We need constituencies with multi-MPs so the constituency is more completely represented. A single-MP cannot possibly represent every citizen in the constituency, it is just unrealistic.

Single-MP Ridings:

Single-MP ridings the focus becomes how many **ridings** a Party can win, the number of **votes are irrelevant**.

This was demonstrated in BC 1996 election when the BC Liberal Party received 41.82% of the Popular Vote and elected 44% of the Legislature's MLA (33) – the BC NDP received 39.45% of the Popular Vote and elected 52% of the Legislature's MLA (39). The BC Liberal Party won the Popular Vote and **Lost** the Legislature – the votes received was secondary to the number of ridings a Party wins.

In 2001 BC election the BC Liberal Party received 57.62% of the Popular Vote and elected 97% of the Legislature MLA (77) – the BC NDP received 21.56% of the Popular Vote and elected less than 3% of the Legislature MLA (2). This left the Province without an Official Opposition as having 2 MLAs does not qualify the Party as the Official Opposition.

Elections BC link – http://www.elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/1987-2001-ElectionHistory.pdf

These two examples from the BC Provincial Elections demonstrate how single-MP ridings reduce the relevancy of the Voter's votes. These two examples from BC may be extreme cases, however, even the recent Federal Election (2015) shows this practice of single-MP ridings with the Liberals receiving only 39% of the Popular Vote but won 54% of the House's seats (MP).

Multi-MPs Ridings:

Multi-MPs need a **minimum of 3 MPs** per constituency. Constituencies with only 2 MPs will only **polarize the citizens** of the constituency and does not really represent actually options. 3 MPs give the citizens an actual choice, it is not just supportive or not, there is another option.

Some constituencies will have more MPs. As an example, the City of Vancouver currently has 6 Constituencies with a single MP each. The City of Vancouver would be a single Constituency with 6 MPs. Although the Constituency is larger in size, the ratio of MP to citizens is the same.

The riding will be geographically larger, but with multi-MPs the ratio of MPs to citizens will remain the same as they are now. The Local representation will be strengthened as there will be more than 1 Political Party candidate representing the Local riding.

We need multi-MP ridings (3 or more MPs) to make Voter's votes the <u>only</u> relevant aspect of the election.

Combining Multi-MP Ridings with Ranked Ballot:

When we combine the Multi-MPs Constituency with the Ranked Ballot we have much more **Proportional Representation** in both the House of Commons and in the Local Constituency.

In Multi-MPs Constituency the Quota of votes that a Candidate needs to be elected is different. The Quota of votes needed is dependent on the number of MPs a Constituency will elect. (Number of MPs to be elected plus 1 divided by the valid votes cast) + 1.

In a 3 MP Constituency the Quota is 25%+1 of the votes cast for the Candidate to be elected. This means that 75%+ of the voters will actually elect 1 of the 3 MPs. A **large majority of voters** will actually have an MP that they have directly elected.

In a 6 MP Constituency the Quota is 14.28%+1 of the votes cast for a Candidate to be elected. This means that 85%+ of the voters will actually elect 1 of the 6 MPs (14.28% X 6 = 85.7%).

Other Electoral Systems;

When looking at different Systems we need to ask two key questions;

1. **How are the Ballots used?**

   Do the Ballots permit only a single-marked selection or do they permit prioritizing the Candidates? A single-marked ballot would **ignore** the majority of votes; the prioritized ballot will make **every vote relevant**.

2. **How are the Ridings organized?**

   Do the Ridings consist of single-MP or multi-MPs? Single-MP will continue the **disparity** of votes to seats; multi-MPs will give us **proportional representation** in both the House of Commons and in the Local Riding.

These are the issues that we need to come to terms with, if we want an Electoral System that inspires the Voters to participate in our Democratic system.

Single Transferable Vote:

The Single Transferable Vote (STV) is the only Electoral System that I have found that deals with the 2 major flaws that need to be addressed.

STV uses the Ranked ballot so **every vote is relevant** to the election result. There are no votes that are ignored.

STV uses Multi-MP ridings (3 or more). This brings **Proportional Representation** to both the House of Commons and the Local Riding.

STV is not new to Canada. STV has been used in both Alberta and Manitoba from 1920s to the 1950s. Canada has a history of over 30 years of using STV.

Harold John Jansen did his Ph.D thesis on the history of STV in Canada. You can find the thesis at the link below;

http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD_0004/NQ29051.pdf

Dr. Dennis Pilon talks about STV and how Political Parties and Politicians **do not like STV**. That STV puts the **Voter in the drivers' seat** and the Political Parties are put in the backseat. You can find Dr. Pilon's video on STV at the link below;

https://youtu.be/e1Npd_NL_yc

If we truly want to reform our system we need to adopt the Single Transferable Vote system. With STV we will have **Proportional Representation** and **every vote** **will have a direct influence on the election results**.

Mixed Member Proportional Representation:

MMP tries to make our current FPTP system more Proportional in a contrived manner.

MMP gives the Voter 2 votes; 1 vote for the local candidate (MP) and 1 vote for the Party.

There are different forms of MMP and I will address them later.

Currently the MMP idea is to have 2/3 of the House be Local MPs and 1/3 be Regional MPs. This comes from the Law Commission of Canada report that can be found at;

http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/J31-61-2004E.pdf

There is talk that 1/3 Regional MPs as 'top-ups' will not be enough to bring any real sense of Proportional Representation and this may be changed to ½ Local MPs and ½ Regional MPs.

Common Form of MMP:

The first vote is the Local Candidate vote and uses the single-marked ballot and a single-MP riding. **This is exactly the same as our current FPTP system**. The majority of the local candidate votes will be **ignored**, and the single-MP means that there will still be a **Disproportional** result of votes to seats. This means that over 200 of the 338 MPs will still be elected with the **winner-takes-all** system. It is this 'winner-takes-all' system that Proportional Representation is supposed to do away with.

The second vote is the Party vote. This vote also uses the single-marked ballot but uses a multi-MP regional riding. It is this second vote that **every Party vote will count** and be relevant to the election outcome. The Party's candidate on the 2nd vote the majority of votes will not count and will be **ignored**.

The second vote is used to calculate the number of seats a party is qualified to have in the House of Commons. The candidates on the 2nd vote are used as "top-ups" for any seats a party is short in the Local candidate makeup.

This is why I say that MMP is **not** truly a reformed system. MMP just adds a second vote to our current FPTP system and tries to rebalance the disparity of votes to seats that the first vote created. There are limited number of "top-ups" so MMP will be **limited in bring true Proportional Representation** to the House of Commons.

MMP is **not reforming FPTP, just adding to it**. This is why I see MMP as potentially worse than just FPTP; by adding to our current system, with its current problems, it may also add to the problems.

Jenkins' MMP;

Jenkins' system uses the Ranked ballot in the 1st vote for the Local candidate. However, the local riding is still a single-MP. With the ranked ballot all the local candidate votes are relevant to the result. However, with the single-MP riding will still produce a disparity between votes and seats and require the 2nd vote to balance them.

The 2nd vote is still a Party vote and the Party candidate ballot is a single-marked ballot, so again the majority of these candidate votes are ignored, the Party vote counts.

Dions' P3;

This system is totally centered on the Political Parties. It still uses the 2 votes that the other MMP system used but completely different.

It uses Multi-MP regions and the 1st vote is to elect the **Party of choice** and is a Ranked ballot. The 2nd vote is for the local candidate and uses a single-marked ballot. The majority of the local candidate votes will be **ignored** but the Party vote will count.

The problem with this option is that Political Parties do not represent the constituency or the citizens. **Political Parties represent different Philosophies and Policies**. You cannot recall a Party. It changes the whole focus of the election from the local candidate to the Party. I do not know if this would pass the constitution requirements.

Much Larger Ridings:
Because of the creation of 'Regional MPs' the local ridings will be much large in size, to make room for the Regional MPs. The local ridings will be larger and represented by a single MP and this will **dilute** Local representation. Promoters of MMP say that the Regional MP can also represent the Local riding; however, this is not necessarily true. What is in the best interest of the Local riding may not be in the best interest of the Region and a conflict is very likely.

Mixed Member Proportional Representation is <u>not a system</u> that I can support.

Instant Runoff Voting:

IRV or AV (Alternative Voting) is **not proportional**; however, it is a big improvement over FPTP.

IRV/AV is the use of the Ranked ballot in a single-MP riding. As it uses the Ranked ballot every vote is **relevant** to the election result. The elected MP needs at least 50%+1 to be elected, so the **majority of voters** need to support the candidate. This is a big improvement over the 30 – 40 % that our current system usually requires.

Although IRV is not proportional, it does produce **less of a disparity** between votes and seats than FPTP creates. There are positive aspects to IRV and they can be found at the link below;

http://archive.fairvote.org/factshts/irv.htm

B.C. has used the AV ballot in both 1952 & 1953 provincial elections. In both elections the Liberals were kicked out of the Legislature. The idea that the ranked ballot favours the Liberal party is a rumor used to discredit IRV, and is not factual.

IRV is my second choice to STV and is much preferred to MMP or FPTP.

Online Voting

I do not support online voting at this time. Online systems are only secure until they are hacked and then they are not secure. Also not everyone has access to online technology, most maybe but not ALL.

I do not see online voting as complying with the 5 principles of the Committee's mandate, namely #4 Integrity or #3 Accessibility and Inclusiveness.

Mandatory Voting:

I am **strongly opposed** to mandatory voting in any form.

When anyone is forced to participate they will find ways to mess with the system. The fact that they are forced to vote means they will vote for anyone as they do not support anyone.

In Australia where Compulsory Voting has been in force for a number of years they have problems with how the lists of candidates on the ballots are listed is a major issue. The **forced voter** just marks the **first names on the list**, they do not care who. This has Australia now randomize the order of the candidates from one election to another. This does not really help at all, as someone has to be **listed first and they have the advantage of the forced voter**.

Compulsory Voting will only lead to more problems with our Electoral System.

If we want to encourage and inspire the Voters to participate we need an Electoral System where their votes actually elect someone and has real relevancy to the election results.