**Brief submitted by Henry Bradford**

**A Simple Mixed Member Electoral System Giving Proportional Representation**

When elections do not turn out the way that some people want, they tend to blame the electoral system. We hear statements like: "the system is broken" and similar exaggerated nonsense. We also hear catchy slogans like "make every vote count". What's the problem - has someone been throwing our ballots away?

Actually, our electoral system, often known as "first past the post (FPTP)", works pretty well. It is a simple, familiar, democratic system designed to elect a single member of parliament to represent each electoral district or riding. The candidate who gets the most votes wins the seat in parliament. What more could anyone ask?

However, a legitimate complaint is that it tends to give a disproportionately large number of seats to the party that receives the largest percentage of votes cast (called the "popular vote"), and disproportionately small numbers or none at all to parties receiving a smaller percentage. The result is a parliament that concentrates power in the hands of a few, and consequently does not properly represent the variety of points of view in the country. A cure for this problem is "proportional representation (PR)".

In a PR system, the percentage of seats in parliament that each party receives is equal to the percentage of votes it receives in the election (i. e., the "popular vote"). For example, in a PR system, a party that receives 40% of the popular vote would receive 40% of the seats in parliament, whereas in the last two federal elections, parties receiving about 40% of the popular vote received about 55% of the seats – a majority and the power that goes with it. Critics of the present system call this a "false majority". Such an outcome can allow (and some would say has allowed) the winning party to govern in a manner that is against the will of the majority of voters.

The remedy, which is proportional representation, can be achieved by adding extra MP's to those elected in a conventional FPTP election. Such a system is called "mixed member proportional (MMP)". As the name implies, the resultant parliament is a mixture of conventionally elected MP's plus extra ones who are added to make the total number of MP's for each party proportional to the popular vote it received. These additional members are sometimes referred to as "topping-up MP's". A bill to institute such a system in Canada was introduced in parliament December 8, 2014 by Craig Scott, NDP. The NDP voted in favour of it, the Liberal vote was split, and the Conservatives voted against it. The latter could hardly be expected to vote to change the system that had just given them a parliamentary majority.

In the MMP system that was proposed, the topping-up MP's would be elected from lists of candidates provided by the parties. This feature was criticized because it would give the party machines too much influence over the outcome of the election.

To overcome this objection, it is proposed here that the candidates for topping-up seats be drawn from a national list of candidates who faced the electorate but did not win seats. These candidates (typically up to a few hundred for each party) would be arranged in order of the percentage of votes they received in their ridings, which would be considered to be a measure of their popularity. The topping-up MP's would be drawn from this list in descending order of popularity until the number required for proportional representation for their party is reached – typically a few dozen. See for example the table below. They would become members-at-large, representing their parties but no particular constituencies. These MP's, together with the conventionally elected ones, would form a parliament that better reflects the popular vote.

The tables below shows what the composition of parliament would have been in 2011 and 2015 if the proposed MMP system had been in place. The simple formula given there determined the required number of  MP's-at-large.

In summary, the proposed system would have the advantage of producing proportional representation, while requiring no changes that affect the voters; i. e., no change in either the voting procedure or the ballot, and no changes in ridings or electoral boundaries.

I---------- 2011 election results --------------------I   I----- proposed PR ------I

|  | seats won | seats won % | pop vote % | MP's at-large | MP's total | MP's % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conservatives | 166 | 54 | 40 | 0 | 166 | 40 |
| New Democrats | 103 | 33 | 31 | 25 | 128 | 31 |
| Liberals | 34 | 11 | 19 | 45 | 79 | 19 |
| Bloc Quebecois | 4 | 1 | 6 | 21 | 25 | 6 |
| Green | 1 | 0.3 | 4 | 15 | 16 | 4 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total | 308 |  |  | 106 | 414 | 100 |

I---------- 2015 election results --------------------I   I----- proposed PR ------I

|  | seats won | seats won % | pop vote % | MP's at-large | MP's total | MP's % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Liberals | 184 | 54 | 40 | 0 | 184 | 40 |
| Conservatives | 99 | 29 | 32 | 48 | 147 | 32 |
| New Democrats | 44 | 13 | 20 | 48 | 92 | 20 |
| Bloc Quebecois | 10 | 30 | 5 | 12 | 22 | 5 |
| Green | 1 | 0.3 | 4 | 15 | 16 | 3 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total | 338 |  |  | 125 | 461 | 100 |

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**Formula for determining the required number of members-at-large**

The number of MP's representing each party in a PR  parliament =
(percent of the popular vote for the party / percent of the popular vote for the winning party) x number of MP's won by the winning party. The required number of members-at-large is the difference between this number and the number won in the election.