Proposal for a new voting system

Brief prepared for the Special Committee on Electoral Reform

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Summary

This proposal introduces a new voting system that aims at:
1. Making sure that each vote counts
2. Representing proportionally the results of the ballot , in each region
3. Representing each riding by a MP that has won the riding, as chosen by the voters in the riding
4. Representing each region by MPs that have received an important share of the votes

The new voting system is simple, and produces results in a single round. It also solves the distortions of the current simple majority system.

The new voting system

Members of parliament :

The parliament comprises two kinds of seats: **riding seats** and **regional seats**.
- A **riding MP** represents both a riding and a region (encompassing the riding).
- A **regional MP** represents a region.

Ridings and regions

Compared to the current system, ridings are enlarged so that the number of ridings is halved, to make room for an equal number of regional seats. Compared to the current House of Commons, the total number of seats remains unchanged.

A **region** consists of ridings of the same **province** or **territory**. A count of six (6) ridings appears ideal; however, this is only an objective for grouping ridings. The number of ridings in a region would be adjusted as agreed by an electoral mapping process.

Candidatures

Each **party** proposes **two candidates in each riding** :

- one candidate for the riding.
- one candidate for the region.

The ballot

The voter chooses two parties by order of preference. See figure 1 .*Example ballot*

Determining a riding's MP

In each riding, a single **candidate** is elected as **riding MP**.

1. In each riding, the first and second choice ballots are counted **using weighed voting**. Each party gets a **score computed by adding**
   - First choice votes
   - A fraction of **2nd choice votes** (we suggest a weigh of 1/4; however, the weight for 2nd choice votes could be the subject of a discussion).
2. **The riding's seat** is granted to the winning party, that is the party with the best score in the riding.
3. The **winning party's** candidate for **riding MP** is elected.

Allocating regional seats

In each region, the **seats are allocated** to each party **proportionally to their regional score**. A party's **regional score** is computed by adding **riding scores.**.

In each region, the **seats are allocated** to each party **as a complement to riding seats**.
> *Example : In a region, suppose that a party should obtain 5 seats according to proportional allocation, and this party won two riding seats, then this party would obtain 3 regional MPs.*

Determining regional MPs

Regional MPs are picked one by one from the list of the region's party candidates ranked by their party's score in the ridings of the region.

How many steps are there, and therefore how simple or complex is it to determine how many seats each party has won and which candidate has won which seat?

- The voting system determines in a single step: the number of seats won by each party, the elected MPs representing each riding, and the regional MPs.

How simple or complex is it?

- Voters only needs to mark their two preferred parties.

Threshold for determining winners: What is the percentage of votes needed for a candidate or party to obtain a seat?

- For a riding's seat, there is no minimum. The candidate with the best score is elected, regardless of percentage.
- For a regional seat, there is no set minimum threshold. In a typical region with six ridings, there are twelve seats to be filled. A seat is granted with 8% of the regional score (100% divided by 12).

Assessment against principles of the reform

Principles for electoral reform	*Assessment and remarks*
1) Effectiveness and legitimacy: that the proposed measure would increase public confidence among Canadians that their democratic will, as expressed by their votes, will be fairly translated and that the proposed measure reduces distortion and strengthens the link between voter intention and the election of representatives;	The proportionality of seats allocates fairly according to regional and riding votes, as well as globally in Parliament. This new system avoids the distorsions of the current system when voting for a riding's seat: a party that gets the majority of votes in the current system could be seen as a bad choice by a majority of voters. This party will likely not win in the proposed system . This distorsion is fixed thanks to weighed votes of 2nd choice. **Example of distorsion reduction:** Three parties compete in a riding. Let us call them "black", "dark grey" and "white". Voters that prefer "black" have "dark grey" as 2nd choice. Voters that prefer "dark grey" choose "black" as a second choice. Voters preferring "white" vote for "dark grey" as a second choice. Let us suppose the following distribution of first choices: • Black: 32 (1st choice) • Dark grey : 32 (1st choice) • White: 36 (1st choice) The parties would score as follows, after considering the 2nd choices: • Black: 32 + (32/4) = 40 • Dark grey: 32 + (32+36)/4 = 49 • White : 36 + 0 = 36 The "Dark grey" party wins the riding.

Principles for electoral reform	Assessment and remarks
2) Engagement: that the proposed measure would encourage voting and participation in the democratic process, foster greater civility and collaboration in politics, enhance social cohesion and offer opportunities for inclusion of underrepresented groups in the political process;	Proportionality is what makes every vote count. A party with 8% of the regional score is guaranteed to obtain a regional MP. This voting system assures some opposition in each region, thanks to the weighed votes. The fraction of the score accountable to second choices represents a ratio of 0,25 point over 1,25 available points, that is 20% of the score. Thus, at least 20% of the regional score is allocated to non-majority parties. In a typical 12-seat region, this will provide at least two 2 MPs from parties other than the party of the majority.
3) Accessibility and inclusiveness: that the proposed measure would avoid undue complexity in the voting process, while respecting the other principles, and that it would support access by all eligible voters regardless of physical or social condition;	This voting system is only slightly more complicated than the current one. A voter must make two voting marks (filling a circle) rather than a single mark. The process is fast, because it determines the outcome in a single pass. There is no second round. In comparison to the municipal voting system, this one is much simpler.
4) Integrity: that the proposed measure can be implemented while safeguarding public trust in the election process, by ensuring reliable and verifiable results obtained through an effective and objective process that is secure and preserves vote secrecy for individual Canadians;	This proposal assures reliable and verifiable results. The counting of ballots, the determination of the winner of a riding and the allocation of proportional seats in a region are easy. This process is effective and objective, at least as good as the current system. This process is safe, and keeps the vote confidential for Canadian citizens, just like the current system.

Principles for electoral reform	Assessment and remarks
5) Local representation: that the proposed measure would ensure accountability and recognize the value that Canadians attach to community, to Members of Parliament understanding local conditions and advancing local needs at the national level, and to having access to Members of Parliament to facilitate resolution of their concerns and participation in the democratic process;	The fact that MPs are associated to a region, and to a riding maintains the current proximity. Access to MPs for riding or regional issues is maintained. Regional MPs should work together regardless of their allegience to a party, on regional issues. A citizen should be able to addresse a non-partisan **"regional council"**.

Illustration 1: Example ballot

Mark preferred party in 1st choice column and a different one in 2nd choice column	1st choice	2nd choice
Bloc Québécois	①	②
Conservative Party of Canada Parti conservateur du Canada	①	②
Green Party of Canada Le Parti vert du Canada	①	②
Liberal Party of Canada Parti libéral du Canada	①	②
Libertarian Party of Canada Parti Libertarien du Canada	①	②
Marxist–Leninist Party of Canada Parti Marxiste–Léniniste du Canada	①	②
New Democratic Party Nouveau Parti démocratique	①	②
Rhinoceros Party Parti Rhinocéros	①	②