

Overview

The Duncan family proposes a made in Canada voting system that combines the advantages of our traditional majoritarian FPTP (First Past The Post) system, with a proportional allocation designed to ensure all Canadians have a voice in their government.

The MAP (Majority *and* Proportional) Voting System

Well suited to the changing realities of Canada's population densities, MAP (Majority And Proportional) requires additional members of the House of Commons who would represent political views and opinions that are often shut out of parliamentary discourse and government decision-making.

The House of Commons would be made up of the winners in all the constituencies plus additional members from each party, the number of which would be based on the results of the proportional vote. The difference between MAP and other MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) systems is that the 'top ups' would be chosen by each party from duly-nominated candidates who ran under its banner in the current election, not, as in most MMPs, chosen from a list of people identified by the parties previous to the election. The additional members would not represent voters from a particular geographical area, but would represent voters of a similar mind from Canada as a whole.

Voting will be done as it is now, ie voters would continue to vote for their constituency Member of Parliament. ***The change will be in how the votes are used.***

MAP System Highlights

- MAP would keep the familiar and traditional FPTP system, with its same constituency boundaries and winner-take-all declaration of successful candidates. The current House of Commons seat total is 338 members.
- MAP would add on / top up the House of Commons with, for example, 50 more seats, to be allocated based on a new Commons seat total: For example, 388 members.
- Voting count would become a two-stage process, the first to declare the winners based on the FPTP system, and the second to determine the allocation of 'top up' seats awarded to each party.
- The top up seat allocation would be determined by the national percentage of popular vote that each party received.
- The top up members, would not be representing only one constituency, but would be like members at large, representing any voter of similar thought.
- Top-up members would be chosen by the formally-recognized political parties, from among their candidates who ran – unsuccessfully – in the current election.
- The parties would select 'their' top-up members based on their needs to achieve better or more balanced geographic representation; better or more balanced diversity; better or more fair adjustment for rural / urban population shifts and densities; and / or on the basis of adding a particularly valuable / relevant expertise to the House.

The Advantages of MAP:

- MAP builds on the familiarity and simplicity of the FPTP system, but ensures the new 'hybrid' more accurately includes and reflects the opinions of all voter groups.
- Minority opinions will have a greater 'voice' in their government.
- What will change is how the votes are 'used', not how the voting is actually done.
- Voters will not need to change their voting behavior, nor learn anything new. Even the look of the ballots will be familiar, simple and unchanged.
- Canadians will keep their close connections to their local Member of Parliament.
- Campaigning would still be done at the constituency level. (With some MMP systems, there are two-levels of campaigning, one for the constituency and one for the party 'list')
- No constituency boundary changes will be needed to implement MAP.
- By encouraging and enabling issue-related alliances among Members, MAP would increase the effective power and influence of individual members and reduce the tendency to polarization around just two parties.
- Thus, the MAP system would encourage various political parties to work together, to find compromises on particular issues and proposed legislation.
- Voter participation will improve as every vote would now 'matter', and would count toward the proportional representation if not their FPTP representation.
- The House would still have a 'government, a party in power, so the business of the House could be carried out with responsibility for its actions assigned to that party.
- The power of the two main parties would be diluted somewhat, but more voters would feel that they have more choice.
- MAP would result in a more equitable ratio of votes cast to MPs elected. FPTP has resulted in wildly inequitable votes per MP numbers. For example, according to the results of the 2015 election, Liberals elected one MP for every 37,664 votes; the Conservatives elected one for every 56,570 votes; the NDP elected one MP for every 78,665 votes, and the Green Party elected just one MP but received 606,864 votes.
- Using FPTP alone can lead to the election of "false majority" governments, whereby more Canadians voted AGAINST the winning party than voted FOR that party. MAP balances that result.
- A voter would be able to bring an issue to either his constituency member, or any of the members at large, whichever he feels would be more effective.

Disadvantages of MAP

- Cost
Adding members to the House would result in additional operating expenses for salaries, staff, offices, pensions etc. Perhaps the budget for both the Senate and the House could be combined and reallocated among all the members, thus limiting increased costs.

Examples of House Membership under the MAP System

Using the results of the most recent (2015) Federal election with the results of:

- Liberals: 184 elected, 39.5% of popular votes, total votes = 6,930,136
1 MP per 37,664 voters
- Conservatives: 99 elected, 31.9% of popular votes, total votes = 5,600,496
1 MP per 56,570 voters
- NDs: 44 elected, 19.7% of popular votes, total votes = 3,461,2621
1 MP per 78,665 voters
- Bloc: 10 elected, 4.7% of popular votes, total votes = 818,652 ...
1 MP per 81,865 voters
- Greens: 1 elected, 3.4% of popular votes, total votes = 605,864....
1 MP per 605,864 voters
- Other: 0 elected, .8% of popular votes, total votes = 142,943
0 MPs for 142,943 voters

Under the MAP system, for ease of arithmetic using as an example the addition of another 100 MPs to the House of Commons, to be selected by the parties based on the national percentage of the popular vote they receive, the make up of the House of Commons would look like this:

- Libs would have their 184 constituency members plus 40% of 100 = 40 extra, total 224
- PCs would have their 99 constituency plus 32% of 100 = 32 extra, total 131 MPs
- NDs would have their 44 constituency plus 20% of 100 = 20 extra, total 64 MPs
- Bloc would have their 10 constituency plus 5% of 100 = 5 extra, total 15 MPs
- Greens would have their 1 constituency plus 3% of 100 = 3 extra, total 4 MPs

Total = 438 members of the House

The Liberals would maintain a majority in the House, although reduced in number (Liberal 224 MPs to non-liberal 214) The Conservatives would remain the official opposition, but given the high percentage of votes they received, they would have more seats. Other parties would be represented with a voice commensurate in power with their national vote totals.

Using 50 as the number of members at large, the results would be:

- Libs would have their 184 constituency members plus 40% of 50 = 20 extra, total 204
- PCs would have their 99 constituency plus 32% of 50 = 15 extra, total 114 MPs
- NDs would have their 44 constituency plus 20% of 50 = 10 extra, total 54 MPs
- Bloc would have their 10 constituency plus 5% of 50 = 3 extra, total 13 MPs
- Greens would have their 1 constituency plus 3% of 50 = 2 extra, total 3 MPs

Total = 388 members of the House

Again, the positions of majority and oppositions remain the same, although at a reduced ratio, this time 204 to 184. It's interesting to note that reducing the number of proportional members vis a vis majority members reduces the balance that the MAP voting system is trying to achieve. So, to be effective, the number of members at large has to be large enough to be significant.

For Additional Consideration

It is worth noting that, in all our electoral reform discussions with friends and family members - ranging in age from early 20s to mid-70s, one suggestion was the virtually unanimous conversation opener: If Canada is ever to have an engaged, informed and actively-participating electorate, schools must once again 'teach government'.

And this means starting about grade four or five, and continuing in each grade, in age appropriate content of course, right through high school, not simply a 'highlights reel' crammed into a term or two.

Course content must include the basics – the three levels of government; how members are chosen; division of powers, which level of government is responsible for what; the history of our parliaments, including the background leading to important decisions; and current issues now being debated. The 'newspapers in the classroom program' should be implemented so students get their information from sources other than just from Facebook. There should be a comparison of the Canadian parliamentary system with other systems throughout the world, particularly the U.S. presidential system.

Such a thorough education into how our 'world' actually operates would drastically reduce the number of voters who still think the federal government is in charge of potholes (!).

Consideration should be given to lowering the voting age to 16. when most students are still in high school. Participating in their first election while still in high school, allows the teachers the opportunity to put campaign knowledge, voting procedure etc. into a real life exercise. Combining better-educated young adults with a lowered voting age would no doubt increase the overall and continuing percentage turnout at the polls. Studies have shown that those who begin voting at an early age, are more likely to continue to vote as they get older.

A final note

This paper is a summary of many discussions held during July and August, discussions that, for the most part, our families and friends took very seriously.

We all agreed that electoral reform was needed here in our changing country, and applaud the Government for taking steps to have these conversations with Canadians, including ourselves. You did your part to encourage the discussion, so we did our part to participate.

Of course, we would be happy to elaborate on any of the concepts or suggestions we have described.

Respectfully submitted,

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