

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM**

**BRIEF SUBMISSION**

**Proposal of a Modern Electoral System for Canada  
Reformed Single Transferrable Vote**

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## **BACKGROUND & EXPLANATION**

Nearly all governments provide universal adult suffrage. However, the right to elect candidates of personal choice is still quite limited because about 46% to 100% of electors normally fail to elect candidates of their own choice when virtually all of today's most commonly used and widely known election systems are used to elect representatives to legislative assemblies.

When overlapping election districts are combined to form a single overlapping election districts election system, they can enable large majorities of electors to directly elect candidates of choice, which in some models approaches 100%.

## **SUMMARY OF A MODERN ELECTION MODEL - REFORMED SINGLE TRANSFERRABLE VOTE**

Reformed Single Transferable Vote (Reformed STV) election systems improve the right to elect politicians of choice and reduce complexity. This means large (many politicians per district) multi-member districts used by present Single Transferable Vote (STV) election systems are no longer required to enable large proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice. Large districts produce ballots that can be too long for voters; they blur the lines of accountability between representatives and constituents, and make the tracking of how votes are used to elect politicians more complex. The reform also means small (few politicians per district) and much simpler multi-member districts can now be used to enable much larger proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice.

Reformed STV election systems produce inherently better representation than STV election systems. So, if the STV election method is chosen by the committee for the next Canadian federal election, then the election system chosen should be a Reformed STV election system.

This brief contains one Reformed STV election system proposal with 2 variations that each have impacts on voter representation and government formation. Both variations use two-member districts for voting and are as follows:

1. Reformed STV three districts of residence election system. About 96% or more of the votes of voters elect politicians of choice.
2. Reformed STV two districts of residence election system. About 89% or more of the votes of voters elect politicians of choice. (This paper will focus on this 2 vote model.)

As shown above, election results become more inclusive as the number of districts for voting increases. By contrast, the current STV election system is largely exclusionary. It normally prevents about 33% or less of the votes from electing politicians of choice.

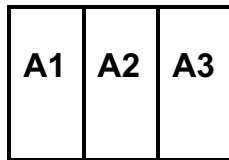
The primary purpose of the Reformed STV election system is to enable high proportions of voters to elect politicians of direct personal choice from small and simple two-member districts. This ensures currently disenfranchised minority groups obtain the right to effective representation and therefore the right to proper inclusion in our democratic processes.

### **How It Works: General Election Area of Reformed STV Election System**

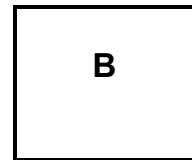
'Overlapping Election Districts' are subdivisions of general election area tiers. For example, consider the general election area of the following two overlapping STV election districts election system that uses two-member districts.

#### **General Election Area of Two-member Districts in a Two Overlapping STV Election Districts Election System**

**Tier 1  
Local First Vote  
Districts**



**Tier 2  
Overlapping Second Vote  
Districts**



As shown above, the general election area is divided into two overlapping election tiers and four overlapping election districts, which have common boundaries. Tiers 1 and 2 respectively have three and one overlapping election district. (8 MPs).

Districts A1, A2 and A3 have smaller areas than district B. For example, local first vote districts are on average about one-third as large as the overlapping second vote district.

### **Reformed STV Voting**

Election Day voting is simple. For example, voters residing in local district A1 cast their first vote for a candidate in local district A1. Then they cast their second vote for a candidate in overlapping district of residence B. Voters residing in local districts A2 and A3 also cast votes in their local and overlapping district of residence in similar fashion. In effect, the overlapping districts of residence voting process enables voters to elect politicians of choice regardless of where they live within their allocated voting districts.

### **Right to Representation**

The two tier election model enables about 89% of voters to elect politicians of choice who provide real representation. Only about 11% of voters do not elect in this model in comparison to the present STV model where about 33% of voters typically do not have the right to representation from politicians of their own meaningful choosing.

## **Counting Votes**

Election Day votes are counted and election results are tallied in smaller local district areas before larger overlapping district areas. In this two district model each elector is given two votes. Likewise, votes are counted and tallied in smaller overlapping district areas before larger overlapping district areas. However, in order to have a fair legislative assembly representation of all voters from election votes counted; each voter can use one but no more than one valid vote to elect politicians of choice.

Also, unused fractional portions of votes are transferable from smaller to larger districts on the ballot. So for example, if a voter uses a whole vote in their first district, the second ballot vote is null and void. Alternatively, if a voter does not elect in their first district, then their second ballot vote is counted as in the first district. But if a voter uses a fractional portion of a vote in the first district, then only the unused fractional portion of the first district vote is counted in the second district. Furthermore, politicians can run for election in only one election district on the ballot. This counting method considerably increases chances for voters to elect politicians of personal choice.

About 67% of valid votes elect politicians of choice in each round of vote counting on the ballot. After the first round of voting, the percentage of valid votes counted in the second round of vote counting drops by about 67%.

## **Reformed STV Broadens Voting Power to Elect**

The voting right of all voters to elect politicians of choice broadens as the number of districts for voting increases. For example, consider the:

1. Two voting districts election system. About 89% or more of the votes elect politicians.
2. Three voting districts election system. About 96% or more of the votes elect politicians.

As shown above, the power to elect broadens from about 89% or more votes to about 96% or more votes when the number of two-member districts of residence for voting increases from two to three.

Voting systems that enable large proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice also enable voters and parties to obtain proportional representation from politicians of choice. Overlapping districts provide the minority's right to elect politicians of choice. This right strengthens as the number of overlapping districts for voting increases.

## **Government Formation**

Single party majority governments have their strongest roots in the weakest proportional election results and their weakest roots in the strongest proportional results. Therefore, parties obtain single party majority government formations most often from the two voting districts election system and least often from the three voting districts election system.

## **Single Transferable Vote Election Systems Comparisons**

Reformed STV reduces complexity and improves the right to elect politicians of choice.

### **Reduced Complexity**

Reformed STV reduces complexity. For example, consider the:

1. Two voting districts election system. Reformed STV uses four two-member districts to enable about 89% or more of the votes to elect politicians. By contrast, traditional STV uses only one eight-member district to enable about the same proportion of votes to elect politicians. Therefore, reformed STV has six less politicians per district than the traditional STV district.
2. Three voting districts election system. Reformed STV uses thirteen two-member districts to enable about 96% or more of the votes to elect politicians. By contrast, traditional STV uses only one twenty-six-member district to enable about the same proportion of votes to elect politicians. In this case, reformed STV has twenty-four less politicians per district than the traditional STV district.

Reformed STV districts have advantages over traditional STV districts. For example, two-member district ballots are considerably shorter than large multi-member district ballots (many politicians per district). Also, two-member districts produce geographic links between constituents and elected politicians that are relatively obvious and more easily understood than large multi-member districts. More specifically; since there are just two elected politicians from each district, lines of representation, responsibility and accountability between constituents and elected politicians are reasonably clear and simple.

### **Improved Power to Elect**

Reformed STV improves the right to elect politicians of choice. For example:

1. The traditional STV election system enables about 67% of the votes to elect politicians.
2. By contrast, the two voting districts election system enables about 89% of the votes or about 22% more of the votes to elect politicians.
3. Also by contrast, the three voting districts election system enables about 96% of the votes or about 29% more of the votes to elect politicians.

In each example above, the total number of elected politicians is unchanged.

## **Reformed Single Transferable Vote is Better**

If the STV election method is chosen by the committee for the next Canadian federal election, then the election system chosen should be a Reformed STV election system. This system produces inherently better representation than traditional STV election systems.

Reformed STV enables high proportions of STV election system voters from small and simple two-member districts to elect politicians of direct personal choice. This improves the personal connection to voting, the personal connection to representation and the geographical representation of voter opinion. It also improves the right to effective representation, the problem solving ability of legislative assemblies and the legitimacy of government. But that's not all there is to it - voters and parties also get better proportional representation from politicians elected to two-member districts than is possible from traditional STV.

## **MADE IN CANADA REFORMED STV IS A STRONG ELECTION REFORM ALTERNATIVE**

### **FPTP and Main Alternatives Curtail Voting Right to Elect**

The biggest problem with Canada's voting system and nearly all of the main alternatives is they curtail the voting right to elect politicians of choice. For example, consider:

1. List PR voting systems. List PR prevents 100% of voters from electing politicians of choice. List PR systems only enable voters to elect parties of choice.
2. FPTP voting systems. FPTP normally prevents about 50% or less of all voters from electing politicians of choice.
3. AV voting systems. AV optional preferential typically prevents about 46% or less of all voters from electing politicians of choice.
4. MMP voting systems. MMP generally combines the List PR voting system with FPTP or AV voting systems. The List PR component dilutes and reduces the total proportion of legislative assembly members that are elected as politicians of choice.
5. STV voting systems. Small multi-member district (few politicians per district) voting systems prevent large proportions of voters from electing politicians of choice. For example, two-member districts prevent about 33% or less of all voters from electing politicians of choice. By contrast, large multi-member district (many politicians per district) voting systems can enable very large proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice. But the big problem with high election rate STV voting systems is complexity. This complexity makes many if not close to all high election rate STV voting systems unsuitable for people who yearn for simplicity.

Each of the above voting systems prevent either all or large proportions of voters from electing politicians of choice. The exception is STV, which can enable large proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice. Voting systems that prevent all or large proportions of voters from electing politicians of choice also prevent voters and parties from obtaining proportional representation from politicians of choice.

## **Main Election Reform Alternatives Are Not Better**

There's no significant advantage to switching from FPTP to one of the main electoral reform alternatives. For example, consider the following switches:

- 1. AV:** Only about 4% more (54% - 50% of voters) AV voters than FPTP voters elect politicians of choice. The real main difference between FPTP and AV voting is simplicity. AV voters rank order candidates on the ballot. This is more time consuming and complex than FPTP voting. FPTP voting is simpler because voters only need to put a mark beside one candidate on the ballot. Also, the AV election formula is more complex than the FPTP election formula. This means, knowing how your vote counts is generally easier and quicker to figure out with FPTP than with AV.
- 2. STV:** The big problem with STV is complexity. STV voters rank order candidates from small or large STV multi-member districts. This is much more time consuming and complex than FPTP voting. Also, larger multi-member districts are more complex than smaller multi-member districts. The number of politicians per multi-member district can get too large and election ballots can get too long for voters. As a result, multi-member districts may confuse or act as a barrier to the lines of representation, responsibility and accountability that constituents have with representatives. Furthermore, the system's election formula complexity often forces voters into guessing who they elect with their votes. As a result, these voters may never know who they help to elect.
- 3. MMP:** MMP weakens the right to elect politicians of choice. For example, FPTP election system voters lose one-half of their influence from politicians of choice when MMP cuts the number of FPTP representatives from 100% to 50% of legislative assembly members. The List PR component of MMP is discussed next.
- 4. List PR:** List PR destroys the right to elect politicians of choice. The system only enables people to elect parties of choice. Also, List PR multi-member districts break simple FPTP single-member district links. Furthermore, getting elected is difficult for those who want to run as independent candidates outside of the party structure.

The main electoral reform alternatives merely trade one set of electoral system flaws for another. Replacing Canada's outdated FPTP election system with another outdated election system reform will not work.

## **Referendums and a Plebiscite**

None of the main electoral reform alternatives offer significantly desirable improvements to Canada's FPTP voting system. People have voted to keep the FPTP devil they know rather than switch to one of the main alternatives. In their view, the FPTP single-member district election system is better and therefore worth keeping. However, for many years a strong majority of Canadians (around 70%) have also supported proportional representation.

The Reformed STV election system enables high proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice to simple two-member districts. It also provides better proportional representation than is possible from traditional STV election systems that use two member districts for voting. These features merit consideration for making Reformed STV the election system of choice for Canada's next federal election.

## **Committee Perspectives & Considerations:**

**Effectiveness & Legitimacy:** Present majority rule election systems are not working. A new, inclusive and simple system is required to restore public faith in our system of governance. Reformed STV uses two or three-member districts which does strengthen the link between voter intention and the election of representatives, greatly increasing voters' representation.

**Engagement:** Voters today are fractured, highly partisan and are often and easily excluded from having an elected representative of their personal choice voted into office. Disaffected voters end up feeling a deep distrust and disinterest in the system of government. Reformed STV enfranchises a much higher proportion of two or three-member district electors and previously unrepresented minorities, by enabling them to directly elect representatives of their own choice. This election model is designed to create real representation, inclusiveness and as much simplicity as possible in the electoral process.

**Accessibility & Inclusiveness:** Developing a new "Overlapping System" of voting that increases the ability to elect candidates of choice; thus being more inclusive to voters, creating greater interest in governance due to greater personal representation, and through a method that is built upon existing models making it relatively simple to understand for a new model.

**Integrity:** While not nearly as simple as first past the post; voting is easy enough for the average voter to understand. When overlapping election districts are combined to



form a single overlapping election districts election system, they can enable large majorities of electors to directly elect candidates of choice, which in some models approaches 100%.

**Local Representation:** The Reformed STV model is built on local constituencies, ranging from small local areas to larger overlapping and adjoining areas that creates area based representation of small, medium sized and larger overlapping constituencies. Elected representatives are directly responsible for issues within their areas of representation, which may be focused within local districts or across the common interests of local districts within larger areas of representation. Electors in Reformed STV election models have geographical representation from 4 Members of Parliament to facilitate their concerns.

**End Results/Aim:** To create an electorate that has greater representation in Parliament of their own personal and therefore meaningful choice. By doing so, this will create more interest and trust in governance and those who govern them.

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