

Submission to the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform

Multi-Member Personal Proportional (M2P2) and Proportional Parliament Voting System (PPVS): Two alternate proposals for electoral reform

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SUMMARY

This committee is currently exploring various ways to improve our electoral system.

There are a number of different electoral systems that can be considered:

- Alternative Vote (AV; sometimes referred to as Preferential Vote (PV) or Ranked Ballot)
- Proportional Representation (PR)
- Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)
- Single Transferable Vote (STV)

AV, PR, MMP and STV can all be designed in different ways; resulting in a baffling array of options: PR – Closed List, PR – Open List; Jenkins-Inspired MMP, Dual Member Proportional; STV+, Rural-Urban PR; to name just a few.

This begs the question: how does one evaluate the various options and determine the best one for Canada?

This submission attempts to help answer this question. It will:

- Explore the various models to determine the best features (and shortcomings) of each
- Offer two alternate proposals that seek to combine the best features of the various models:
 - Alternate Proposal #1: Multi-Member, Personal Proportional (M2P2)
 - Alternate Proposal #2: The Proportional Parliament Voting System (PPVS)
- Evaluate these three alternate models against the guiding principles/criteria established by the ERRE Committee

GOALS AND CRITERIA

The ERRE Committee has suggested that any proposed changes to our electoral system should be evaluated against the following goals/principles:

1. **restore effectiveness and legitimacy:** the voting system should reduce distortions and produce election results that are in line with voter intentions;
2. **increase civility and engagement:** the voting system should foster greater civility in politics and increase voter participation;
3. **strengthen accessibility and inclusiveness:** the voting system should allow for all eligible voters to take part in the electoral process and not be unduly complex;
4. **safeguard the integrity** of our voting system; and,
5. **allow for local representation** and accountability.

(Source: <http://www.democraticinstitutions.gc.ca/eng/content/government-canada-proposes-all-party-parliamentary-committee-electoral-reform>)

To these, we would suggest adding the following:

1. Simplicity. Any changes to our electoral system should be fairly easy to understand by the average voter and be reasonably simple to implement.
2. Every vote counts. All votes should count towards the composition of our Parliament and not just the votes of a winning candidate.
(This is a key objective of Fair Vote Canada (FVC) and the Every Vote Counts Alliance (EVCA)).
3. Proportionality. The final distribution of seats in the House of Commons should closely approximate the results of the general election.
(For instance, if one party gets 39% of the popular vote (as happened in the last 2 elections), they should have roughly 39% of the votes in Parliament)
4. Fair and tamper-proof. Any new electoral system should be fair to all parties and not confer an electoral advantage to any particular party. The system should also be impervious to tampering by the political parties. (Ranked Ballot is considered to favour the Liberals who are likely to be a second choice for Conservative or NDP voters. Under the Mixed Member Proportional system, if a party is under-represented in Parliament, they can add “top up” candidates to arrive at a more proportional share of the seats; this allows the party to rig the system somewhat by controlling who they put forward as “top up” candidates)
5. Addresses or allows for inequity between ridings. There can be large differences in the number of voters within different Electoral Districts. This results in more populous ridings requiring far more votes to elect a representative than in a less populous riding.
6. Can be implemented in time for the 2019 election as promised.

EVALUATION OF VARIOUS ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Ranked Ballot (also called Preferential Voting, Instant Voter Run-off or Alternative Vote)

Ranked Ballot is a feature that can be used in Majority Voting systems such as First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) or in proportional systems such as PR, MMP and STV. When Ranked Ballot is offered as an alternative to our current FPTP system, it usually refers to Alternative Vote (AV), also called Preferential Vote (PV), a Majority Voting System that allows voters to rank parties or candidates.

There are some variations to Ranked Ballot but, in general, here is how it works:

- Voters can rank candidates in order of preference (1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd choice, etc.)
- The number of 1st choice votes are counted for each candidate
- If a candidate receives more than 50% of the 1st choice votes cast, that person is elected
- If no candidate receives more than 50% of the 1st choice votes cast, the candidate with the fewest 1st choice votes is eliminated and those votes now go to each voter's 2nd choice
- If one of the remaining candidates now has 50%+ of the votes cast, that person is elected
- If not, the candidate who now has the fewest votes is eliminated and those votes now go to each voter's next choice
- This process continues until one candidate has 50%+ of the votes

Pros:

- Fairly simple to understand and implement
- Could possibly improve civility as political parties seek to be a 1st or 2nd choice among more voters

Cons - A Ranked Ballot voting system scores poorly against the criteria outlined above:

- AV/PV does not resolve, and can even accentuate, disproportionate results
- voters sometimes rank candidates in the order they appear on the ballot ("donkey voting")
(NOTE: This can be addressed by varying the candidate order evenly amongst ballots)
- votes for losing candidates are ignored so not every vote counts
- AV/PV gives voters more choice (the ability to rank candidates), but since votes for losing candidates are ignored, this option is not likely to increase voter participation/engagement
- since losing votes are ignored, this option does not produce election results that are proportional to the votes received and can produce results that are even more disproportionate than under FPTP
- this option is considered to favor the Liberal party which is most likely to be a 2nd choice for NDP or Conservative voters so could confer an unfair electoral advantage to one party
- ranking candidates can be difficult; in larger regions with multiple candidates, ballots can become somewhat complicated with many candidates listed

Given all the disadvantages identified above, I recommend against using a Ranked Ballot voting system with any electoral system including MMP or STV.

Proportional Representation (PR)

There are variations to PR but here is how PR works in general:

- Each political party produces a list of ranked candidates
- Voters vote for a political party
- Each political party receives a number of seats proportional to their share of the votes received
- Each political party fills their seats won from their list of ranked candidates
(For example: if a party wins 12 seats, the first 12 candidates on their ranked list are elected)
- PR can use Closed Lists (the party list is controlled by the party) or Open Lists/Flexible Lists (voters can vote on candidates and determine which candidates fill the seats won by the party).
- Closed Lists score poorly against the criteria outlined above, so only Open Lists/Flexible Lists should be used with any PR system

Pros:

- Fairly simple to understand and implement
- Proportional: each party receives a share of seats proportional to their share of the popular vote
- May promote greater civility as each party tries to win a larger share of the popular vote
- May increase voter participation/engagement since results more proportional

Cons - A PR voting system also fails to meet a number of our criteria:

- Voters vote for a party but not for specific candidates which reduces effectiveness and legitimacy
- Not being able to vote for specific candidates could reduce voter participation/engagement
- Not being able to vote for specific candidates could also undermine the integrity of the system since voters have no say or control over each party's list of candidates or their ranking
- There is no local representation since voters cannot vote for specific candidates

Since a pure PR system does not allow for local representation, there are a number of hybrid systems that combine elements of a Majority voting system (such as First-Past-The-Post or Alternative Vote) with various degrees of proportionality. MMP and STV are two such hybrid systems and are discussed next.

Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)

MMP is a hybrid system that seeks to create a more proportional outcome. Under MMP:

- voters cast two votes: one for their preferred party and one for their preferred candidates
- voters elect multiple MPs: a local candidate and regional "top-up" candidates (mixed member)
- the party ballot determines the share of the MPs to be elected by each party
- the candidate ballot determines which local and "top-up" candidates are elected

MMP can be designed in many different ways; each with its own pros and cons. Given its flexibility and advantages, it is not surprising that MMP has been proposed more than any other electoral reform system.

Pros:

- Voters can vote for multiple MPs; both local and regional
- Voters have multiple MPs they can contact with issues or concerns
- The use of “top-up” candidates makes results more proportional
- Each party has a better chance of having MPs from all regions in the country
- MMP is very flexible and can be configured in a way that best meets our unique needs

Cons:

- MMP creates two categories of MPs: local and regional, “top-up” MPs
- Ridings become larger and electoral boundaries need to be redrawn
- If ranked ballots are used (not recommended), it can become challenging to know all the candidates

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

STV is a somewhat more complex voting system that produces fairly proportional results by using a ranked ballot process to elect multiple candidates in given constituencies. Canada has used STV at the provincial and municipal levels in the past. In B.C., the Citizen’s Assembly on Electoral Reform recommended STV but it was defeated twice in referendums in 2005 and 2009.

Pros:

- Few votes are “wasted”
- The results are fairly proportional; the number of seats won closely approximates the votes received

Cons – A STV voting system fails to meet a number of our criteria:

- It is more difficult to understand and would need to be explained before the next election
- It takes longer to count the ballots (which can be addressed by using optical scanners)
- It requires creating new, multi-member constituencies; but this is doable before the next election
- Larger constituencies may result in local ridings not having a candidate to vote for (For instance, Hamilton’s 5 local ridings could be combined into one Hamilton region which would elect 5 candidates but there could be no candidates running from Ancaster or Dundas)

The table below summarizes how each of these electoral systems scores against the criteria identified above (Y=Yes, N=No, P=Possibly or Partially).

Criteria	Electoral System				
	Ranked Ballot	PR	MMP - Closed	MMP - Open	STV
Effectiveness	N	P	P	P	P
Legitimacy	N	P	P	Y	P
Increase civility	Y	P	Y	Y	Y
Increase engagement	N	P	P	P	Y
Access/inclusiveness	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Integrity of voting system	N	Y	Y	Y	P
Local representation	Y	N	Y/N	Y/N	P
Simple to understand	Y	Y	N	N	N
Every vote counts	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Proportionality	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Fair and tamper-proof	N	Y	N	P	P
Addresses riding inequity	N	N	N	N	N
Can be implemented by 2019	Y	Y	P	P	N

As the above table shows, none of the electoral systems considered satisfies all the criteria identified above and each has one or more major shortcomings.

So I would like to propose two alternate systems that better satisfy these criteria:

- Multi-Member Personal Proportional (M2P2)
- Proportional Parliament Voting System (PPVS)

These alternate systems are described in detail on the following pages.

ALTERNATE ROPOSAL #1 – MULTI-MEMBER, PERSONAL PROPORTIONAL (M2P2)

This electoral system allows voters to elect 4-6 MPs in a region (Multi-Member), ensures most voters will be able to elect a local candidate of their choice (Personal) and each party's share of the MPs elected is roughly equal to their share of the regional vote (Proportional); hence the term, Multi-Member, Personal, Proportional or M2P2.

Here is how M2P2 would work:

- Electoral Districts remain unchanged but are grouped together to form 75 regions as follows:
 - Alberta: 8 regions, each with 4-5 MPs (34 MPs)
 - British Columbia: 9 regions, each with 4-6 MPs (42 MPs)
 - Manitoba: 3 regions, each with 4-5 MPs (14 MPs)
 - New Brunswick: 2 regions of 5 MPs each (10 MPs)
 - Newfoundland and Labrador: 1 region (7 MPs)
 - Nova Scotia: 2 regions of 5 or 6 MPs each (11 MPs)
 - Ontario: 28 regions, each with 4-6 MPs (121 MPs)
 - Prince Edward Island: 1 region (4 MPs)
 - Quebec: 17 regions, each with 4-6 MPs (78 MPs)
 - Saskatchewan: 3 regions, each with 4-5 MPs (14 MPs)
 - Territories: 1 region (3 MPs)
 - Total: 75 regions (338 MPs)
- Voters cast two ballots: one for their preferred party, one for their preferred candidates (if there are 5 MPs to be elected, each voter votes for the 5 candidates they want to see elected)
- Voters simply vote for parties/candidates; they do not need to rank the parties or candidates
- The first ballot (for preferred party) determines how many MPs each party elects (Multiply the number of MPs to be elected by each party's share of the first ballot votes and use the "highest remainder" rounding process to determine how many MPs each party can elect)
- The second ballot (for preferred candidates) determines which candidates get elected for each party (if a party is electing 3 MPs, the party's 3 candidates with the most votes get elected)

Benefits of the M2P2 electoral system:

- it is simple (voters cast only 2 ballots and don't need to rank parties or candidates)
- it produces results that are roughly proportional and approximate the wishes of the electorate (each party's percentage of MPs elected is roughly equal to their share of votes received)
- it is likely to increase civility since each party will be trying to get more votes and elect more MPs
- it can increase candidate diversity and electoral success: since each party is likely to elect only 1-3 MPs per region, parties can run fewer, more diverse candidates who have a better chance of being elected
- having two votes and getting to elect 4-6 MPs gives voters a lot of flexibility with their ballots (voters can use their multiple votes to vote for their preferred party, for preferred candidates, for candidates from another party, for more women or more diversity in their MPs, etc.)

Benefits of the M2P2 electoral system (continued):

- it is likely to increase voter engagement since voters have greater flexibility with their ballots and their vote is likely to count in electing one or more MPs
- it allows for local representation (provided parties run local candidates)
- it provides good regional representation; most parties are likely to elect MPs from most regions
- it eliminates the need for “top-up” MPs; since near proportionality is achieved in each region
- with 4-6 MPs per region, a party would need 14%-20% support to elect an MP: a threshold that is attainable for major parties but likely too high for fringe parties/candidates
- there is no need to redraw electoral boundaries (simply group existing ridings together into regions)
- it can reduce or possibly eliminate “safe seats”; making elections more competitive and requiring parties to be more responsive to the electorate
- it can easily be implemented for the 2019 election

There are a few minor shortcomings to M2P2:

- voters will only be able to vote for a local candidate if their party runs a local candidate (parties may run fewer candidates and may not have a candidate from the voter’s local riding)
- results will be roughly proportional but will not be perfectly proportional
- most votes will count but there may be a small number of voters whose ballots will not elect an MP

ALTERNATE PROPOSAL #2 – THE PROPORTIONAL PARLIAMENT VOTING SYSTEM (PPVS)

As the table on page 7 shows, none of the electoral systems under consideration satisfy all the criteria identified above and each has one or more major shortcomings.

M2P2 is offered as an alternate system that incorporates the best features from PR, MMP and STV.

Another possibility is Proportional Parliament Voting System (PPVS), an alternate system that better meets the above criteria.

PR, MMP and STV all attempt to remedy the distortions of our current First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) Single Member Plurality system by reforming the electoral process. PPVS seeks to remedy these distortions by leaving the electoral system largely the same and changing the voting system within Parliament.

Here is how it would work:

- The number of MPs to be elected and the electoral districts remain unchanged
- Voters cast two ballots; one for their preferred candidate and one for their preferred party
- The first ballot (for preferred candidate) is used to elect MPs; with MPs being elected using our current First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system
- The second ballot (for preferred party) is used to determine each party’s share of the available votes in the House of Commons.

- To address the potential distortions with FPTP, we modify the voting system in the House of Commons
- We do this by increasing the number of votes available in the House of Commons by 50%
- Given our current total of 338 MPs, under PPVS there would be 507 House Votes ($338 \times 1.5 = 507$) available in the House of Commons
- Two-thirds of these votes would be awarded to the MPs (338 votes; same as now) and one-third of these votes would be Party Votes; “top up votes” (similar to “top up” candidates under MMP) awarded to the parties based on their share of the popular vote
- This results in a truly proportional distribution of votes within the House of Commons
- Each party receives a share of the 507 House Votes (HV) equal to their share of the popular vote as indicated by the voters’ second ballot (for their preferred party)
- The number of House Votes (HV) awarded to each party are divided into 2 parts:
 - Member Votes (MV), equal to the number of MPs elected by the party; and
 - Party Votes (PV), the number of “top-up” votes awarded to each party
- The calculate the number of Party Votes each party gets, simply subtract the number of Member Votes (MPs elected) from the party’s total House Votes
- The table below shows how many Member Votes, Party Votes and House Votes each party would get under our current First-Past-The-Post system and under a Proportional Parliament Voting System (PPVS) based on the 2015 election results:

Party	Popular Vote	MPs elected	Under FPTP	Under PPVS		
			% share of seats (338 MPs in total)	House Votes (507 available)	Member Votes	Party Votes
Liberal	39.5%	184	$184/338 = 54.4\%$	200 (39.5%)	184	16
Conservative	31.9%	99	$99/338 = 29.3\%$	162 (31.9%)	99	63
NDP	19.7%	44	$44/338 = 13.0\%$	100 (19.7%)	44	56
BQ	4.7%	10	$10/338 = 2.96\%$	24 (4.7%)	10	14
Green	3.5%	1	$1/338 = 0.30\%$	18 (3.5%)	1	17
Independents/ Minor parties	0.7%	0	$0/338 = 0.0\%$	3 (0.7%)	0	3 (not assigned)
TOTAL	100.0%	338		507	338	169

- When voting, MPs cast two ballots: First, they cast their Member Vote on behalf of their constituents, then they cast a second ballot to determine how their party’s Party Votes are allocated
- For instance, if a party’s MPs are 80% for a bill and 20% against a bill, then 80% of the party’s Party Votes would be cast for the bill and 20% of the party’s Party Votes would be cast against the bill
- The Party Votes for and against would be added to the Member Votes for and against to arrive at the total House Votes for and against a bill
- To pass, a bill would need 50% of the House Votes cast in favour of the bill (same as now)

- Since each party will have a share of the House Votes equal to their share of the popular vote, the government will often have less than 50% of the House Votes
- So the government will often need the support of one or more other parties to enact legislation
- This will require parties to work together in a more collaborative and respectful way than is sometimes the case now
- In the event of a by-election, the Party Votes would remain the same (even if a different party won the by-election), but the winning party would gain 1 Member Vote and 1 House Vote while the losing party would lose 1 Member Vote and 1 House Vote
- So if a riding held by the Conservatives was won by the NDP for instance, then the NDP would gain 1 Member Vote (for a new total of 45 Member Votes, 56 Party Votes and 101 House Votes) and the Conservatives would lose 1 Member Vote (for a new total of 98 Member Votes, 63 Party Votes and 161 House Votes)

The Proportional Parliament Voting System (PPVS) meets all of the criteria identified above:

- it is effective and legitimate: it reduces the distortions of our current FPTP system and produces results in line with the voters' intentions by awarding each party a share of the House Votes equal to their share of the popular vote
- it is likely to increase civility and collaboration between the parties (you are more likely to be nice to another party if you need their votes to pass your legislation)
- it is likely to increase voter participation/engagement because every vote counts and results are in line with voters' intentions (each party's share of the House Votes is equal to their share of the popular vote)
- it is simple; it doesn't require any changes to our current electoral process (other than adding a second section on the ballot for voters to indicate their preferred party)
- it allows all eligible voters to take part in the electoral process
- it does not introduce any changes that would undermine the integrity of the electoral process
- it retains local representation and accountability
- it is simple to understand and easy to implement
- every vote truly does count (even votes for independents and minor parties that don't elect an MP are counted; this is reflected in the House Votes that are not assigned to any party)
- it is a truly proportional system (each party's share of the House Votes is equal to their share of the popular vote)
- it could make parties more responsive to the wishes of the electorate: since each party's share of the House Votes is based on their share of the popular vote, parties will want to adopt policies that are likely to appeal to a broader range of voters
- since the House Votes are distributed proportionally to the parties based on their share of the popular vote, it eliminates the need to vote strategically
- it increases voter choice and flexibility by giving voters two votes (one for their preferred candidate and one for their preferred party)
- since votes are awarded based on the popular vote this is fair to all parties and doesn't confer an electoral advantage to any particular party

Benefits of the PPVS electoral system (continued):

- this system creates greater equity among electoral districts since each party's share of the House Votes is based on their share of the popular vote rather than on the number of MPs they elected
- it is easily implemented in time for the 2019 election
- it would be a uniquely "made in Canada" system that reflects our values of equality and fairness
- since it achieves the goal of proportionality without changing our electoral system, it is one option that could be approved in a referendum

The major drawback of PPVS is that regional imbalances can still occur; in which parties have few or no MPs elected from certain regions of the country. This could be addressed by using a "double majority" approach: if a bill is likely to impact a region of the country where a party has few or no MPs, then the party will need majority support from the riding associations in that region; in addition to a majority within the House of Commons. The "double majority" approach could also be used to compensate for other under-represented groups within the party, For instance, if a party is considering a poverty reduction program but doesn't have any MPs with lived experience of poverty; then the party could seek support from established, credible organizations in the poverty reduction field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PPVS is a simple, easily understood system that produces proportional results without changing our existing electoral system (other than changing the ballot to allow voters to vote for a party directly). PPVS does not require any changes to existing electoral districts and can easily be implemented in time for the 2019 election. And if the committee decides to conduct a referendum on any proposed electoral reforms, PPVS is an option that has a good chance of being approved. So I recommend that the committee consider PPVS as a viable option for electoral reform.

M2P2 combines many of the best features from PR, MMP and STV while avoiding many of the drawbacks. Grouping ridings allows for regional voting without needing to redraw electoral boundaries. Voters still get to vote for a local candidate but M2P2 introduces two changes for voters: voting twice (once for a party and once for candidates) and voting for 4-6 MPs instead of a single MP. M2P2 is more of a change from our existing electoral system than PPVS. So while M2P2 is superior to PPVS in a number of ways, it may face a bigger challenge of being approved in the event a referendum is held. I recommend M2P2 be considered as another viable option for electoral reform.