

Why Canada Needs a Proportional Electoral System That is Fair to ALL Parties

A Submission to the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform

Gayvin Franson, Saskatoon, October 2016

The present FPTP system in Canada patently disadvantages smaller parties whose support is broadly based across Canada. Because of where they live, "sprinkled" across the country, they almost never win a seat in parliament, in spite of even sizeable numbers of total votes. This is perhaps best demonstrated by looking at the numbers for the Green Party in the last three elections.

In the 2008 election, the Green Party polled 576,221 votes, but won only **one seat**. For fewer total votes, the Conservatives won the **35** seats listed in Table 1. This disparity is because FPTP, by its very nature, makes where you live a huge factor in the power of your vote.

In 2015, the Greens polled 602,944 votes that again resulted in only **one seat**. For fewer total votes, the Liberal Party won the **37** seats listed in Table 2. If those Greens were to trade houses with those particular Liberals, it would have produced 37 Green seats.

But look at what happened in the 2011 election. The Greens polled **almost a million votes** (937,613) and got **ZERO seats!** It beggars the imagination and begs the question of how anyone can say with a straight face that such an electoral system is in any way "democratic". In that election, and with fewer votes, the Conservatives won 55 seats, and the Liberals 54. Sorry, no table for this one but you can do the numbers yourself by looking at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Results_by_riding_of_the_Canadian_federal_election,_2008

Even a child can see the unfairness of doing things this way. Admittedly, this look at the numbers involves "cherry picking" the smaller constituencies across Canada. But the point is that variations in constituency size **are** a part of the reason for our inevitable non-proportional outcomes with FPTP. Our geography and constitution make it unavoidable that we have some seats that are physically huge but small in voter numbers. The more important point is that a carefully designed Made-in-Canada Proportional System **can** overcome this unfairness in spite of our inherent historical/geographical constraints. The Fair Vote Canada submission seems to offer a number of possible directions. To my untrained eye, their STV+ proposal, or their Rural-Urban Proportional hybrid, like the Swedish model, seem worth consideration. But to make for a truly fair and proportional result for **all** parties, may I humbly suggest that any PR system selected include a small additional "super" top-up layer to make the final federal result as fully proportional as possible, with a goal of proportionality in the high 90% range. These top-up seats could probably be set up on a regional basis, with perhaps fewer than ten seats needed...newly created seats if necessary. Made in Canada.

A carefully designed system would still have every MP representing a constituency of voters, whether large or small. More importantly, it would make almost every vote count towards a member in Ottawa, whether on the Government or the Opposition side.

The other benefits of PR are many. Presently, all the parties focus their attention and spending on the "swing seats", where a few votes either way will mean losing or winning a seat. The votes of those voters are much more "valuable" than votes in any of the "safe seats". So voters in the safe seats are virtually ignored in the months before the election,

and rightly feel that their vote will be meaningless, win or lose. With Proportional Representation, every vote goes toward electing a member to a seat. Votes are all equally "valuable", no matter where you live. The parties must pay attention to ALL the voters, both during the election AND all through their time in office. "Gerrymandering" the boundaries will likewise no longer affect the overall outcome of elections, so there will be no reason to ever again engage in such a practice.

B.C. and Ontario have had referenda on PR and both voted it down, largely on the basis of misinformation and myths in the media before the votes. The first myth is that a referendum is even needed. It is NOT. After input from a committee of knowledgeable and concerned people, the *Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform*, the legislation can be changed just like any other law. The media have characterized PR as complicated and hard to understand. It is NOT. The situation in a few countries like Italy, with many parties & frequent elections is NOT the norm. If a referendum is deemed necessary, it can only be considered legitimate if there is a substantial and substantive education blitz, in all the media. Such an educational exercise should be government funded, but created by a non-political group, academics for example.

Ranked or Preferential ballot systems are even more unfair than what we have now. I would urge the *Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform* to reject them and any other Majoritarian, "winner-take-all" systems out of hand. Only a carefully designed PR system, aiming at the highest feasible degree of proportionality, can eliminate the unfair and undemocratic outcomes illustrated above. For voter buy-in, I would urge the committee not to recommend any form of closed lists. Open lists, or even better, "best runner-up" for top-ups would be more transparent and accepted.

Summary:

The First-Past-the-Post electoral system in Canada inherently disenfranchises supporters of smaller political parties whose members' homes are not clustered in areas of Canada that correspond to existing constituency boundaries. Only some form of proportional representation of all voters, regardless of where their homes are located, can correct this very undemocratic feature of Canadian governance. I urge the Committee to give high priority to correcting this ongoing historical problem. It means rejecting any Majoritarian system and finding the best possible Made-in-Canada PR system that will achieve 90% or higher proportionality, and so give all smaller political parties, present and future, a fair voice.

The committee has a daunting and extremely important task to accomplish in a limited time. I look forward with great excitement about what this can mean for fairness and democracy in Canada, and congratulate in advance all the people of good will who make up the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform.

Gayvin Franson, Saskatoon

Table 1
2011 Fed Election - 35 PC seats won with 558,512 total votes

Labrador	Peter Penashue	4,234
Egmont	Gail Shea	10,467
South Shore—St. Margaret's	Gerald Keddy	17,924
West Nova	Greg Kerr	20,206
Madawaska—Restigouche	Bernard Valcourt	14,224
Miramichi	Tilly O'Neill-Gordon	16,113
Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	Robert Goguen	17,408
New Brunswick Southwest	John Williamson	17,971
Saint John	Rodney Weston	18,457
Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	Denis Lebel	18,438
Pickering—Scarborough East	Corneliu Chisu	19,220
Don Valley East	Joe Daniel	14,421
Scarborough Centre	Roxanne James	13,401
York Centre	Mark Adler	20,355
Bramalea—Gore—Malton	Bal Gosal	19,907
Mississauga East—Cooksville	Wladyslaw Lizon	18,796
London North Centre	Susan Truppe	19,468
Kenora	Greg Rickford	11,567
Nipissing—Timiskaming	Jay Aspin	15,495
Sault Ste. Marie	Bryan Hayes	18,328
Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette	Robert Sopuck	18,543
Elmwood—Transcona	Lawrence Toet	15,298
Winnipeg South Centre	Joyce Bateman	15,506
Cypress Hills—Grasslands	David Anderson	20,555
Palliser	Ray Boughen	15,850
Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	Tom Lukiwski	18,076
Regina—Qu'Appelle	Andrew Scheer	15,896
Battlefords—Lloydminster	Gerry Ritz	19,203
Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River	Rob Clarke	10,509
Prince Albert	Randy Hoback	19,214
Saskatoon—Humboldt	Brad Trost	19,954
Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	Kelly Block	14,652
Vancouver South	Wai Young	19,504
Nunavut	Leona Aglukkaq	3,930
Yukon	Ryan Leef	<u>5,422</u>

Total: 558,512

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Results_by_riding_of_the_Canadian_federal_election,_2011

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Canadian_election

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Gres&genElection=41&ridProvince=0&submit1=Search>

Table 2**2015 Fed Election - 36 Liberal seats won with 585,008 total votes**

<u>Labrador</u>	<u>Yvonne Jones</u>	8,878
<u>Cardigan</u>	<u>Lawrence MacAulay</u>	14,621
<u>Charlottetown</u>	<u>Sean Casey</u>	11,910
<u>Egmont</u>	<u>Bobby Morrissey</u>	10,521
<u>Malpeque</u>	<u>Wayne Easter</u>	13,950
<u>Fundy Royal</u>	<u>Alaina Lockhart</u>	19,136
<u>Miramichi—Grand Lake</u>	<u>Pat Finnigan</u>	17,202
<u>New Brunswick Southwest</u>	<u>Karen Ludwig</u>	16,656
<u>Tobique—Mactaquac</u>	<u>T. J. Harvey</u>	17,909
<u>Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia</u>	<u>Rémi Massé</u>	14,378
<u>Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine</u>	<u>Diane Lebouthillier</u>	15,345
<u>Chicoutimi—Le Fjord</u>	<u>Denis Lemieux</u>	13,619
<u>Québec</u>	<u>Jean-Yves Duclos</u>	15,566
<u>Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine</u>	<u>Sherry Romanado</u>	18,301
<u>Montarville</u>	<u>Michel Picard</u>	18,848
<u>Rivière-des-Mille-Îles</u>	<u>Linda Lapointe</u>	18,787
<u>Thérèse-De Blainville</u>	<u>Ramez Ayoub</u>	18,281
<u>Scarborough North</u>	<u>Shaun Chen</u>	18,904
<u>Brampton Centre</u>	<u>Ramesh Sangha</u>	19,277
<u>Hamilton East—Stoney Creek</u>	<u>Bob Bratina</u>	19,622
<u>Niagara Centre</u>	<u>Vance Badawey</u>	19,513
<u>Kenora</u>	<u>Howard Hampton</u>	10,420
<u>Sault Ste. Marie</u>	<u>Terry Sheehan</u>	19,582
<u>Thunder Bay—Rainy River</u>	<u>Don Rusnak</u>	18,523
<u>Kildonan—St. Paul</u>	<u>MaryAnn Mihychuk</u>	18,717
<u>Winnipeg Centre</u>	<u>Robert-Falcon Ouellette</u>	18,471
<u>Edmonton Centre</u>	<u>Randy Boissonnault</u>	19,902
<u>Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon</u>	<u>Jati Sidhu</u>	16,625
<u>Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge</u>	<u>Dan Ruimy</u>	17,673
<u>Steveston—Richmond East</u>	<u>Joe Peschisolido</u>	19,486
<u>Surrey Centre</u>	<u>Randeep Sarai</u>	19,471
<u>Burnaby North—Seymour</u>	<u>Terry Beech</u>	18,938
<u>Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam</u>	<u>Ron McKinnon</u>	19,938
<u>Coquitlam---Port Coquitlam</u>	<u>Ron McKinnon</u>	19,938
<u>Nunavut</u>	<u>Hunter Tootoo</u>	5,619
<u>Northwest Territories</u>	<u>Michael McLeod</u>	9,172
<u>Yukon</u>	<u>Larry Bagnell</u>	10,887

Total: 585,008

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Results_by_riding_of_the_Canadian_federal_election,_2015