Brief, to the Canadian Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform
submitted by
John Clarke Warkentin

Recommendation

I am in favour of a <u>modified</u> Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system for Canada. The modifications are as follows.

- There would be special single-member ridings for Indigenous Peoples, similar to the single-member Maori electoral districts in New Zealand. Only indigenous persons would be allowed to run in and vote in these ridings and members would be elected by the First-Past-the-Post system.The number of such ridings would be based on the percentage of indigenous peoples in Canada's population, so that their number of seats in Parliament would be that same percentage. The total number of seats in Parliament, currently 338, would be increased by these special seats.

- The party lists would not be created by the political parties themselves. To be on a particular party's list, a person must run for that party in a single-member constituency and fail to be elected as that constuency's member. The percentage of the votes cast for that candidate in that constituency would then be calculated. The party list for that party would then consist of all such failed-to-be-elected candidates, ranked highest to lowest by the percentages so calculated. The "top-up" seats would be added from the party lists so determined.

Rational

1 Mandate of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform

   The Mandate is stated at the http://www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/ERRE/About URL, as specified by the Parliamentary Motion by which the Committee was established. In particular, the following five "principles for electoral reform" are itemized: effectiveness and legitimacy, engagement, accessibility and inclusiveness, integrity, and local representation.

   I submit that the above recommendation satisfies all of these principles, as detailed in the Mandate document, but it would take many pages to effectively argue that case, pages which I don't have according to the limits specified for brief submissions, so I will pick out a few which I deem to be most important.

   - foster greater civility and collaboration in politics: Propotional representation would almost certainly result in minority governments. For minority government to work, greater civility and collaboration would be an absolute requirement. For if a member castigated another member as an oponent one time, he might find that another time, his party was in a coalition with that member's party, and the two would find it difficult to work together. Similarly for parties as a whole.

   - local representation: The MMP system provides for local representation.

   - independent members: The MMP system provides for independent members

2 Personal Opinion

   - Up until now, Canadian Federal Parliaments and Provincial Legislative Assemblies have failed to treat Indigenous Peoples fairly, and in keeping with the various treaties that are supposed to bind these government bodies. Much improvement has occurred over the last couple of decades, but much, much, more needs to be done. I beleive that by ensuring Indigenous Peoples have a significant voice in Parliament, improvements will be more rapid than would otherwise be the case.

   - I very much mistrust the idea of political parties coming up with their own party lists. Individual members of political parties have very little power/influence over party decisions - just look at the hub-bub stirred up by the Green Party membership voting to support BDS, and the rejection of that vote by the party's leadership. And even if that were not the case, too few Canadians are currently, or ever likely to be, members of some party or other. That means party lists drawn up by parties are basically the prerogatives of party elites, and have hardly been vetted in any way by actual voters. My recommendation alleviates that risk - a person hoping to get on a party list would have to campaign hard in order to win a higher percentage of the votes than others in the party with similar hopes.

Example of how a party list might be constructed

Consider a country with a First-Past-the-Post electoral system that is switching to an MMP system. The country currently has roughly 1.5 million voters, distributed roughly equally among 20 ridings, so that each riding has roughly 75,000 voters. Under the MMP system with party lists created according to my recommendation, but no seats reserved for Indigenous Peoples, there are to be 10 single-member ridings. A party must receive at least 5% of the votes cast country-wide in order to obtain top-up seats.

I wll call these ridings A, B, C, D, E, F. G, H, I, and J. Party X has never won a seat in this country under FPTP, but has hopes of picking up one or more seats through proportionality. Party X runs candidates in all of these seats, and the results of the first election under the new system are depicted in the following table.

Riding	Total Votes Cast for Candidates in that Riding	Party X's Candidate in that Riding	Votes Cast for Party X Candidate in that Riding	Percentage of Total Votes Cast in that Riding for Party X Candidate
A	49,637	Candidate Xa	2,448	4.93%
B	51,502	Candidate Xb	3,622	7.03%
C	50,279	Candidate Xc	2,646	5.26%
D	49,751	Candidate Xd	1,983	3.99%
E	52,975	Candidate Xe	3,092	5.84%
F	48,392	Candidate Xf	2,724	5.63%
G	49,847	Candidate Xg	3,286	6.59%
H	50,823	Candidate Xh	3,705	7.29%
I	48,173	Candidate Xi	2,936	6.09%
J	52,247	Candidate Xj	2,367	4.53%
Totals	503,626	Party X, country-wide	28,809	5.72%

Ranking the Party X candidates from highest to lowest percentages of votes received, the following is the party list for Party X.

Candidate Xh, 7.29%; Candidate Xb, 7.03%; Candidate Xg, 6.59%; Candidate Xi, 6.09%; Candidate Xe, 5.84%; Candidate Xf, 5.63%; Candidate Xc, 5.26%; Candidate Xa, 4.93%; Candidate Xj, 4.53%; Candidate Xd, 3.99%.

Since Party X received 5.72% of the votes cast country-wide, it has earned one top-up seat. That seat therefore goes to Candidate Xh.

Online Voting

I have a PhD in Computer Science and as such, believe that I can speak with some authority when I state that, no matter how secure a system is designed and implemented, it can still be hacked. A subtle hacking could *significantly* alter the overall outcome of an election, and may be impossible to detect, or take years to detect, as happened recently with Yahoo. With the current paper voting system, it is virtually impossible for perpetrators to alter voting results in a sufficient number of ridings to *signicicantly* change the overall result of an election.

Another consideration is that of judicial recounts. These should'nt be needed in an online system, because the computer *always* tallies things correctly, right? But how can anybody be sure that the code has no bugs that could cause incorrect results? Again, I say that *no* computer system is bug-free. Our current paper ballot system of voting has had centuries of debugging effort put into it. Canada should stick with the tried and true.

For these reasons I am totally against any form of online voting.