

Oct. 6, 2016

The Sunshine Coast Alliance 4 Democracy was established in 2012 to tackle a variety of issues including the democratic deficit in Canada. One of the key issues around which we gathered was the broken electoral system, which currently does not reflect the wishes of the Canadian people. When a majority government can be formed with less than 39% of the vote as in the last two federal elections, it is time to look to other modern democracies for potential solutions.

We quickly realized that a system based on Proportional Representation rather than a majoritarian (or first-past-the-post) system, better reflects the wishes of the people and leads to a more engaged electorate. With declining voter turnout in Canada, we had run into the attitude among young people of “what’s the point” in relation to voting. Under the current system, the many people casting ballots that are not reflected in the election outcome, can become discouraged.

The Liberals, the NDP, the Green Party and the Bloc Quebecois, support electoral change with the first three making this a main plank in their recent 2015 election campaign. Only the Conservatives are against electoral reform and they were soundly defeated, so Alliance4Democracy sees no need to hold a referendum—the Liberals were *very clear about ending the first past the post system, so the election itself was a de facto referendum.*

From our many community and group discussions, we conclude that Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMP) provides the best model for the parliamentary committee to consider, as it offers possible variations that can be developed for a *made-in-Canada system*. Single Transferable Vote, while roughly proportional, is a more confusing system, requires larger ridings, and has an unrealistically high threshold for parties to meet in order to get ‘a seat at the table’. In addition, MMP is the system recommended by the Law Commission of Canada and other experts.

We most definitely recommend against implementing another majoritarian system such as the Ranked Ballot (also known as Alternative Vote), which can skew election results even more than the current system. Through discussions, webinars and research, we learned that Proportional Representation has many other advantages (listed on the following page) and have been active in spreading this message in our own community.

We urge the special parliamentary committee to immediately begin to a) develop a process to implement and have a PR system in place before the next election and b) begin an educational program once the type of PR has been selected, to help Canadians be ready to vote in an informed manner in the next election. *We, like many Canadians, expect the promise to "make every vote count" in 2019 to be honoured. There is very little in the news about your committee and about how people can have input, so we respectfully suggest that you put out press releases about your work and engage more Canadians in this very important initiative.*

Thank you for your hard work, consultations with citizens and thoughtful consideration.

Gayle Neilson

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## Advantages of Proportional Representation

- Every vote counts so citizens feel represented in parliament
- Higher voter turn-out as citizens are more engaged in the electoral process
- Eliminates strategic (or negative) voting
- Less division and polarization in parliament
- More co-operation leads to better governance that focuses on long-term solutions
- Citizens more knowledgeable and interested in policies
- Media covers a broader range of policies
- Political stability even with coalition government
- Less adversarial politics and more co-operation
- More egalitarian social policies and MPs who better reflect Canada's diversity
- Less corporate control of policy
- More empowerment for individual MPs
- MPs more representative of the wishes of the people

Notes: for a comprehensive study about these advantages, see AREND LIJPHART, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2012