

Submission from Boyd Reimer to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform, October 5, 2016...

...Now as a Written Brief:

Summary:

Greetings Special Committee on Electoral Reform:

To “make every vote count” in Canada, I recommend the electoral system called, “Mixed Member Proportional” (MMP), specifically with Open Lists. Open list MMP has had a proven track record for many years in Bavaria, Germany’s largest province.

If the Committee’s consensus shows that it’s not possible to get MMP with open lists, then I would be still be satisfied with any other system which is at least “proportional representation” -- such as STV, etc. This is where the percentage of seats a party gets will match the percentage of votes they get. I want proportional representation, at the very least.

BUT I definitely do NOT want any electoral system which is “Winner-Take-All”. This is “where the candidate with the most votes in one riding ‘takes all’ of that riding, and then is the only representative of that riding. This family of electoral systems includes First Past the Post, and Alternative Vote. I clearly don’t want these because they are not Proportional Representation.

Below are two longer clarifications showing the reasons for the above recommendations. Here’s a summary of what is below:

- **Why a referendum on proportional representation would be detrimental to voter equality**
 - o Partisan voting in such a referendum
 - o How the results of such a referendum could be erroneously perceived as non-partisan
- **Addressing concerns with MMP**
 - o Addressing concerns on the importance of citizens and geography
 - o Open lists are crucial
 - o Proven track record of MMP aspect and of Open list aspect
 - o Making every first vote count
 - o Why no referendum is needed now

Details:

How the results of a PR referendum could be erroneously perceived as *non-partisan* by large numbers of people

There is a probability that a person's answer on that referendum question will be influenced by their allegiances to their chosen political party. That probability is much higher than if that same person were to answer a referendum question on Prohibition (1898), Conscription (1942), and/or the Charlottetown Accord (1992).

Because of that difference in that probability, it is illusory to think that a referendum on proportional representation is *the same* as those other referenda.

And yet that illusion is precisely what some people, who have a long term political agenda, want us to believe. These people have money to spend on pushing this illusion.

Others simply believe that illusion because they have not yet been made aware that it is an illusion. There is less money spent on debunking this illusion, than on pushing this illusion.

.....

Some corollaries

Because of the above, it is a mistake to have a referendum on PR. It always has been a mistake and it always will be...anywhere. This includes all of the provincial referenda in Canada, and all of the national referenda around the world. The decisions to have these referenda perhaps all involved people falling into the trap of believing the illusion that referenda on PR are not inherently partisan.

New Zealand, and other countries, shouldn't have had to *wait* for the political landscape to be strategically correct* before they switched to PR. No one should have to *wait* before making their voting system fair. No one should have to *wait* for basic justice. Justice delayed is justice denied.

1. Open lists force all candidates to be elected by citizens of that region. In that way, they are **not** like the closed lists used in some other countries (ie. they are not party appointments in which the voter for that party has no choice.) Even the nomination of such candidates could be done through a democratic process within the region they are applying to represent.
2. Open lists of regional candidates are attached to specific geographic locations. In fact, a total of 27 such regions across Canada are suggested for this particular system by Dennis Pilon, professor of political science at York University (2).

****Ontario voters have already said that Open Lists are crucial:**

MMP (3), and specifically Open List MMP (see footnote 4), was recommended by the Law commission of Canada in 2004. But in 2007, unfortunately Ontario voters were presented with something that did not follow that advice from the 2004 Commission. In 2007 the reason Ontario voters rejected MMP was largely due to the fact that it was not the Open List type of MMP. Therefore open lists are crucial.

****Proven track records of the MMP aspect, and Open list aspect:**

1. MMP is already used by the several successful democracies including Germany, New Zealand, Scotland and more.
2. Open lists are already used by several successful democracies including Japan and more.
3. Open list MMP, in particular, is used in Bavaria, a state in Germany.

****Making every first vote count**

To “make every vote count” in a more accurate way, it’s important to try to, as much as possible, “make every first choice vote count.” If every first choice vote doesn’t count, then we’ll continue to have false majorities in the future –just like we had with the old First Past the Post system.

To truly have every voter’s voice represented in Parliament, it’s important that the end product of an election be an accurate undiluted reflection of the full spectrum of Canadians. “Undiluted accuracy” means not diluting any Canadian’s voice by forcing them to accept their second or third choice with a voting system which relies too heavily on ranked ballots.

I would rather have a future filled with coalition governments which are accurate reflections of the full spectrum of Canadians --rather than have a future filled with governments which claim to represent a majority of Canadians but whose claim is not

genuine because it relies too heavily on some second and third choices. Coalition governments will have a genuine undiluted strong mandate to cooperate; and cooperation is exactly what the diversity of Canada needs.

****Why no referendum is needed now, ... and when it would be needed**

Because of the results of the 2015 election, no referendum is needed to go ahead with electoral reforms: A total of 62.56% of voters voted for parties which campaigned on a promise that they will “make every vote count”: Liberals (39.47%), NDP (19.71%), Green (3.45%). This is already a substantial majority mandate to go ahead with your plan to make every vote count.

In the history of Canada, a referendum was never used in 1918 to give women the vote, nor to give First Nations people the vote, nor to lower the voting age from 21 to 18, nor to remove the property ownership requirement for voters.

There is already a precedent for a provincial govt in Canada changing the voting system without a referendum: This happened in BC in 1950 and 1951.

If there is a lot of pressure to hold a referendum, I suggest waiting and having it held after we have tried proportional representation for 4 or 8 years, but not before. Why? Because then more people will know the practical aspects of what they are voting for or against. Right now, not enough people are fully informed on the practical aspects. Besides, in the future, if people want to switch back to the old system, they can elect a government that runs on that platform and does that. There was already a precedent for this in 1951 in BC.

Your plan to “make every vote count” is also supported by ten Canadian Commissions, Assemblies and Reports that have recommended proportional representation since 1984. (see below)

Please let me know what you think all of the above, thanks.

Sincerely,

Boyd Reimer

Further reading:

<http://wilfday.blogspot.ca/2010/04/mmp-made-easy.html>

<http://fairvote.ca/>

<http://wilfday.blogspot.ca/>

made-in-Canada system.

It recommended a [mixed system](#) quite like that of Scotland's Parliament. A majority of MPs will still be directly elected in local single-member ridings accountable to them. At least a third of MPs will be elected from regions to "top-up" the local results, so that the overall result reflects the share of votes cast for each party.

You have two votes: one to simply choose your local MP, and one for your regional MP which counts as a vote for the party you want in government. Unlike Scotland, for regional MP voters could choose a candidate from those nominated by party members in their region, or could simply vote for the regional slate as ranked by the party members' nomination process.

The [Law Commission model](#) was inspired by that used in Scotland and Wales. In Scotland, the regions have a total of 16 MPs; in Wales, 12. For example, a region might have 14 MPs — nine local MPs, and five regional "top-up" MPs who campaigned in your region and will compete with your local MP to serve you. It maintains the link between citizens and their representatives. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, which each have 14 MPs, and in the Atlantic provinces, the "region" would be the whole province.

Like all proportional systems, it will let every vote count, and promote consensual, cooperative and cross-party law-making. Since each province would still have the same number of MPs, no constitutional amendment would be needed.

2. Quebec's Estates-General on the Reform of Democratic Institutions - 2003

2003 In 2002-3 Quebec's Estates General on the Reform of Democratic Institutions (the Béland Commission) visited 20 towns in Quebec and held 27 public hearings, and in February 2003 brought 825 people together to deliberate on these issues. In March 2003 they presented their Report.

3. Prince Edward Island - 2003

2003 In January 2003, the Government of Prince Edward Island appointed the Hon. Norman Carruthers, a retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island, to examine options for reform of the Island's electoral system. In December 2003, Justice Carruthers presented his report recommending a Mixed Member Proportional System (MMPS) based on the system now in use in Germany, New Zealand, Scotland and Wales.

4. British Columbia Citizens' Assembly - 2004
2004

5. Quebec government study - 2003

2003 In July 2003 the new government of Jean Charest began work on a mixed member system, aided by the [140-page Report of Prof. Louis Massicotte](#).

6. New Brunswick's Commission on Legislative Democracy - 2005

2005 Bernard Lord, Premier of New Brunswick, established the Commission on Legislative Democracy in December 2003 to study democratic reform in New Brunswick. In its [report](#) in January 2005 the Commission recommended a regional MMP

7. Quebec Citizens' Committee Report - 2006

2006 A parliamentary Select Committee of the National Assembly began proceedings in November 2005, and sat jointly with a randomly selected Citizens' Committee. They were to study and make recommendations on the draft bill introduced in December 2004. They held public consultations in 16 cities across Quebec beginning in January 2006, when 379 groups and individuals made presentations.

In April 2006 the Citizen's Committee presented to the National Assembly a [detailed report](#).

8. Quebec Select Committee Report - 2006

2006 The Select Committee recommended the mixed compensatory system proposed, but with changes to give greater consideration to the multiplicity of political expressions.

9. Ontario Citizens' Assembly - 2007

2007 In November 2004, Premier McGuinty announced that a citizens' assembly would be created to examine the FPTP electoral system and to recommend possible changes. A referendum would be held if an alternative electoral system was recommended by the citizens' assembly. The selection process for the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, 103 randomly selected citizens, was not completed until June 2006. Members of the Assembly began meeting in September 2006 with a mandate to examine current and prospective electoral

systems through public meetings and written submissions.

In a report in May 2007, the Assembly recommended a MMP system combining members of provincial parliament elected in local districts and members elected for the whole province from [closed province-wide party lists](#). The government held a referendum on this recommendation in conjunction with the general election in October 2007.

10. Quebec Chief Electoral Officer's Report - 2007

In December 2007 the [Report of Quebec's Chief Electoral Officer](#) on a **2007** compensatory mixed system was made public. It reviewed a number of options for the design of a mixed proportional model for Quebec, leaning towards a nine-region model with an open list system giving voters the choice of using their second ballot to vote for a party or one regional candidate.

With all this evidence, no wonder [polls have shown for more than ten years that at least 70% of Canadians support moving towards a system of proportional representation in Canadian elections](#).

