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Winnipeg, MB

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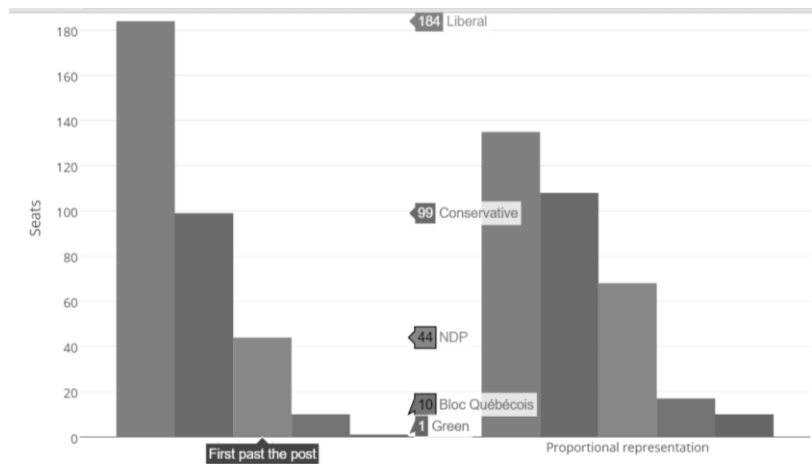
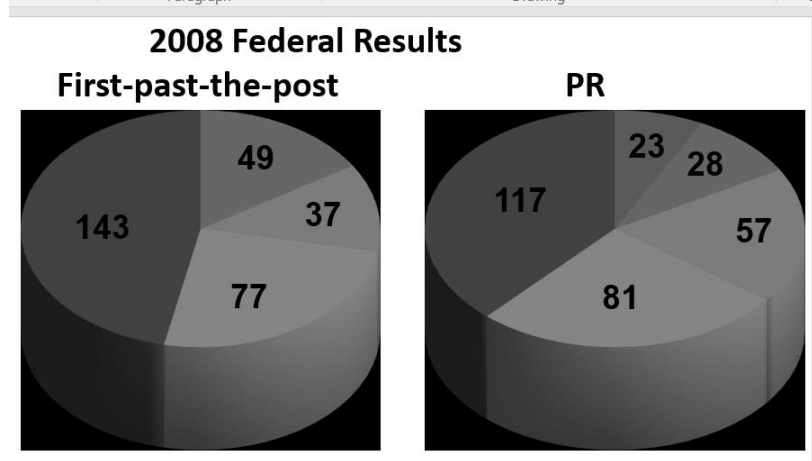
Members of the Committee, Mr. F. Scarpaleggia, Mr. S. Reid, Mr. N. Cullen, Mr. J. Aldag, Mr. A. Boulerice, Mr. M DeCoursey, Mr G. Deltell, Ms. E. May, Mr. B. Richards, Ms. S. Romanado, Ms. R. Sabota, Mr. L. Theriault
House of Commons Committee on Electoral Reform

Presentation to the Electoral Reform Committee to make the case for Mixed Member PR

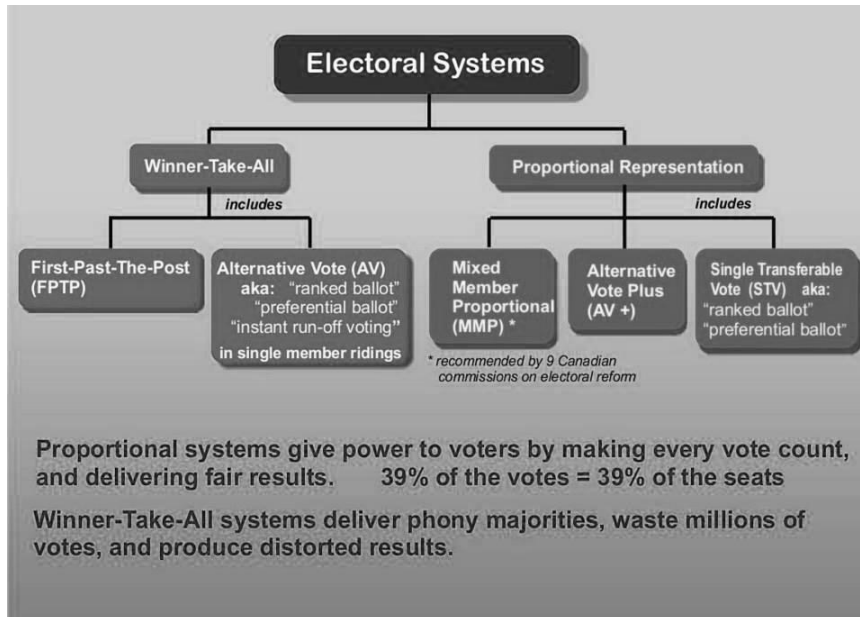
To all Members of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform and other interested Canadians:

Thank you for all your hard work and for to Winnipeg on the 20th. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to illness.

Electoral reform is a must for the Canadian political agenda. It was passed in 2004. The public I have spoken with, having attended 4 sessions on PR, appear to be in favor, although the sample size is admittedly small, it is diverse. As proportional representation appears to be accepted, the issue is which form is best. One of the best explanations of the effects of the various systems is trying them out using known election results and applying them.



The drawback of ranked ballots is that is a variation of FPTP. The Ranked Ballot or Single Transferable Vote systems) cannot reliably produce proportionality.



If we would use a PR/ranked ballot fusion to drop the lowest person from the ballot to get 50%, if the candidate is actually the 2nd choice if most voters, dropping that candidate because s/he did not get 50% of the first ranked place would produce inaccurate results. A lot of people know which government they favor, and yet for their local person, they may want a candidate of a different party. With the right degree of education of the public, we could get this type of 2 vote ballot into place, referred to as the mixed member proportional PR. This way you can vote for the Liberals or Conservatives as the government, and vote for the Green/NDP member for your own representative. A collection of large fused ridings would give people the opportunity to actually have a Conservative, Liberal, NDP and Green elected or 3 Liberals and one NDP. People would feel they had much more say when they vote with these approaches.

The result of this is not a particularly complex process, would not be perfectly proportional but would be much more so than by maintaining the status quo. Maybe more importantly it would prevent a situation where a political party clearly not wanted by the majority of voters would form government.

A PR system would lessen the need for strategic voting, as Canadians would feel more free to vote their conscience. This open list system in particular also eliminates the quandary of voters liking a local candidate but not his or her party; as they could vote for that individual in particular but give the rest of their votes to another party. The split ballot system could be used as the alternative method, leaving the ridings as they are. These are minor considerations. The main concept of voting for the governing party and also local representation appears to be the most proportional method. However, in the end, it would be worth it for MPs to remain responsive to concerns from all areas within their district or riding when running for re-election.

The other option would see the country divided into somewhere 50 to 60 districts with 3 and 9 MPS elected from each. The House of Commons would remain at 338 seats until the next census, with all provinces keeping their current number of MPs. The territories, which only have enough population for one MP, might still need to opt for a FPTP method because of the sheer difficulty of campaigning over large, sparsely populated areas. A ballot for southern and western provinces would choose up to 5 candidates, regardless of party. A voter would have as many votes as MPs to be elected.

An open-list; regionally-based proportional representation electoral system addresses most of the concerns about the current electoral system, as well as the issues raised so far by the electoral reform committee. The mixed member proportional with voting for the party and voting for the MP does essentially the same thing but makes the ballot slightly more complex.

Some further beneficial effects of the mixed member proportional PR could be:

- A more representative Parliament.
- The number of seats won by political parties would more closely match their electoral support.
- The threshold for admission for new parties would be lower, and movements such as the Greens might have a better chance at winning seats.
- Fewer, larger constituencies may be problematic for attending to constituents needs.
- Under the mixed member proportional systems, roles for MPs may be improved if several MPs represent an area. Workload issues would need to be solved in this case so that each serve constituents evenly or nearly so.
- Less regional polarization as caucuses would be more likely to include MPs from most major provinces.
- Statistically, PR voting systems tend to improve the chances of women and members of minority groups being elected

Ideally maximal voter turnout would be idea but the downside of mandatory voting is voting by uninformed voters, and the whole concept of a penalty for failing to vote. Better is voluntary voting and a good educational program. Of course, for this change, education will be very important.

Electronic on-line voting could be used with a single use PIN number. Provisions to prevent theft or coercion would need to be in place. Additionally, while trialing the method, a clearly identifiable paper backup should be used for recounts or for cyber hacking. The issue of recounts would need to be solved before instituting on-line voting as a primary method of voting.

Lowering the voter age should be considered as students generally are very engaged and giving them the option of expressing their preferences could be ideal in establishing good life long voting habits.

References:

Explanation of mixed member proportional systems, see the Law Commission of Canada, *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*, Ottawa, 2004, pp. 90-99.

National Post <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-politics/what-the-federal-election-would-have-looked-like-with-proportional-representation>

Respectively submitted,

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Professional Summary:

Physician, veterinarian, ecologist (naturalist), teacher, with 21 yrs as a veterinarian (clinic owner), 18 years as a physician, 10 yrs in teaching, and a lifelong study of ecology and teaching ecological issues (since undergraduate degree) as well as intense interest in explaining pathology and physiology in medicine and veterinary medicine to lay persons. Extensive work with inner city Winnipeg residents, learning their culture, which has reinforced my training in ecology (wildlife conservation) and Mother Earth. Politics is my other intense interest. Traveling the world is my hobby, to study wildlife and ways of life. Skilled at running a small business, educated on government activities, as an active participant with the ability to see difficult projects to the end (housing, disability and educational matters). Have been complimented on ability to explain pathology and physiology in medicine to patients and aiding resettlement of immigrants.

Goals: Management position in ecology for rapid transition to a green ecology or in politics, utilizing key issues brought forward by Indigenous persons; or position working on enhancing lives and education of Indigenous Canadians in Government funded programs. Am disabled, using a red wheelchair to get around.