

October 4, 2016

Submission to ERRE Committee

Good day,

I am writing to you today to share my thoughts about electoral reform and based on that to ask you to recommend the proportional representation principle to address the problems with our current system.

All of us have known only one electoral system at the federal level, the First Past the Post system. This is a system, given that we have three major parties and a few small parties, that allows governments to achieve absolute political power with less than 50% of the popular vote. The last two majority governments had less than 40% of the popular vote. This unassailable fact is in itself the biggest argument for a new system. It is clearly undemocratic in the most basic sense of the word, that every vote should count toward representation by our political system. Instead, our country gives absolute power at the federal level to a group of people who represent less than 50% of the voting population.

The principle that best adheres to the idea that every citizen's vote should count is proportional representation. Most of the democratic world uses proportional representation because it best reflects the wishes of the population. The merits of PR can best be seen in Europe where this principle has been used for over a hundred years in some countries, and to my knowledge, none of these countries has ever felt the need to replace PR with another system. Instead, modifications made to these electoral systems lead to better application of the PR principle. No such modification is possible with FPTP.

A cursory review of the testimony your committee has received on electoral reform shows that a large majority of expert opinion supports PR as the principle which best meets the desire to have every vote count. In this testimony and elsewhere I've read that the longer a country has PR, the more likely that a) voter engagement is greater, b) participation of women in government is greater, c) income inequality is less pronounced, d) environmental protection is greater, and e) minority voices have a greater chance of being represented. I've attached a brief comparison of three of these qualities as they relate to Canada, Sweden and Germany (page 3). Most striking is the level of voter engagement when Canada is compared to Sweden. The highest voter turnout in Canada since 1960 didn't quite match the lowest voter turnout in Sweden. This is a major reason, among many, for choosing the PR principle for Canada.

A new electoral system should be made to fit Canada's needs so it is likely that a PR system for Canada will be unique. The two main PR systems that I know of are Mixed Member Proportional and the Single Transferable Vote. I believe that the solution to our need for a better electoral system can be found in the structures of these two approaches to PR. Both approaches allow for local representation, a feature important to most Canadians, but with a mechanism that allows for a balancing of voter intention, whether through open or closed lists

or ranked ballot features. Elements of these approaches to PR are used in various countries and don't appear to be too complicated for citizens to understand.

I know that the committee is also evaluating the idea of ranked ballots/alternative voting. I don't believe ranked ballots would be as effective in making every vote count as PR. In the most general sense I say this because ultimately the ranked ballot system is a majoritarian system like FPTP, and this means that while people's votes will count more than in FPTP, the end result is that the majority of people's first votes will not be of the same value as the minority that votes initially for the winning candidate. In most cases a minority of voters will have their first vote count, another minority or perhaps even a majority have their second vote count, and so on. Every vote counts in this approach, but some are worth more than others.

Another problem with ranked ballots is that minority voices will likely be eliminated entirely, unless a candidate is very popular in a riding. The Green Party, for example, would continue to be underrepresented though across the country up to 5% of citizens support this party.

Given the need to reform our electoral system and the evidence showing that Proportional Representation would be most effective in making every citizen's vote count, I strongly urge the ERRE committee to recommend a new electoral system that incorporates PR.

Thank you for considering my submission,

Peter Morgan  
Peterborough, ON

## APPENDIX

### Three Benefits of Proportional Representation

#### 1. Greater engagement of citizens

Sweden (2014) - 85.81% of all reg. voters / 82.61% of all eligible voters  
Germany (2013) - 71.53% of all reg. voters / 66.07% of all eligible voters  
Canada (2015) - 68.49% of all reg voters / 61.59% of all eligible voters

**Highest/Lowest turnout since 1960:** Sweden (88.49%/75.6%)  
of all eligible voters Germany (88.74%/64.61%)  
Canada (75.08%/53.59%)

<http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=37>

#### 2. More women participate and get elected in PR systems

Sweden-ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the world - 43.6%  
Germany-ranked 21<sup>st</sup> in the world - 36%  
Canada-ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in the world - 26%

<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

#### 3. Alternative parties (e.g. Greens) have a greater chance of representation

Sweden - 4<sup>th</sup> place - 6.9% of the vote - 25/349 seats  
Germany - 4<sup>th</sup> place - 10.7% of the vote - 68/598 seats  
Canada - 5<sup>th</sup> place - 3.45% of the vote - 1/338 seats (if PR - 12 seats)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swedish\\_general\\_election,\\_2014](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swedish_general_election,_2014);  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_federal\\_election,\\_2013](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_federal_election,_2013);  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian\\_federal\\_election,\\_2015](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_federal_election,_2015).