

## Brief submitted to ERRE

(Special Committee on Electoral Reform)

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I call this the All-elected Member Proportional system which can be used to 'AMP' up our democracy!

People who put their names up to run in any election, earn great respect in my books. They subject themselves to the scrutiny of being a candidate and running in a campaign. And it is because of this scrutiny that I think only those who have gone through it should represent us in parliament:

For the House of Commons I propose a modified MMP. The directly elected MPs would be as in the standard MMP model. However, the "party lists" of those who are to adjust the representation to reflect the national popular vote, should come from those who ran and came in second in their riding! The order of these lists would be determined by Elections Canada based on the percentage of: their vote compared to the winner's vote (second's # votes/winner's # votes x 100%). This would approximately adjust for the number of credible candidates running in each riding. For this to work there would have to be a legal requirement that only one candidate from each party can run in each riding and, once elected, if any MP wants to switch to another party, they would trigger a by-election (with the exception that they could become an independent without a by-election).

If the resulting list is not long enough, third place candidates would be considered, and so on. This would be limited by a legal requirement that no more than two candidates can be elected from each riding. If not enough candidates ran and were eligible for any party, that party's remaining seats would be filled by those parties who did, in the same proportion as the national vote. Independent candidates, and candidates from parties that do not receive the threshold percentage of votes nationally, will need to come in first in their ridings to get elected.

The major consequential change is that ridings would have to become substantially larger. It is my understanding that it would in the order of 60% larger. In all other aspects, the voter would not see any change in voting:

- The ballots will look and be marked exactly the same as now;
- They will also be counted and reported identically as now;
- The candidates who come in first will be going to parliament, as now;

There would be some change in what happens next, but no reduction in the transparency of the process:

- Allowing for recounts and mailed in ballots, once the counts are stable, Elections Canada will assemble and publish the 'lists' in order using and showing the above simple calculation.
- The appropriate number of runner up candidates for each party will then be 'elected' to parliament to reflect the national vote.

In ridings with two MPs (approximately six out of every ten ridings) it is very likely that over half of the voters voted for one or the other MP. In the other one MP ridings (4 out of 10), that MP will have a substantial lead over the runner up (otherwise they would have been selected from the list). So substantial that in some cases it will be over half (50%) of the total votes in that riding. Which ridings have 2 MPs will change from election to election. In short, more voters (than now) in each riding will have voted for an MP. And because it is a proportional system, almost all votes will count (again) towards the number of MPs from each party in Parliament!

**Recommendation:** That the committee recommend the AMP system for elections for the House of Commons.

How does this AMP system meet the Principles for Electoral Reform laid out by Parliament:

1) Effectiveness and Legitimacy:

- It will increase public confidence as the voting (marking ballots) process remains the same, while much more accurately reflecting the results in parliament. All MPs are still

elected and each one from a riding to represent and be accountable to. The number of voters who elected someone locally will be a significantly higher.

- It will reduce distortion and strengthen the link between voters and their MPs as it is proportional and will hold all MPs accountable to their riding (because they all have one). Those ridings that have 2 MPs may well see them compete to better serve their constituents.
- In the standard MMP model MPs selected from the party list have no accountability to a riding and may have got their name on the party list by less than honourable means, as the compilation of these lists is usually not transparent.

## 2) Engagement:

- The casting of votes will be the same as the current system, which uses ballots that are as simple as possible (no ranking, one candidate per party, etc.). Locally more voters will see their votes count and virtually all votes also count nationally. In ridings (about 60%) with two MPs, their constituents can engage with and/or get information (e.g. newsletters) from both with presumably differing points of view (party ideologies).
- In 2 MP ridings they can choose to cooperate or compete. Where they cooperate, presumably this will carry over into parliament as collaboration. With proportional representation, coalition governments will be more common leading to more 'practice' by parties at getting along. If voters do not like the lack of civil behaviour (e.g. negative ads) they can vote for any other party they do agree with and it will have a collective effect on national representation.
- More collaboration and civility in parliament, and hopefully in politics, will be a role model for similar behaviour in Canadian society. As parliament becomes proportional, underrepresented groups will also be better represented, often when second in a riding.

## 3) Accessibility and Inclusiveness:

- A strong attribute of this system is its simplicity, as laid out in the main description. Even the list part of the process is straightforward, using a simple and appropriate calculation that anyone can verify, and is executed by the independent agency Elections Canada in a transparent process.
- The access by voters with physical or social challenges is an important issue that is mostly independent of which voting system is chosen. It is beyond the scope of what I am submitting.

## 4) Integrity:

- As this system will use the current balloting process (with its checks by party scrutineers and independent elections officials) which is generally trusted in Canada, it will similarly have the public confidence.
- The additional MPs election process can also easily be set up so it is verifiable and transparent.

#### 5) Local Representation:

- This is another area where this system excels. Over half of the ridings will have two elected MPs! In other words, the constituents of these ridings will have two avenues to Ottawa. The MPs of the other ridings will have a clear win over the runner-up, giving them a strong mandate. And after the next election, some of these ridings will have two MPs.
- This is another important issue that is mostly independent of which voting system is chosen. The key to MPs "... advancing local needs at the national level ..." is to eliminate from the Elections Acts the requirement that party leaders must approve (sign off) all candidates for their party! This requirement has resulted in party leaders, who are so inclined, having almost dictatorial control over their MPs. In fact, MPs are elected primarily to represent their riding (not primarily to toe the party line).

Note: In order to keep this submission brief, it presumes that the members of the Special Committee are by now well versed in the various voting systems, including MMP. Should there be any clarifications, questions or further issues to be addressed, please contact me.