

Submission to the ERRE

Hamilton, October 2016

I would like to make the following comments regarding Electoral Reform:

A. Part 1 My Priorities

Two aspects are equally important to me:

Local Representation and **Proportional Representation**

As a consequence several electoral systems should not be considered:

- “First Past the Post” (FPTP) does not provide Proportionality
- “Alternative Vote” (AV) does not provide Proportionality
- “List Proportional Representation” does not provide Local Representation
- “Single Transferrable Vote” (STV) can provide one or the other, depending on the structure, but it cannot provide truly both at the same time, unless the number of MPs overall is increased drastically:

True Local Representation can only be achieved if the riding is kept small. But that would mean only a very small number of candidates per riding can be elected. That makes true proportionality not possible.

On the other hand, if one wants to achieve true proportionality, the riding has to be vast. That eliminates true local representation.

- “ Mixed Member Majority ” (MMM) can come closer to providing both, depending on the distribution between MPs elected in ridings and MPs elected via lists, but due to its inflexibility it does like not achieve true proportionality.
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The only electoral system which can provide both, true local representation as well as true proportionality is **Mixed Member Proportional Representation**

Mixed Member Proportional Representation

“Mixed Member Proportional” representation or “MMP” is the only electoral system that can guarantee both, true [Local Representation](#) and true [Proportionality](#).

Within this very flexible electoral system there are many options. The following are my recommendations and preferences:

1. To keep things simple there should be 50% directly elected MPs and 50% list-based MPs. That way we only need to combine 2 present ridings into one.

I am aware that there will be anomalies and some complexities:

- Where there are uneven number of ridings in a province, this may be an opportunity to either increase the number of ridings due to population increases or reduce the number of ridings by combining 3 ridings where populations do not warrant separate ridings.
- Where rural ridings become too large, special adjustments may be necessary.
- Special considerations should be given to Nunavut, Yukon and the NWT. They obviously need to keep their 1 riding each. But for the “proportional” part of the vote, their second (“party”) vote could be combined with other provinces/regions to determine party proportionality. Having a second (party) vote is important for voter equality as otherwise these voters may not be able to be represented by a MP who reflects their values and interests.

2. Because the strong proportional part of the voting process compensates for any distortion of the local MP election and ensures overall proportionality I have no strong preference for using FPTP or AV for selecting the local MP, although AV might be more acceptable to most voters as it would elect a local representative who is supported by more than a simple majority and fewer direct local votes may be “wasted”.

3. While “Closed Lists” may be simpler for voters to understand and use, an **“Open List”** system is preferable: It is the more democratic option as it increases true voter participation and influence in the selection of representatives while reducing party power over candidates.

Voters should be able to choose the MPs on the list which they want to represent them.

This can increase the diversity of candidates (women, multicultural groups, linguistic minorities, First Nations etc.).

But to reduce such complexity for voters who do not want to or do not feel knowledgeable enough to select or rank individual candidates from open party lists there should be the options of simply voting for the party without having to rank any list members as well as the option to select or rank just a few.

4. Basically the “Open Lists” should be provincially based. But in order to make “Open Lists” practical and reduce the length of lists for voters to deal with, Provinces with more than 10 List MPs should be divided into Regions, each with its own list. This would only be necessary for BC, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

5. In order to avoid tiny, local, extreme, or one issue parties entering parliament and to make government formation and maintenance easier and thus stability I would propose a national threshold of 3% of the proportional vote or 2 directly elected MPs.

B. Part 2 MMP and the ERRE Principles

1. Effectiveness and Legitimacy

Proportionality ensures that the will of the voters is translated directly to Parliament: 34% of the vote for a party will mean 34% of seats in Parliament and that via Open Lists MPs with the values, interests and ideas of all voters in their particular voting region or province will be sent to Parliament.

Local Representation ensures a direct communication line between local citizens and representatives in Parliament about local concerns and issues while knowing that the local MP will be familiar with the local issues.

2. Voter Engagement:

By feeling that their values, interests, ideas, and their political views will truly be represented, regardless of where they live, more voters will participate in the process

3. Accessibility and Inclusiveness:

PR with "Open Lists" facilitates more inclusiveness of women, multicultural groups, linguistic minorities, First Nations and others, as candidates as well as voters.

As demonstrated in many nations, where a form of MMP is practiced successfully, it is not a difficult system for voters to use.

4. Integrity

A system that uses paper ballots inspires more confidence and thus has more integrity than one using electronic voting. This does not mean that all processes surrounding the voting itself should not utilize the most up-to-date technology, including electronic means for voter registration and identification, polling station checking etc.

Studies have also shown, that MMP and other proportional voting systems enjoy a high degree of integrity and thus voter confidence that the resulting parliament and governments truly reflect their will.

5. Local Representation

On the one hand it is absolutely essential that the will of the people is directly represented in Parliament. That means a party should be represented according to their

share of the vote: 29% of the votes has to translate into 29% of the seats. Thus any new election system needs to be proportional.

But pure proportional representation ignores the desire of people to be represented locally. This is especially true for a vast country like Canada with its many distinct regions and diversity.

Thus the new election system must include the means for “Local Representation”.

Only a form of “**Mixed Member Proportional**” representation achieves truly both: Local Representation AND Proportionality.

All other systems fall short in one or the other aspect. And while STV can strive towards a combination, the need to balance between Local Representation and Proportionality, means that one or the other will be short changed: When approaching Proportionality, the voting district/riding will be too large to enable true Local Representation, when favouring true Local Representation, the riding will be too small to accommodate real Proportionality.

C. Part 3 Electronic Voting and Mandatory Voting

1. **I do NOT support mandatory voting.** I consider it undemocratic. Not to vote is also a democratic choice.
2. While I would encourage using electronic processes for all kinds of aspects of the electoral system and processes, like voter registration and scan-able voter cards or other types of electronic identification etc. to speed up the voter check and voting process etc. **I do NOT support electronic voting.**

While electronic voting is “convenient”, it is vulnerable to hacking and easy manipulation, whether as mischief or as partisan manipulation, or even government manipulation. And such hacking or manipulation is hard to detect or prove. In jurisdiction where some forms of electronic voting has already been practiced, such hacking/manipulation has already occurred. It is too easily done. It certainly is impossible for non-technical local scrutineers to notice such interference.

I rather wait a bit longer for the results of paper ballots to be counted than not to be sure whether any manipulation has occurred. Only the simple counting of paper ballots can truly be scrutinized by local representatives and, if necessary recounted judicially.