

Proposal for Canada-MMP Electoral System

by

Eric Scheuneman

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The following proposal was developed after following electoral reform for many years and after closely reviewing the reports and recommendations of the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly **BC-STV (2004)** and the Ontario Citizens' Assembly **ON-MMP (2007)**.

SUMMARY

Proposal for Canada-MMP Electoral System

This proposed system is a variation of Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) to adapt to Canada and to eliminate the two major objections that caused British Columbia Citizens' Assembly **BC-STV (2004)** to select STV over MMP.

Each Province would have about **2/3 Local Ridings** and **1/3 Regional Ridings** with one Regional Riding allotted to 2 Local Ridings.

Each ballot would contain a *list of **Candidates for the Local Riding*** - comprised of Independents and no more than one candidate from each Party - and a *list of **Parties for Regional Ridings*** with the Voter to mark one X on each list as their vote choice. The Voter can mark an X on both, one or neither of the two lists. Alternatively, there could be two ballots with one list on each.

The proposal for Ridings is that:

*There would be about 2/3 of the current Ridings as **Local Ridings** formed by combining 3 current Ridings into 2 with each Member of Parliament (MP) determined by most Local Riding votes - as in the current First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system.*

and

*There would be about 1/3 **Regional Ridings** where each Riding is Regional for 2 of the new Local Ridings and assigned to Parties - receiving at least 3% of those total votes - to proportionately fill Parliament's seats for that Province according to the Regional Riding total votes for each Party. Each Regional Riding would be assigned to Party Candidates who did not win a Local Riding in order of number of local votes for each Candidate. The Regional Riding location would be determined by best matching each Candidate's local votes to Regional Ridings.*

To get on the Regional Riding ballot, the Party would have to have received at least 3% of the votes in the previous Federal General Election in that Province or have nominated candidates in at least 50% of the Local Ridings in that Province for the current Federal General Election.

The choices to the Voter are clear, flexible and simple:

**Vote for which Candidate you want for your Local Riding
and**

Vote for which Party you want for your Province and Canada.

ELABORATION

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Improvements for Canada

Party Lists decreasing Voter power is eliminated. This was one major reason why BC Citizens' Assembly chose STV over MMP. This proposal gives more power to the Voters and less to the Parties compared to most MMP systems because each Party List is automatically comprised of Party Candidates that did not win a Local Riding and listed in order of local votes each received. This means that every Candidate for MP has placed themselves before the Voters by running for Parliament - rather than simply being chosen by each Party for a list and not directly interacting with Voters.

This proposal encourages Candidates to campaign fully since the more votes they get the better their chance to become MP of a Regional Riding if they do not win the Local Riding. It also avoids confusion to voters of having candidates running for two types of Ridings.

Less local representation is eliminated. This was the second major reason why BC Citizens' Assembly chose STV over MMP. This proposal would strengthen local representation since every Member would represent a specific Local or Regional Riding. This means that voters have 2 MPs to represent them - whereas before they only had 1. This would maintain the same population density per MP and both MPs are now in direct competition - or cooperation - to give good service to local voters.

By-elections

By-election for a **Local Riding** is determined by which Candidate receives the most votes with the same Candidate requirements for a Local Riding as in a Federal General Election.

By-election for a **Regional Riding** would not be necessary since the replacement MP would be the next from the same Party List who does not already sit for a Regional Riding; if this person declines, it goes to the next person on the same Party List.

Alternatively, the replacement MP is determined through a by-election by which Candidate receives the most votes. Candidates must be from a Party obtaining at least 3% of the votes in the previous Federal General Election in that Province and no more than one Candidate per Party. The number of Regional Riding by-elections should be small enough to not significantly change the overall Province proportional representation.

Riding Determination Examples

This proposal aims for a ratio of about 67/33 Local Ridings/Regional Ridings. This ratio is between the ratios of ON-MPP (2007) of 70/30 and BC-STV (2004) of 60/40 which were determined to be the ratios needed to achieve Province-wide proportional representation.

If a Province has a number of Federal Ridings that are a multiple of 3, then it is simple to use all the existing Riding boundaries to combine 3 Ridings into 2 Local Ridings and create 1 new Regional Riding for each 2 new combined Local Ridings. If not a multiple of 3, then it is more complicated. However, Elections Canada and the Electoral Boundaries Commission for each Province have all the tools to do the job and would face less pressure regarding boundaries because the overall proportional representation result removes the incentives for parties to fight for certain boundaries.

There are two Provinces that currently have a multiple number of 3 Federal Ridings: British Columbia with 42 and Quebec with 78 so they are straightforward and would give Local/Regional Ridings of BC 28/14 and QC 52/26.

There are five Provinces that currently have one more seat than a multiple of 3: Alberta with 34, New Brunswick with 10, Newfoundland and Labrador with 7, Ontario with 121, and Prince Edward Island with 4. The solution is to subtract one from the total and then divide that number into 2/3 Local Ridings and 1/3 Regional Ridings and having 1 extra Regional Riding for the entire Province. This would give AB 22,11,1 and NB 6,3,1 and NL 4,2,1 and ON 80,40,1 and PE 2,1,1.

Alternatively, to minimize having to re-do all the boundaries, the least populated Riding could be left as is and the remaining Ridings have 3 combined into 2 Local Ridings with 1 Regional Riding each plus the 1 least populated Riding.

The choosing between the foregoing two procedures would be done by the Electoral Boundary Commission for each Province working with Elections Canada.

There are three Provinces that have two more seats than a multiple of 3: Manitoba with 14, Nova Scotia with 11, and Saskatchewan with 14. The solution is to subtract 2 from the total and then divide that number into 2/3 Local ridings and 1/3 Regional Ridings and having 2 extra Regional Ridings for the entire Province. This would give MB 8,4,2 and NS 6,3,2 and SK 8,4,2.

Alternatively, to minimize having to re-do all the boundaries, the two least populated Riding could be left as is and the remaining Ridings have 3 combined into 2 Local Ridings with 1 Regional Riding each plus the 2 least populated Ridings.

The choosing between the foregoing two procedures would be done by the Electoral Boundary Commission for each Province working with Elections Canada.

Regardless, the final Riding results will yield proportional representation and maintain essentially the same population density per MP and be clear to the Voter.

Territories

The three Territories - Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon - are a special case because they only have one Federal Riding each. There are three proposals to deal with this difficulty:

(1) Give each Territory 2 more Ridings for a total of 3 each which would only add 6 seats to Parliament and would give them each 2 Local Ridings and 1 Regional Riding. This can be justified because of the international importance to Canada for their Arctic location and because of their large area with transportation and societal challenges. **This is the best and only way for actual proportional representation and inclusion of more views in Parliament.**

(2) **Alternatively** if the rest of Canada will not agree to this, the Territories would use the same two ballot lists and requirements as the rest of Canada with the Riding being awarded to the Candidate with the highest total of Candidate votes plus Party votes. This greatly reduces the chances of an Independent Candidate and small parties.

(3) **Another alternative** is the Ranked Ballot whereby the Voter would rank the Candidates by number with 1 being their first choice and the first Candidate achieving 50% plus 1 votes after totalling all the number 1 votes. If no candidate achieves this, then the Candidate with the lowest number of 1 votes is dropped and their votes going to the highest ranked other candidate on their ballots - and so on if required. The defect is that usually most voters would only have their second choice effectively count.

Five Principles for Electoral Reform

(1) Effectiveness and legitimacy

- would be greatly increased as this proposed electoral system guarantees that votes are fairly and clearly translated proportionally into seats in Parliament showing the direct link that every voter's first choice counts - contrasting with systems such as ranked ballot where only their second choice counts.

(2) Engagement

- would be greatly increased because there is much more opportunity for smaller parties and independents to be elected resulting in more diversity of views and input in Parliament and Government which would reflect a primary strength of Canadian society. Such diversity would encourage more civility and collaboration in politics since there would be *no false or distorted majorities* that allow many views to be ignored.

(3) Accessibility and inclusiveness

- would be enhanced by having one simple ballot with two lists or two simple ballots with one list where the voter marks each list with one X which would encourage voting regardless of physical, mental or social condition.

(4) Integrity

- and public trust in the election process would be ensured since this proposed electoral system can be implemented by Elections Canada under secure paper or electronic ballot that preserves vote secrecy and follows rules allowing reliable and verifiable results.

(5) Local representation

- would be maintained at the same number of voters per MP and enhanced because there would now be 2 MPs that each voter could turn to as representing their Riding which would better facilitate resolution of their concerns and encourage their participation in the democratic process.

Highlights and Comparisons of BC-STV (2004) and ON-MMP (2007)

Both British Columbia and Ontario had a **wide-ranging representative Citizens' Assembly** that travelled throughout each province and issued detailed reports. British Columbia selected one female and one male randomly from each 79 electoral district and balanced by age for 158 representatives. Ontario selected one voter randomly from each 104 electoral district with 52 females and 52 males and balanced by age.

Both strongly coalesced on some form of Proportional Representation - British Columbia by 93% and Ontario by 92% - as clearly the best way to reform each province's electoral system.

Both chose the same two forms of proportional representation - Single Transferable Vote (STV) and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) - for final consideration with British Columbia choosing STV and Ontario choosing MMP.

Both recommended systems maintain **the same number of overall Parliamentary Seats**. **This Canada-MMP proposal** has adopted this except for proposing to add 2 more seats to each Territory which would **add 6 more seats** to Parliament which would be an increase from 338 to 344 which is an increase of only 1.8%.

BC-STV has larger multi-Member Ridings with Members determined by a ranked transferable ballot.

ON-MMP has larger single-Member Ridings with the Member determined by most Riding votes and has Provincial Members determined by proportional Party votes with Members from each Party's ordered List.

Ontario chose 70% Local seats and 30% Provincial seats as the necessary division to guarantee proportional representation in the Legislature whereas the British Columbia MMP model (not adopted) chose a 60% and 40% division. **This Canada-MMP proposal** has 66 2/3% and 33 1/3% which is between the Ontario and British Columbia figures.

Ontario requires creation and publication of **ranked Party Lists** determined by each Party. **This Canada-MMP proposal** requires that all MPs were Candidates in the Federal General Election and has the ranked Party Lists determined by how many votes each Candidate received. So, Voters have seen, evaluated and voted for every Candidate on each Party List. Hence, Voters mostly determine the List - not the Parties.

Both British Columbia and Ontario have a **threshold vote level** to avoid extreme fragmentation of Parliament/Legislature. British Columbia uses a quota vote calculation and does not guarantee small party representation whereas Ontario chose at least 3% of the Provincial vote which guarantees small party representation. Note that the British Columbia MMP model (not adopted) also chose 3%. **This Canada-MMP proposal** has adopted the 3%.

ON-MMP has at least as good a chance for Independents as BC-STV because 2/3 of the Ridings are open to Independents and each ballot allows a separate Party vote so voters can choose both an Independent and a Party. This makes it easier and more likely for a voter to choose an Independent. **This Canada-MMP proposal** has 2/3 of the Ridings open to Independents and small parties.

One major difference between the two is the electoral ballot.

- British Columbia has one list of more candidates which each voter numbers in order of preference as many of the candidates as they want with a minimum of one number 1.

- Ontario has one list of less Candidates for each Local Riding and one list of Parties for Regional Ridings which each voter marks their one choice from each list with an X.

British Columbia system is considerably more complex for the voter to decide who to vote for and how to vote and requires a multi-step 4-page procedure to 'count' votes. The BC-STV example Ballot has three Members to be elected from 8 Candidates including three candidates each from two parties with the Voter's choices shown by sequential numbers starting with the number 1. Only one number 1 (and subsequent numbers) is allowed: this is confusing and inaccurate because a Voter may want to select 3 candidates equally yet cannot do that.

This Canada-MMP proposal has adopted Ballots with one List of Candidates for each Local Riding and one list of Parties for all Regional Ridings with each List to be marked with one X. There could be one Ballot with the two Lists or two Ballots with one List each depending which this Honourable Committee feels would be clearer for the Voter.