

**Submission to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform:
Mixed Member Proportional by Transfer to Party Region Electoral System**

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Dear Committee Members:

Summary

This brief proposes an MMP system where every voter gets a local MP from the party she voted for. It also eliminates Party MP duplication common in regional MMP systems while preserving our simple FPTP ballot. It achieves this by defining party regions based on the result of an FPTP election instead of defining regions beforehand. This system keeps voting familiar, simple and clear while intelligently delivering all the desired democratic results, making it an ideal system for Canada. This system is derived from the regional MMP system proposed by the Law Commission of Canada.

How it Works

Instead of defining regions and running regional PR candidates right from the beginning like existing MMP systems, we derive them from the results of an FPTP election - the same FPTP election we run now. Here are the steps.

1. Using the same FPTP process we use now, we elect district MPs.
2. When the winners are known, we add top-up seats and give them to the under-represented parties until we achieve proportional representation.
3. Based on the number of PR seats, each party divides the parts of the country in which they ran a candidate into regions - one region for each PR seat. The regions are created by grouping together the districts they lost. The parties are required to size their regions to encompass the same number of votes for that party per region. To fill those seats, we transfer the winningest district candidate in the region from that party that did not win a seat, like awarding a wild card playoff spot. That PR candidate now represents the people of that region in the legislature. Optionally, we can let the party choose from among the winningest say 50% of district candidates.
4. For the party that was overrepresented and therefore do not get any PR seats, the party creates regions by attaching those districts they lost to the districts they won. The winning district candidate becomes the representative for the entire region. It's like super-sizing the districts they won. All regions for a party must encompass roughly the same number of votes for that party.

Results

Each party's regions may be drawn differently. Parties winning fewer votes will have fewer but larger regions. Regions from different parties will superimpose and blanket Canada, giving each party an MP in every district where they ran a candidate.

Since all parties will have an MP in all districts where they ran a candidate, this means all voters will have a local MP from the party she voted for. All voters will be served by this system. His vote is not wasted. Her democratic will is respected.

Since parties are required to size their regions to encompass the same number of votes for that party, areas of high support for a party will get smaller but more regions from that party and therefore greater representation and higher level of service from that party. This is a fair translation of voter will and an intuitive expectation of the voters.

Each voter gets one - and only one - representative from each party that ran a candidate in his district. The links between voters and their representatives are clear, efficient and effective. In contrast, predefined PR regions have multiple regional seats that may be filled by members from the same party. There may also be duplication in the district and regional MPs being from the same party. This could produce regions where a voter is over-serviced by one party and not serviced at all by another. This can be wasteful, confusing and frustrating: "Why do I need 3 MPs from the same party? Which one should I call? And where's the MP from *my* party?"

A citizen in any district will be able to choose to work with any MP from among all the parties that ran a candidate, regardless of which party won his district. This is important, because the party that won the district seat may not be sympathetic to a voter's cause. With this system however, a voter can work with representative(s) of his choice that are likely to be sympathetic to the cause and more knowledgeable. For example. If someone has an environmental concern, but the district MP is from a party that favours business needs such as the Conservatives, then the citizen can call on a regional MP from the Green Party.

Analysis

Although the PR members have not been directly elected by all the voters of the region, they have faced the voters in one of the districts in the region - and performed well. This is better than closed list systems used in many countries where PR members have not faced any voters at all. This is a sound compromise. And for Canada, it is a good compromise, because it preserves the simple FPTP ballot, to which voters are accustomed.

By avoiding the PR list, we ensure the most qualified candidates fill the PR seats. At the outset of an election, a party does not know how many or if they will get any PR seats. So parties will run their best candidates in the district races. Filling PR seats using the winningest district candidate that did not win a seat ensures the best talent is put to use and not wasted. The district candidates have

proven their dedication and gained knowledge of local issues by canvassing door-to-door. They deserve the PR seats and will make better regional representatives than the second stringers from a PR list. Chances are good the candidates on the PR list wins because of ill-informed voter choices based on gender, skin color or age. This is not good, because there are good and bad people in every race, gender and age group.

By not using predefined PR regions, we avoid the built-in minimum threshold that depends on the total number of regional and district seats. In the system proposed by the Law Commission of Canada of 5 regional seats for every 10 district seats, a party must garner 1/16 or 6.25% to win a regional seat. But in this system, we can set the threshold where we want.

Although runner-up systems such as this have “poor optics” in that an MP for a smaller party will probably not have finished highly in his district race, this system allows the runner-up to be chosen from a much larger pool of districts, increasing the chances of finding a candidate that performed well. For example, in 2015 election, the Greens would have been awarded only 10 PR seats. Chances are good, they had a good performing candidate somewhere in all of BC, or in all of Quebec or in all of the atlantic provinces.

Because a party representative is present in every district, citizens enjoy the same benefits as those in multi-member districts of an STV system. But unlike in that system, the district magnitude is not predefined nor limited. It may be impractical to offer every district in Canada 4 seats or more. Limiting the magnitude to 3 would not help smaller parties like the Greens get fair representation.

Making Room for PR Seats

Just as proposed by the Law Commission of Canada, I propose we reduce the number of districts to make room for PR seats. The number of PR seats required in the previous election should provide a reasonable estimate.

Exceptions and Boundaries

Unlike in predefined regions or multi-member districts, we can set the threshold for a PR seat to any value we want.

In Respect of the Five Mandated Principles of Electoral Reform

1) Effectiveness and Legitimacy

“that the proposed measure would increase public confidence among Canadians that their democratic will, as expressed by their votes, will be fairly translated and that the proposed

measure reduces distortion and strengthens the link between voter intention and the election of representatives”

This system expresses the will of the voters, because a party’s share of power is equal to their share of the popular vote.

Because a party representative (district or regional) is present in every district where that party ran a candidate, all voters will have a representative from the party he voted for. All voters will be served by this system. No vote is wasted. Her democratic will is respected.

Because parties are required to size their regions to encompass the same number of votes for that party, areas of high support for a party will get smaller but more regions from that party and therefore greater representation and higher level of service from that party. This is a fair translation of the voters’ democratic will.

This system also ensures all voters get one - and only one - district or regional representative from each party that ran a candidate in his district, making it highly efficient. There is no duplication. No one will be asking: “Why do I need 3 representatives from the same party? And which one should I call? And where is the MP from *my* party?”

All of this will increase public confidence in our democracy

2) Engagement

“that the proposed measure would encourage voting and participation in the democratic process, foster greater civility and collaboration in politics, enhance social cohesion and offer opportunities for inclusion of underrepresented groups in the political process”

Being a proportional system, every vote counts. Voters won’t need to worry about vote splitting or strategic voting. Voters can now vote for the party they like best. This will encourage people to get out and vote. And because the legislature is likely to be governed by a minority, the governing party will have to compromise and collaborate with the other parties and respect the views of the voters who did not vote for them. And because of the large influence of the other parties, policy changes will be tempered or moderated but longer lasting. This avoids the large changes when a majority government takes power, only to be undone in the next election. Changes will be incremental but will always reflect the views of Canadians. This will enhance social cohesion.

This system opens opportunity for underrepresented groups in our political process. The Green party is an example. Using the vote count from the 2015 election, the Green party would have won 11 seats in this system instead of 1. Also, once people stop worrying about vote splitting and vote their heart’s content, the bias toward the biggest parties will be removed. Smaller parties like the Green

party will get even more votes. In turn, when people in underrepresented groups realize they have a fair chance to make a difference, (small parties are viable) they will be encouraged to participate in the political process... To run as candidates, especially in smaller parties like the Greens, or even start their own party, such as an aboriginal or women's party.

Using the runner-up to fill the regional seats reduces the number of "unwinnable" districts. The composition of sitting MPs should more closely reflect that of the running candidates when compared to the current system. For example, parties that run more women candidates should see more women MPs. This will increase the presence of underrepresented groups in the legislature. Should the government ever pass quota legislation on the percentage of women candidates for example, it should produce more women MPs.

3) Accessibility and Inclusiveness

"that the proposed measure would avoid undue complexity in the voting process, while respecting the other principles, and that it would support access by all eligible voters regardless of physical or social condition"

This system preserves our simple FPTP ballot while providing proportional results and omni-party representation. This shows that the complex ballots of PR list MMP systems are in fact, undue. Given Canada's long history with FPTP and failed reform attempts, we would be wise to avoid those systems and their complex ballots.

A simple ballot maintains maximum access to eligible voters regardless of physical or social conditions. The disadvantaged may not have access to all the information about a party's candidates. This system requires only that a voter determine his favorite party.

By preserving our simple ballot, we won't need to retrain millions of ordinary Canadians on how to vote. Not only does this save money, but it eliminates any chance for confusion, increased ballot spoilage or increased voting station lines.

Having a simple ballot is important. Most people vote for the party or its leader instead of for a candidate. Ordinary Canadians do not want to choose from district or regional candidates. Most don't have time to evaluate the few district candidates we have now, let alone lists of regional candidates. They consider that they have done their civic duty by taking the time to understand the various party platforms and leaders. Ordinary Canadians want to just vote for a party and expect the system to sort it all out in a fair and intelligent manner.

The recent surge in public support for electoral reform was driven by a determination to end false majorities (specifically, Harper's Conservatives who passed borderline racist laws) - not a sudden

realization some groups like women are underrepresented in politics. Therefore, the committee should be seeking the simplest system that ends false majorities - not a complex, inefficient one to increase diversity.

In addition to considering this particular system, I strongly urge the committee to add runner-up MMP to the public discussion, such as in your online survey and the background section of your website and all presentations in the town hall meetings. It should be presented as a viable and credible option right along side Closed-list MMP, Open-list MMP, etc. The public has a right to know about this option. In the 2 town halls in 1 week in September in Toronto, I met 2 other people who thought they invented Runner-up MMP. That's 3 people, including myself! Obviously, many Canadians don't like the party list.

4) Integrity

“that the proposed measure can be implemented while safeguarding public trust in the election process, by ensuring reliable and verifiable results obtained through an effective and objective process that is secure and preserves vote secrecy for individual Canadians”

The system in no way changes the election process. Therefore, the public trust in our existing election process is safeguarded. The results continue to be reliable and verifiable. The system continues to be secure and preserves vote secrecy for individual Canadians.

5) Local Representation

“that the proposed measure would ensure accountability and recognize the value that Canadians attach to community, to Members of Parliament understanding local conditions and advancing local needs at the national level, and to having access to Members of Parliament to facilitate resolution of their concerns and participation in the democratic process”

In this system, every sitting member is accountable to a geographic group of citizens somewhere. This is better than closed list systems where MPs only represent their party. In that case, we should instead give the seats to the party leader and save on salaries.

In addition, all sitting members have canvassed and competed for a district seat and have either won or performed very well with the voters. They have proven their talent and dedication and have acquired knowledge about local issues. They will make more effective representatives than the second stringers from a PR list.

Also, this system provides all citizens an MP (district or regional) from all the parties that ran a district candidate, so he can choose the one that will most effectively facilitate resolution of his concerns in Ottawa. A citizen may choose a representative from a party that is more sympathetic and more knowledgeable. For example, he may choose a Green party MP for an environmental concern.

This system also ensures all voters get one - and only one - representative from each party that ran a candidate in his district, making the link between MP and voters clear. This is in contrast to regional PR list systems where multiple members from the same party may represent the same group of citizens, obscuring accountability.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This system is ideal for Canada, because Canadians have little appetite for duplication and waste and are accustomed to the simple FPTP ballot. Like a popular smartphone app, ordinary Canadians will support this system, because of its familiar, easy-to-use interface and its intelligent and automatic results.

Opponents of progress argue the complicated PR ballot will cause confusion, high rates of spoiled ballots and long lines at voting stations. I urge you to take this ammunition away. Please offer an MMP system with a simple, familiar ballot and no duplication: MMP by Transfer to Party Region.

In addition, I urge you to add runner-up MMP systems to the survey and background parts of your website and to your town hall presentations, so the public can know there is a non-list alternative for MMP. Then you can measure true public opinion about the PR list.