

Brief to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform - 7 October 2016

I support the adoption of a proportional representation (PR) voting system. In particular, I support PR systems that are based on multi-member ridings using a ranked ballot (e.g. STV, STV+, RUP and P3). The following are advantages of multi-member riding PR systems:

1. The chances are good, especially in a riding with more than 3 MPs, that one of the winning candidates in your riding will be one that you voted for first and, as an MP, would be more likely to appreciate your views and concerns.
2. The chance of fringe parties with extreme policies getting a significant number of MPs elected are slim due to the fact that vote counting automatically eliminates candidates with low vote counts, transferring their 2nd and, if necessary, subsequent lower ranked votes to the remaining candidates.
3. Due to the multiple number of MPs in the riding, you don't have to be particularly concerned about your vote being inconsequential or wasted due to being in a safe riding as can be the case in the First Past The Post (FPTP) system.
4. The concept of swing ridings, being so important in the FPTP system, is not so relevant due to the multiple number of MPs in the riding.
5. The practice of strategic voting in the FPTP system, where voters feel that they must vote for someone that is not their preferred candidate in order to keep another party's candidate from winning is not so relevant in a multi-member riding. However, in multi-member ridings using a ranked ballot, one can vote strategically by voting only for the candidate or candidates of your preferred party which means 2nd and 3rd ranked votes wouldn't be available for other competing candidates. In this case, you are not negatively voting against a candidate but voting positively for your preferred candidate.

I feel that the following are excluded from the current voting system: youth; homeless people; some First Nations and Inuit, and non-English-speaking immigrants. I think that many in these groups feel excluded because they don't think that their vote matters or would count. A proportional representation voting system based on multi-member ridings and using a ranked ballot such as STV, STV+, RUP and P3 could help make Canada's electoral system more inclusive.

The features in a voting system that are important to me are, in the following order of priority, the following: proportionality, inclusiveness, local representation; accessibility; and simplicity. I feel that these features could best be addressed in a made-in-Canada STV+ (see: http://www.fairvote.ca/fvc-erre-submissions_appx_10_-_made-in-canada_stv/). Another reason that I favour a made-in-Canada STV+ is that it incorporates the following attractive features from other voting systems:

- uses a preferential ranked ballot as in the AV (Alternative Voting) system in urban ridings;
- uses FPTP (our current First Past the Post) system to elect a single MP in rural ridings;
- as in the MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) system, some MPs to be chosen from political party lists in rural ridings to improve proportionality;
- In multi-member urban ridings, the second and subsequent choices of lower-vote-count candidates would, as required, be allocated to higher-vote-count candidates as in the STV (Single Transferable Vote) system or for parties as in Stephane Dion's proposed P3 (Proportional, Preferential and Personalized) voting system; and
- it could actually be considered one form of the RUP (Rural Urban Proportional) voting system.

Here is my view on some other aspects of voting reform:

- I am against a referendum to adopt or legitimize a new voting system;
- I am neutral on the question of mandatory voting but, in this regard, suggest that consideration could be given at the polling station or online, to offering each voter an income tax deductible receipt (e.g. \$50.00) after casting their vote; and
- I support lowering the voting age to 16 but it would need to be accompanied by inclusion of education on the political voting system, rationale and procedure in the high school curriculum.

In summary, I strongly favour the adoption of a proportional representation voting system that is based on multi-member ridings using a ranked ballot. My preference would be a made-in-Canada STV+ voting system.

Peter Scholefield,
West Vancouver, BC