

## **This is a proposal for an electoral system "Voter Weighted Voting" (VWV)**

The Committee has received a number of witness statements and briefs that fall broadly into a category called "weighted voting" (WV). All these suggestions are remarkable for their originality, simplicity, cost-effectiveness, proportionality and democratic core value. There are important differences within this broader group of WV proposals.

In general WV opens new windows of opportunity relative to more familiar sorts of proportional representation such as MMP or STV. We can obtain full proportionality without adding un-elected members from lists or asking voters to rank candidates. Electoral areas (EAs) can reflect local representation while avoiding rural-urban inequities. Proportionality can be preserved province by province as well as nationally. The system is nearly as simple as first-past-the-post (FPTP) without added cost.

### **What is the basic unit of "weight"? How does VWV differ from other "WV"?**

Most proposals for WV recognize that the numbers of elected MPs under present FPTP does not match the proportions of popular vote. WV proposals may redress this by assigning voting weights to MPs of different parties such that total voting weight by party would match the popular vote for each party. For example it was suggested that, based on 2015 election, voting weights for Liberal MPs might be 0.7 while weights for Conservative MPs might be 1.1 and NDP weight might be 1.5. The intent is that total voting weight of each party matches its proportion of popular vote.

It's simple and cheap and proportional. However some people express distaste for the idea of "0.7 of an MP". Alternative forms of WV propose ways to scale things up so the minimum weight is 1.0 yet the outcome retains the same proportionality among parties.

Issues can arise if one seeks province by province proportionality. Smaller provinces with fewer MPs may not elect any MP for some major party and then there is no weight that can compensate as there is no MP to which such weight would apply.

VWV is different. Weight "1.0" is firmly attached to each individual ballot cast by each individual Canadian. That weight of each ballot is immutable regardless of election outcome as each individual's vote continues to hold equal value with every other individual's vote. When MPs are elected, they go to Parliament representing numbers of individuals' votes. If all MPs' voting weights are added together, that value is the total number of Canadian voters.

### **How does it work?**

A ballot asks two questions: Which candidate do you choose? Which party best expresses your values? A voter can answer either question or both.

If a voter chooses a candidate who receives the most votes in the EA, that candidate is elected with a "weight" given by the number of votes received.

If a voter's chosen candidate is defeated, and if the voter has identified party preference (else the party affiliation of the defeated candidate is assumed), then a weight of one vote is added for that party.

The weight for each MP is adjusted to the sum of votes received by that MP plus a distribution of votes for the MP's party on account of other candidates who were defeated. Party votes are redistributed within province if at least one member from the indicated party has been elected; else party votes are distributed to elected members nationwide.

## **For example**

For example candidate Jane Doe might win an EA with 32453 votes. Jane's party might also receive 438,228 votes (within province) from other EAs where the party's candidates were defeated. If 19 candidates for the party are elected (within province), each receives additional weight 23065 (= 438,228/19) for Jane's total of 55518. When Jane votes on a matter in parliament, her vote carries this weight (55518).

## **Comments and responses to questions:**

Each voter is assured that his or her vote "counts" with weight 1.0 either by election of a chosen candidate or by delegation to a party of choice. Even a voter in a "safe" (assured outcome) EA adds weight to the elected MP. Greater voter turnout is encouraged everywhere.

If a party does not achieve any elected member, but that party achieves greater than some threshold (perhaps 3% or 5% of total vote, to be determined), then a single seat can be provided for a MP who will carry the voting weight of the party.

There is no disparity between urban and rural EAs. EA boundaries can remain as they are. In the future new boundaries could be chosen to improve compact geography or for other reasons without requiring nearly equal voter populations. There is no way to alter electoral outcomes by gerrymandering.

The proposed system adds no cost or complication relative to FPTP. Votes tallied are easily added to elected MPs voting weights along with votes reassigned on account of defeated candidates.

There are no "top-up" lists for additional (unelected) members. Voters do not rank multiple candidates. Each EA elects only one member.

The party with greatest total voting weight has first opportunity to form a government. Continuance or replacement of that government is thereafter at the collective will of Parliament.

When a measure comes before Parliament, aggregate weights of votes have clear meaning. A measure passed by 9,845,131 to 8,623,444 is enacted by elected MPs on behalf of 9,845,131 individual voters (over dissenting views of other MPs on behalf of 8,623,444 voters).

**Question:** How does this affect an independent (no party affiliation) candidate? If that candidate is elected, he or she carries the weight of number of votes received. The candidate does not receive additional votes due to party. However, voters may feel more at-ease to vote for an independent because voters have options to favour a chosen party if the independent is not elected.

**Question:** What happens when an elected member "crosses the floor"? In the case of Jane Doe, she would bring along her 32453 votes while her former party share (23065) would be redistributed among remaining members of the party. If Jane is joining a different party then voting weights within that party are redistributed to provide a new increment to add to Jane's 32453.

Respectfully, Greg Holloway