

A Proposal for Proportional Representation

By Judith Sheppard

I have been following the testimony before the select committee on electoral reform. So far, the witnesses I have heard have spoken only of systems already in use and these seem to have some very serious drawbacks.

Analyses of STV or alternative voting systems indicate that these accrue even more seats to the two dominant parties. MMP requires either redrawing e.d. boundaries to larger areas or greatly increasing the number of seats in the House.

Also, I believe Canadian voters would not be “open” to closed party lists.

I believe it is time for a new, made-in-Canada system, something fair and easily understandable. After much thought on this subject, I have devised an alternative which is straightforward and almost completely proportional. No seats are to be filled from lists of people voters have never met or even heard of. No member will be elected without having been a real feet-on-the-ground candidate.

And a really big advantage is that electoral boundaries remain as they are, leaving voters with a familiar starting point and Elections Canada with a relative easy and not irreversible implementation.

Guidelines of the proposed system:

Any candidate receiving a majority of votes in the e.d. will be elected.

Legislative seats will be distributed according to party percentage of the provincial vote.

There will be a party viability threshold of 5%.

Each voter can declare one preferential vote. These votes are to be attributed only for voters whose first choice is an unsuccessful independent or a candidate for a party not meeting threshold.

To illustrate, I will describe results of a hypothetical 2019 Alberta election, using analysis of and projections from the 2015 Alberta election.

In this hypothetical election, the results are as follows:

ND	PC	WR	LB	GR	AP
40%	30%	20%	5%	5%	
35 seats	26 seats	17 seats	4 seats	4 seats	1 seat(by majority)

The NDP has majority or plurality in 54 e.d.s. They must give up the 19 seats with the lowest ND vote percentage. The cut off for them is 40%.

WR has majority or plurality in 21 e.d.s. They must give up their 4 lowest percentage seats. The cut off for them is 36%.

PC, LB and GR are awarded seats based on their vote percentages in the remaining e.d.s. The cut off for PC is 28%. For LB it is 17%. AP gets one seat with a majority in that e.d.

I have projected an increase in the Green vote as most likely their percentage will increase if voters know their vote will not be wasted. I am projecting the Greens may, like the AP, have one e.d. with a popular candidate and a majority. Their other 3 seats will probably be the "leftovers" with a highly divided vote and anywhere from 5 to 7 candidates. A Green representative would likely have substantial support from the centre-left in the riding and would be a representative of that e.d. with a constituency office in the e.d., doing constituency work for the residents of that e.d. I believe there would be much to be learned on all sides in such a situation. As always, any elector unhappy with the representation is free to communicate with the caucus of choice.

Please note, in order to support this system we must let go of the sanctity of plurality. Many of the candidates of less successful parties will end up representing a district in which they had neither majority nor plurality. Again, I believe there is much to be achieved in such districts, with the necessity of respectful communication among all concerned, the hope of increased understanding of other viewpoints, and a result of all residents of the e.d. cooperating for the common good.

This system can be applied in both federal and provincial elections with, of course, different e.d. boundaries. Territories, with only one representative, might want to consider the option of ranked voting.

Respectfully submitted,

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