

Submission to the House of Commons Committee on Electoral Reform

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October 4, 2016

This paper recommends a modified Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system, in which:

1. The party lists would be blocked by province, territory or region;
2. The party lists would be closed, not open;
3. The party lists would be comprised only of party members who had contested the election but had not been elected in their riding;
4. The list members would be ranked within the provincial, territorial or regional block according the percentage of the vote they had obtained in their riding;
5. The highest ranking list members would be given the party seats in that province, territory or region;
6. If a list member were an Aboriginal person, they would be moved up the block ranking with the objective of having the percentage of Aboriginal MP's in that block of their party equal to the percentage of Aboriginal people in the general population in that province, territory or region;
7. To move up the ranking an Aboriginal person would have to have achieved at least some minimum percentage of the vote in their riding, say, 25 per cent.

Relationship of the recommendations to the ERRE principles for electoral reform:

8. Effectiveness and legitimacy

8.1 Within a block, the percentage of public vote for a party (riding plus party candidates) would result in nearly the same percentage of seats won by the party. The present distortions within a block would be removed.

8.2 For Canada as a whole, the percentage of public vote for a party (riding plus party candidates) would result in nearly the same percentage of seats won by the party. The present distortions between provinces or regions would be removed.

8.3 The closed lists comprised of candidate MP's who had achieved significant public vote support would make most votes count. This would give an incentive to vote and increase voter turnout.

8.4 Other MMP systems give a party the authority to choose anyone to be on their closed list. This party discretion has been feared to result in appointing MP's who are beholden to party officials rather than to voters. The present proposal is designed particularly to overcome this problem.

8.5 Like all MMP systems, although a riding MP could be elected with less than 50 per cent of the vote, this would be offset by the block assignment of seats to parties to reflect the percentage public vote for each party.

9. Engagement

9.1 Aboriginal people would be given fair representation.

9.2 There are so many possibilities within Canada for defining groups that the discretionary possibilities of this voting system should not also be used for other minorities. Cohesion of society is better served by having the voting system treat people simply as citizens, not hyphenated citizens.

9.3 As noted in section 8.3, most votes would count, giving an incentive to vote and increasing voter turnout.

10. Accessibility and inclusiveness

10.1. The ballot would be the same as that proposed for other MMP systems – one vote for a local MP and one vote for a party. This is reasonably simple for voters, fairly easy for the officials to count, and presents for the most part no unusual difficulty for voters regardless of physical or social condition.

10.2 Sparsely populated areas like the territories and northern parts of several provinces could have problems because of the expansion of the size of an electoral district. Offsetting this would be the increase in regional representation offered by the party list MP's. This is an issue needing further study.

11. Integrity

11.1 The vote count in each electoral district would be verifiable for both local MP's and party list MP's.

11.2 The composition of a party's closed list would be foreseeable by the public and the party would not have authority to change it.

11.4 As the party list MP would have obtained their seat as a result of voter support, and as this would be evident, the public should feel that their vote counted.

11.3 A move upward in the ranking of an Aboriginal person on the basis of vote count would be verifiable, and the percentage of Aboriginal MP's in a party would be easily seen.

11.4 Vote secrecy would be preserved for individual voters.

12. Local representation

12.1 There would be local, provincial, territorial, regional and national representation. A citizen might feel more related to the riding MP if wanting to express concern about some local situation. If the citizen wanted to express an opinion about some other issue, they might contact either MP or both and might feel that this gives the citizen more influence than if there were only one MP.

12.2 The presence of two MP's to respond to a citizen, each representing a different party, would give assurance to any citizen that at least one of these MP's would have a sympathetic understanding of the citizen's concerns or suggestions and be in a position to carry them forward.

12.3 It is possible that some competition might develop between the two MP's in trying to serve the citizen better.

12.4 With the possibility of the two MP's discussing together the citizen's issue, and with the two different party backgrounds brought to bear on the subject, a better solution might be found.

12.5 Aboriginal issues, as well as Aboriginal views on general issues, would have improved local, provincial, territorial, regional and national representation.