

August 17, 2016

To the members of the Electoral Reform Committee and other Members of Parliament:

As Canada is becoming a more culturally diverse country, I have seen only a slow increase in representation for Canadians such as racial and cultural minorities, and women. We currently use an electoral system that is designed to inhibit the representation of the mentioned groups as well as other groups based on their political viewpoints.

When I go to vote, I not only want to be able to exercise my right to vote, I want to be able to elect someone. I want my vote to count. I do not wish to have a foregone conclusion that my vote will not elect a candidate or party of my choice. Note: I have voted for all of the major parties in the past. I will likely do so in the future if Canadians can vote in a fair and proportional voting system. If we keep the existing voting system or switch to the Alternative Vote, there will be no incentive for me to vote. An imposition of mandatory voting will fail to get me to vote or pay any fine. It will cost the state more money through court costs to fight to mandate me to vote than to bring in a fair and proportional voting system.

You will meet with many people who will either support or oppose proportional representation. Those who will support it will come from many backgrounds. On the other hand, I notice that those who oppose proportional representation seem to represent the economic, political, or media elites in Canada. You will hear their calls for a referendum. Yet, most offer no solutions on improving the Canadian voting system other than sticking with the status quo which inhibits the representation of non-whites and women in parliament. For example, visible minorities represent about half of the population of the city of Toronto. However, nine out of 25 winning candidates (36%) were visible minorities. All of them came from the same political party. We need a proportional voting system that will help improve the representation of visible and other minorities across Canada—not just in urban centres where there are major concentrations of cultural communities.

I have looked at the Mixed Member Proportional and Single Transferable Vote systems. Both will help improve the representation of Canadians based on cultural backgrounds and political party preferences. I have decided to support an Open Regional List system or Open List with the option of “Above the Line Voting” to make things simple. For example, there could be an average of six local MPs for each Canadian with a range of three to nine. The only exception would be the territories which would still have one each. In an Open List system, voters could choose one particular candidate on a part list, or they may vote for a party. The distribution of seats would be awarded to each party based on a Droop Quota  $(1/(x \text{ seats} + 1)) + 1$  vote. After, the seats would be awarded to the candidates that received the most votes within a party list. That is the concept of an open list.

In the next election, the current electoral districts can be grouped into larger electoral districts of three to nine members each with an average of six each.

Under an Open Regional List system, would the members of Parliament represent Canadians locally? We should not assume that having only one MP means local representation, but having 2+ means no local representation. We can have several local representatives no matter if we live in urban or rural areas. Year ago, I did live in the electoral district of Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing. I found that strange that it would have been easier for me to reach a Member of Parliament whose office was located in a different riding in Sudbury than for me to contact my own MP. Today's single-member electoral districts are just artificial constructs that hold little connection to the people living in communities within them. If we had several local members of Parliament, we could contact one or more of them if needed.

Under an Open List voting system with an average of six members of Parliament per electoral district, Newfoundland could become an electoral district. So would Prince Edward Island. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan would each have two multi-member electoral districts. Within some of the larger provinces, Scarborough, Vancouver Island, and the West Island of Montreal could become multi-member electoral districts.

### **Open Regional List Vote System**

<b>Province/Territory</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Number of Constituencies</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	7	1
Prince Edward Island	4	1
Nova Scotia	11	2
New Brunswick	10	2
Quebec	78	13
Ontario	121	20
Manitoba	14	2
Saskatchewan	14	2
Alberta	34	6
British Columbia	42	7
Yukon	1	1
Northwest Territories	1	1
Nunavut	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>59</b>

The number of constituencies are determined by the number of seats per province divided by 6, then rounded off. Minimum number of constituencies for each province and territory would be 1.

There would be no need for by-elections using an Open List voting system. If a Member of Parliament resigns or dies, the next highest voted party candidate on a list would become the replacement MP. If a Member of Parliament does switch parties while in office, that would be fine. However, if that same MP resigns or dies, the next highest voted candidate from the original party would become the replacement MP.

How would Canadians be nominated to run as candidates for different political parties? That would depend on each party. It is likely that the nominees would run for positions with the parties using some form of proportional representation voting system such as the Single Transferable Vote to select candidates for their list. Those who reach the quota first will likely go at the top of the open list. In some political parties, there may be adjustments for alternating candidates based on gender or by other categories. A party leader may wish to appoint someone to the top of the open list. However, the voters would get to decide if the candidate at the top of the list gets elected. There is no guarantee in an open list that the top candidate would get chosen. Currently, some leaders do appoint candidates for specific electoral districts under our current voting system. Essentially, we have closed lists of one candidate for each party.

I am skeptical about having a referendum in changing the voting system. The first reason is that the wording of a question could change the results of a referendum. In British Columbia, a majority of 57% of voters supported the Single Transferable Vote system in the first referendum. This was a Yes-No question on STV. Because of a requirement for a super majority, a second referendum was held using a different question on the same topic in which the choices were either “First-Past-the-Post” or “Single Transferable Vote” in that order. Only a minority of voters chose STV. Next, because of the requirement for a super-majority, this demonstrated that the government at the time did not want to change the voting system. If today’s parliament were to hold a referendum with a convoluted question and with a required super majority, I would question my participation in such a referendum.

I would also be skeptical about seeing a “free vote” in the House of Commons. I never believe that votes are truly free. Every Conservative Member of Parliament will vote against proportional representation. Practically every NDP MP and the one Green Party MP would likely support some form of proportional representation. The MPs from the Bloc Québécois would vote based on “Quebec’s interests” whatever that means. As for the Liberal MPs, I believe that a bare majority of MPs would support proportional representation knowing that a minority of Liberal MPs would effectively defeat any bill favouring proportional representation. I hope I am wrong.

The cynic in me suggests that the committee on electoral reform will come up with a voting system such as the less than proportional Mixed Member Parallel which is not the same as Mixed Member Proportional. The committee members will claim that they are supporting MMP. However, in the Mixed Member Parallel the one-member constituency systems have no effect on the list seats like the Mixed Member Proportional voting system does. I do predict that the committee will recommend a 2/3 constituency seat – 1/3 list seat system. The constituency seats will be chosen based on the Alternative Vote system. The list seats may have an option for choosing specific candidates.

I do hope that the Electoral Reform Committee will be adventurous and choose a voting system that is both fair and proportional. Anything that is not proportional would not be fair.

Michael Bednarski

Toronto, Ontario

*See attached document.*

Sample Open Regional List Ballot: (by Michael Bednarski)

Red Party	<input type="radio"/>
-----------	-----------------------

Blue Party	<input type="radio"/>
------------	-----------------------

Yellow Party	<input type="radio"/>
--------------	-----------------------

Purple Party	<input type="radio"/>
--------------	-----------------------

Vote either above or below the line using one "X" only. -----

Strawberry, Dean	<input type="radio"/>
Cherry, Mary	<input type="radio"/>
Riding-Hood, Janet	<input type="radio"/>
Fire, John	<input type="radio"/>
Laframboise, Lise	<input type="radio"/>
Rose, Pierre	<input type="radio"/>

Berry, Boo-Boo	<input type="radio"/>
Strumpf, Ernst	<input type="radio"/>
Waters, Lisa	<input type="radio"/>
LaGlace, Jacques	<input type="radio"/>
Blustein, Michael	<input type="radio"/>
Ocean, Indigo	<input type="radio"/>

Sun, Kim-Il	<input type="radio"/>
Butters, Annette	<input type="radio"/>
Hawn, Goldie	<input type="radio"/>
Brick, Dorothy	<input type="radio"/>
Soleil, André	<input type="radio"/>
King, Amber	<input type="radio"/>

Prince, Gary	<input type="radio"/>
Dino, Barney	<input type="radio"/>
Grape, Don	<input type="radio"/>
Beauregarde, Violet	<input type="radio"/>

Votes per party or candidate:

Winners highlighted in yellow with an asterisk (\*) after their names:

Red Party	2500	Blue Party	1525	Yellow Party	775	Purple Party	325
-----------	------	------------	------	--------------	-----	--------------	-----

  

Strawberry, Dean*	955	Berry, Boo-Boo	475	Sun, Kim-Il	488	Prince, Gary	465
Cherry, Mary*	487	Strumpf, Ernst*	588	Butters, Annette	359	Dino, Barney	82
Riding-Hood, Janet*	653	Waters, Lisa*	495	Hawn, Goldie	376	Grape, Don	254
Fire, John	211	LaGlace, Jacques	112	Brick, Dorothy*	566	Beauregarde, Violet	321
Laframboise, Lise	111	Blustein, Michael	130	Soleil, André	45		
Rose, Pierre	125	Ocean, Indigo	255	King, Amber	79		
Red Party Total	5042	Blue Party Total	3580	Yellow Party Total	2668	Purple Party Total	1447

Total: 12,737

Quota for a six seat district equals  $(12,737 / (6 + 1)) + 1$  vote. Equals 1820.

Seats won for each party:

Red 3  
 Blue 2  
 Yellow 1  
 Purple 0