

## **Brief to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform**

### **“A MIXED-MEMBER PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM WITHOUT PARTY LISTS”**

**Submitted by: Peter Jordan**

The following is a simple proposal for an alternative form of a Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system. I am submitting this brief as an individual, and I am not representing any organization.

Several alternative electoral systems have been proposed to the Committee, and of these, I strongly support a MMP system as the best alternative, mainly because it has proven successful and popular in many countries around the world. The question I want to address is, if a MMP system is chosen in Canada, which of the many variations of this system will be the most fair and equitable in all regions of the country, and will be the most acceptable to Canadians.

Whether or not there is a referendum on electoral reform, the chosen system needs to be broadly accepted by the people of Canada - if not by a referendum, then at least by a robust public consultation process. Looking at the failed referendums in BC and Ontario, it seems to me that to succeed, a MMP system should meet these criteria:

- it should be reasonably simple and easily understood by the average voter;
- ridings should not be too big (two-member ridings are OK);
- it should give a reasonable chance to independent candidates and to small regional parties;
- all MPs should be candidates who ran for election in their riding.

There have been several options proposed for choosing the proportional seats in a MMP system, such as open and closed party lists, and regional MPs. In our experience in BC, an important reason why MMP was not chosen as the proposed system for the referendum is that many people dislike the use of party lists - they feel that they would be better represented by candidates from their riding.

It is possible, and quite simple, to devise a MMP system which does not use party lists. Here is an outline of such a system. (There are variations possible on the details; this is just an example.)

- Keep the total number of MPs the same or similar to the number at present.
- Divide the country into several large regions, ideally single provinces, each having a minimum of 20 MPs (if the threshold for a party to be represented is to be 5%). To achieve this, some adjacent small provinces would need to be merged into larger regions (Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and the four Atlantic provinces).<sup>1</sup>
- Combine adjacent ridings to create 2-member ridings. In each riding, one MP would be elected by FPTP, and one proportional MP would be elected based on the party vote.
- Each voter would vote for two candidates. Each party would run one or two candidates in each riding (it would always be to their advantage to run two).

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<sup>1</sup> The three territorial ridings present a problem. It may be best that they remain FPTP ridings.

- To decide the proportional seats, the % of the popular vote for each party party would be tabulated for the province. The seats for the party with the smallest share of the vote over the threshold (e.g. 5%) would be assigned first. The member(s) for that party would chosen from the riding(s) in which that party won the greatest share of the popular vote.
- The process would be repeated for second-last ranking party, and so on until all the proportional seats had been allocated.
- In this way, every MP would be someone who ran in that riding. Independent candidates could win election if they win the FPTP vote in their riding.

This idea is best illustrated by an example. In British Columbia there are presently 42 ridings, so with the MMP system there would be 21 two-member ridings. Using the results of the 2015 election in BC, and an estimate of the FPTP MPs that might have been elected in the 2-member ridings, the allocation of MPs would be as follows:

<u>Party</u>	<u>FPTP seats</u>	<u>% of vote<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>prop. seats</u>	<u>total</u>	<u>(actual 2015 results)</u>
Liberal	8	35%	7	15	(17)
Conservative	5	30%	8	13	(10)
NDP	7	26%	4	11	(14)
Green	1	8%	2	3	(1)

In this example, since the Green Party is the last-ranking party and is entitled to two proportional seats, we find the two ridings in which the Greens got the greatest share of the popular vote. Their candidates (the leading one if there are two in a riding) would win in those ridings. Then, the four ridings in which the NDP got the greatest share of the vote would be identified, and the leading NDP candidate in those ridings would win. Then, eight seats for the Conservatives. Finally, there would be seven seats left, and the Liberal candidate would win those remaining seats.

It is possible that this process might result in many ridings being represented by two members from the same party. If this is seen as undesirable, then an alternative procedure might be to (using the Greens in the above example) pick the two individual Green candidates who got the highest percent of the vote in their riding (but were not elected), and award those ridings to the Greens.<sup>3</sup>

This is just an initial idea of how such a MMP system could work - but it is an example of how we could have proportional representation without party lists, ensure that ridings are represented by local candidates, and give small parties a chance.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Committee!

Peter Jordan  
Nelson, BC, 7 October 2016

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<sup>2</sup> To calculate the proportional seats, the popular vote percentages must be adjusted slightly, to account for the approximately 1% received by independents and small parties.

<sup>3</sup> This is somewhat similar to the “best runner-up” procedure used in Sweden.