

Canadians want a simple solution to electoral reform

Jim Johnston, B. Math, MBA

Submitter

I am a Professor of International Business at the Kinlin School of Business at Fanshawe College. I have been a candidate in the last four federal elections. I have done extensive analysis on electoral systems, but I will make this submission mercifully short and simple.

Guiding Principles for a Great New System

1. **We need to have a new system that acknowledges people's choices.** I, for one, have voted at one time or another for every major party in English Canada, and I have never voted for someone who won their riding. My vote has never counted. I am still engaged in politics because I am stubborn, not because of the encouragement of the electoral system. Many of my peers have given up, as have many of the youth of our country.
2. **Any system that "transfers" my first choice to a second, third or worse choice is betraying my true choice.** While I may not get the result that I want (local, list or top-up MP), at least I know that my vote has made a statement about where I want Canada to go. Alternate vote is seductively deceptive in its promise to possibly count your vote once you have been bumped to a large enough party. Alternate vote accumulates votes until it reaches 50% and then immediately throws out the votes of everyone else, just like FPTP.
3. **In 2016, governments are formed by parties.** Voting for a party is, in many cases, a stronger expression of a person's beliefs than voting for an individual. Clearly, independents are the exception to this rule, and any system must allow voters to support both parties and independents.
4. **Canadians want a simple solution.** Most Canadians have not taken the time to study alternate voting systems, and look for simple choices. Canadians are smart, and can handle the complexities of many different types of systems. However, I believe they will be happiest with something simple, easy to use and easy to understand, so long as it is clear to them that their vote will actually make a difference.

Simple MMP – A New Voting System for Canada

1. Keep provincial representation in the House of Commons at **current levels** of MPs.
2. Fold together ridings approximately **two existing ridings for one new one.**
3. **Elect FPTP candidate** from these ridings as we do today, with the same ballot.
4. Counting this same ballot a second time, elect **provincial top-ups from the best runners up** using an incremental, compensatory method to provide optimum proportional representation.
5. If you run out of eligible runners up, then and only then, select additional top-ups from a provincial party list (this only happens when party support is well over 50% in a province)
6. You can impose a **limit of one top-up MP per riding**, adding the benefit of almost equal representation for all ridings (in provinces with an odd number of ridings, one riding will have only one MP, the rest will have two).

More information

For more information, including more comprehensive analysis, simulations, comparisons and interactive tools, please see the website <http://simplevoting.ca>. This includes the introduction of a measurement called the democratic deficit which can be used to objectively measure outcomes from various electoral systems.

Consistency with ERRE objectives

1. Effectiveness and legitimacy: MMP is the best system for mapping intention to seats, and its legitimacy comes from the transparency of the process.
2. Engagement: Once my vote truly counts, I will vote.
3. Accessibility and inclusiveness: Every vote will count. Voters for large parties will see their support reflected in seats, and voters for small parties will see that they finally have a chance to win a top-up seat.
4. Integrity: The transparency of the process and the power of a single vote being counted twice produces the truest result possible.
5. Local representation: All new ridings are guaranteed one seat in Parliament, and all but a few across Canada will have two.
6. Constitutional issues: None.
7. Voter education required: People will need to know that their vote truly counts for the party they want, even when they might lose the local FPTP race, and that they no longer need to vote strategically.

Additional Considerations

1. I am a strong advocate of online voting. Our country is so large that the challenge of physical voting is substantial. Also online voting will assist in re-engaging younger voters, who are desperately needed to help build the leaders of the future.
2. As an educator, I am in favour of lowering the voting age, perhaps as low as 14, so that students in high school will have a direct or indirect experience in the electoral process.

Appreciation

Thanks for allowing Canadians to have a say about having a say.

I urge you to take the high ground so that we can create an electoral system which will be the envy of the world. I would also ask you to take a non-partisan position in this extremely important decision. We can only reach a better place by setting aside partisanship.

We need look no further than our neighbours to the south to see that a flawed system can result in disastrous outcomes. As a result of the 2016 election process, the entire system of democracy in the US appears to lack credibility, dignity, and legitimacy, and is being driven almost entirely by emotional and irrational themes. The US would benefit from having more than 2 effective parties in the final vote for president.

We can do better.