

Brief submitted to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform

By Murray Gudmundson
Victoria BC

Dear Committee Members,

As you no doubt have a lot of material to read in the course of your work, I will keep this brief.

My suggestion is that Canada adopt a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) Electoral System, with 400 members of parliament elected in total. 300 would be elected at the constituency level. Another 100 would be allocated to parties according to their share of the popular vote but taking into account the percentage of seats already obtained via constituency elections. For example, if a party gets 25% of the vote nationally and wins 100 seats at the constituency level, that party would not be allocated any further seats from the 100 elected at large from popular vote. On the other hand, a party that received 20% of the popular vote but only elected 50 members at the constituency level would receive an additional 30 seats from the pool of 100 proportionally allocated seats to bring them up to the 80 seats that represent their share of the popular vote nationally. The threshold for receiving any proportionally allocated seats should be around 5%.

The advantage of these numbers is that we would still have local representation (300 MPs) across the country with only slightly larger constituencies than we currently have with 338 MPs. The public who feels comfortable with the existing FPTP system would hopefully be satisfied since we will continue to use this system to elect 75%, of our MPs, and almost as many as currently, with the existing system. Those who seek an electoral system that gives us proportionality would hopefully be satisfied that with most elections, we will have a result that is considerably more proportional.

I believe the government should proceed to bring in a MMP system without a referendum, designed as suggested above, and use this for 2 elections and then hold a referendum AFTER Canadians have tried it to see if they wish to keep it or go back to FPTP.

To minimize opposition to the introduction of such an MMP system, I suggest that the parties be required under the elections act to have open party lists, whereby all members of a political party can vote for their party's list of candidates to be chosen should that party be granted any proportionally allocated seats. This will virtually eliminate the criticism of MMP that proportionally allocated MPs will be appointed by party brass and "back room boys". Open party lists will also encourage Canadians to become more active in the political party of their choice, which is truly healthy for democracy.

Finally, in support of having an electoral system that is more proportional, ask yourselves this:

In the 21st century, would we develop public policy, or enact laws that purposely discriminate against a minority group? Would we say, "we don't need accessible buildings, because people with disabilities are a minority"? Would we say, "we don't need to have First Nations people in our public service, they are a minority"? Would we say, "there's no need for affirmative action in the RCMP, to bring in more people of colour, because most Canadians are white, so it's okay if most RCMP officers are white"?

The answer is no. So why would we stick with an electoral system that says, only 7% of Canadians voted for party X, they aren't entitled to any representation in the house of commons?