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Submission to Special Committee on Electoral Reform

Proposal for a Modern AV PR Election Model

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Background & Explanation

For the first time in history, the US 1787 constitution introduced the overlapping election districts system on a massive scale. This constitution produced federal election districts that overlap smaller state election districts which in turn overlap smaller city election districts.

In the seventeen hundreds, the right to vote was limited to privileged groups in society. Advocates of full democracy favored and campaigned for universal adult suffrage. Today, nearly all modern governments provide universal adult suffrage. However, the right to elect candidates of personal choice is still quite limited because about 46% to 100% of electors normally fail to elect candidates of their own choice when virtually all of today's most commonly used and widely known election systems are used to elect representatives to legislative assemblies.

Currently, there are no effective and easily understood election systems to enable very large majorities of electors to elect candidates of choice. For example, although first past the post (FPTP) and alternative vote (AV) election systems are quite understandable; they respectively normally enable only about 50% and 54%¹ of all electors to elect candidates of choice. Also by contrast, the single transferable vote (STV) election system can enable large majorities of electors to elect candidates of choice, but its' complexity often forces electors into guessing who they elect with their votes. Furthermore, commonly used high election rate list proportional representation election systems only enable electors to elect parties of choice, not party candidates of choice. So, none of these electors elect candidates of personal choice.

When overlapping election districts are combined to form a single overlapping election districts election system, they can enable large majorities of electors to directly elect candidates of choice, which in some models approaches 100%.

Summary of a Modern AV PR Election Model

The Alternative Vote Proportional Representation (AV PR) election system provides Canadians with the best of two worlds. Canadians obtain proportional representation from the system and all representatives are elected to single-member districts.

This brief contains one AV PR election system proposal with 3 variations that each have impacts on voter representation and government formation. They are as follows:

1. AV PR four districts of residence election system. About 96% or more voters elect politicians of choice.

¹ The average election rate is obtained from a series of past state elections in New South Wales and Queensland in Australia where the method of voting is 'Optional Preferential Voting'. Also, of further interest in New South Wales and Queensland, about 57% of the total valid vote of voters tends to express a voting preference for elected members of the legislative assembly.

2. AV PR three districts of residence election system. About 90% or more voters elect politicians of choice. (This paper will focus on this 3 vote model)
3. AV PR two districts of residence election system. About 79% or more voters elect politicians of choice.

As shown above, election results become increasingly inclusive as the number of districts for voting increases. By contrast, the current AV election system is highly exclusionary. It normally prevents about 46% or less of all voters from electing politicians of choice.

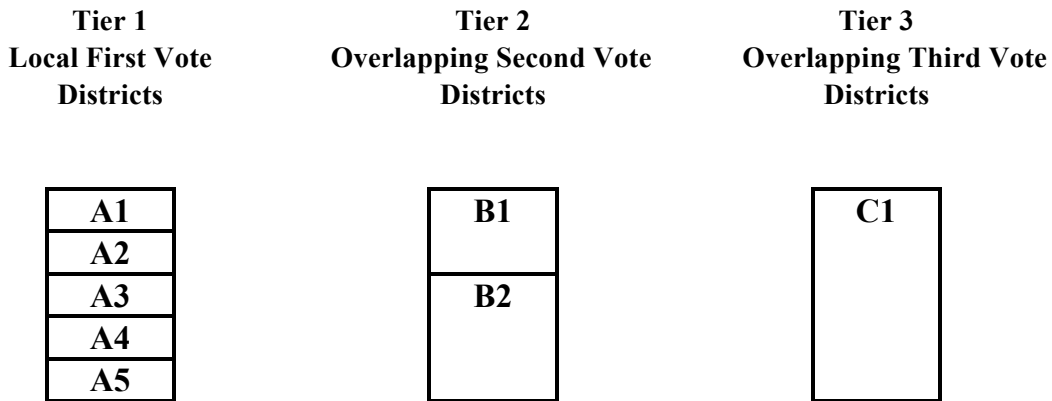
The primary purpose of AV PR election systems is to enable high proportions of voters to elect politicians of direct personal choice. This ensures currently disenfranchised minority groups obtain the right to effective representation and therefore the right to proper inclusion in our democratic processes.

AV PR election systems produce inherently better representation than AV election systems. So, if the AV election method is chosen by the committee for the next Canadian federal election, then the election system chosen should be an AV PR election system.

How It Works: General Election Area of Reformed AV Election System

'Overlapping Election Districts' are subdivisions of general election area tiers. For example, consider the general election area of the following three overlapping AV election districts election system.

**General Election Area of
Three Overlapping AV Election Districts Election System**



As shown above, the general election area is divided into three overlapping election tiers and eight overlapping election districts, which have common boundaries. Tiers 1, 2 and 3 respectively have five, two and one overlapping election district. (8 MPs in total)

Districts A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 have smaller areas than districts B1 and B2, and district C1 is even larger. For example, local first vote districts are normally expected on average to be about

46% as large as overlapping second vote districts. Furthermore, they are normally expected on average to be about 21% as large as the overlapping third vote district.

Reformed AV Voting

Election Day voting is simple. For example, voters residing in local district A1 cast their first vote for a candidate in local district A1. Then they cast their second vote for a candidate in overlapping district of residence B1. Lastly, they cast their third vote for a candidate in overlapping district of residence C1. Voters residing in local districts A2, A3, A4 and A5 also cast votes in their local and overlapping districts of residence in similar fashion. In effect, the overlapping districts of residence voting process enables voters to elect politicians of choice regardless of where they live within their allocated voting districts.

Right to Representation

The three tier election model enables about 90% of voters to elect politicians of choice who provide real representation. Only about 10% of voters do not elect in this model in comparison to the present AV model where about 46% of voters typically do not have the right to representation from politicians of their own meaningful choosing.

What's more, the total number of election districts is typically the same with districting reform as it is without election districts reform. This means there's generally no need to change the total number of politicians elected to legislatures. Legislatures can have just about any number of elected politicians they want.

Counting Votes

Election Day votes are counted and election results are tallied in smaller local districts before larger overlapping districts. In this three district model each elector is given three votes. However, in order to have a fair legislative assembly representation of all voters from election votes counted; each voter can use one but no more than one valid vote to elect politicians of choice. So for example, if a voter elects in their first district, the second ballot vote is null and void. Alternatively, if a voter does not elect in their first district, then their second ballot vote is counted as in the first district. The vote counting process is repeated until votes from all election districts on the ballot are counted. Furthermore, politicians can run for election in only one election district on the ballot. This counting method considerably increases chances for voters to elect politicians of personal choice.

About 54% of valid votes elect politicians of choice in each round of vote counting on the ballot. After each round of voting, the percentage of valid votes counted in the next round of vote counting drops by about 54%.

AV PR Broadens Voting Power to Elect

The voting right of all voters to elect politicians of choice broadens as the total number of districts for voting increases. For example, consider the:

1. Two voting districts election system. About 79% or more voters elect politicians.
2. Three voting districts election system. About 90% or more voters elect politicians.
3. Four voting districts election system. About 96% or more voters elect politicians.

As shown above, the power to elect broadens from about 79% or more voters to about 96% or more voters when the number of districts of residence for voting increases from two to four.

Voting systems that enable large proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice also enable voters and parties to obtain proportional representation from politicians of choice. Overlapping districts provide the minority's right to elect politicians of choice. This right strengthens as the number of overlapping districts for voting increases.

Government Formation

Single party majority governments have their strongest roots in the weakest proportional election results and their weakest roots in the strongest proportional results. Therefore, parties obtain single party majority government formations most often from the two voting districts election system and least often from the four voting districts election system.

Reformed Alternative Vote Voting is Better

AV proportional representation provides a compelling alternative for Canadians. For example, Canadians are familiar with the local single-member district system of representation. Also, the AV proportional representation election system gives people what polls say they want - proportional representation. As well, all representatives have support from a majority of voters.

Districting reform enables large proportions of AV election system voters to elect politicians of direct personal choice. This improves the personal connection to voting, the personal connection to representation and the geographical representation of voter opinion. It also improves the right to effective representation, the problem solving ability of legislative assemblies and the legitimacy of government. But that's not all there is to it - voters and parties also get proportional representation from politicians of choice.

Winning the Right to Elect

Winning the voting right to elect politicians of choice through election districts reform ensures legislative assembly representation is as fair and effective as possible for as many people as possible. So yes, we can do better than our current FPTP election system by switching to the AV proportional representation election system that does more for the common good of all the people.

Made in Canada AV PR Tops Traditional Alternatives

The federal Liberal government is committed to ensuring 2015 will be the last federal election conducted under Canada's First Past The Post (FPTP) voting system. The main alternatives to Canada's current voting system include the Alternative Vote (AV), List Proportional Representation (List PR), Mixed-member Proportional (MMP) Representation and Single Transferable Vote (STV).

FPTP and Main Alternatives Curtail Voting Right to Elect

The biggest problem with Canada's voting system and nearly all of the main alternatives is they curtail the voting right to elect politicians of choice. For example, consider:

1. List PR voting systems. List PR prevents 100% of voters from electing politicians of choice. List PR systems only enable voters to elect parties of choice.
2. FPTP voting systems normally prevents about 50% or less of all voters from electing politicians of choice.
3. AV optional preferential voting typically prevents about 46% or less of all voters from electing politicians of choice.
4. MMP voting systems generally combines the List PR voting system with FPTP or AV voting systems. The List PR component dilutes and reduces the total proportion of legislative assembly members that are elected as politicians of choice.
5. STV voting systems. Small multi-member district (few politicians per district) voting systems prevent large proportions of voters from electing politicians of choice. For example, two-member districts prevent about 33% or less of all voters from electing politicians of choice. By contrast, large multi-member district (many politicians per district) voting systems can enable very large proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice. But the big problem with high election rate STV voting systems is complexity. This complexity makes many if not close to all high election rate STV voting systems unsuitable for people who yearn for simplicity.

Each of the above voting systems prevent either all or large proportions of voters from electing politicians of choice. The exception is STV, which can enable large proportions of voters to elect politicians of choice. Voting systems that prevent all or large proportions of voters from electing politicians of choice also prevent voters and parties from obtaining proportional representation from politicians of choice.

Main Election Reform Alternatives Are Not Better

There's no significant advantage to switching from FPTP to one of the main electoral reform alternatives. For example, consider the following switches:

1. AV: Only about 4% more (54% - 50% of voters) AV voters than FPTP voters elect politicians of choice. The main difference between FPTP and AV voting is simplicity. AV voters rank order candidates on the ballot. This is more time consuming and complex than FPTP voting. FPTP voting is simpler because voters only need to put a

mark beside one candidate on the ballot. Also, the AV election formula is more complex than the FPTP election formula. This means, knowing how your vote counts is generally easier and quicker to figure out with FPTP than with AV.

2. STV: The big problem with STV is complexity. STV voters rank order candidates from small or large STV multi-member districts. This is much more time consuming and complex than FPTP voting. Also, larger multi-member districts are more complex than smaller multi-member districts. The number of politicians per multi-member district can get too large and election ballots can get too long for voters. As a result, multi-member districts may confuse or act as a barrier to the lines of representation, responsibility and accountability that constituents have with representatives. Furthermore, the system's election formula complexity often forces voters into guessing who they elect with their votes. As a result, these voters may never know who they help to elect.
3. MMP: MMP weakens the right to elect politicians of choice. For example, FPTP election system voters lose one-half of their influence from politicians of choice when MMP cuts the number of FPTP representatives from 100% to 50% of legislative assembly members. The List PR component of MMP is discussed next.
4. List PR: List PR destroys the right to elect politicians of choice. The system only enables people to elect parties of choice. Also, List PR multi-member districts break simple FPTP single-member district links. Furthermore, getting elected is difficult for those who want to run as independent candidates outside of the party structure.

The main electoral reform alternatives merely trades one set of electoral system flaws for another. Replacing Canada's outdated FPTP election system with another outdated election system reform alternative is not better.

Referendums and a Plebiscite

None of the main electoral reform alternatives offer significantly desirable improvements to Canada's FPTP voting system. At least, that is what many Canadians and people from the United Kingdom seem to think. For example, in 2005 and 2009 British Columbia voted against switching from FPTP to STV. Also, in 2007 Ontario voted against switching from FPTP to MMP. As well, in a 2005 plebiscite, Prince Edward Island voted against switching from FPTP to MMP. Moreover, since MMP contains a List PR component, the Ontario and Prince Edward Island votes against MMP can also be interpreted as a vote against List PR. Furthermore, in 2011 the United Kingdom voted against switching from FPTP to AV.

People have voted to keep the FPTP devil they know rather than switch to one of the main alternatives. In their view, the FPTP single-member district election system is better and therefore worth keeping. However, for many years a strong majority of Canadians (around 70%) have also supported proportional representation.

The AV PR election system lets people keep a single-member district election system and have proportional representation at the same time. These features merit consideration for making AV PR the election system of choice for Canada's next federal election.

Committee Perspectives & Considerations:

Effectiveness & Legitimacy: Present majority rule election systems are not working. A new, inclusive and simple system is required to restore public faith in our system of governance. This proposed AV PR Model does strengthen the link between voter intention and the election of representatives and greatly increases voters democratic representation.

Engagement: Voters today are fractured, highly partisan and are often and easily excluded from having an elected representative of their personal choice voted into office. Disaffected voters end up feeling a deep distrust and disinterest in the system of government. AV PR enfranchises a much higher proportion of electors and previously unrepresented minorities, by allowing them to directly elect representatives of their own choice. This election model is designed to create real representation and inclusiveness in the electoral process.

Accessibility & Inclusiveness: Developing a new “Overlapping System” of voting that increases the ability to elect candidates of choice; thus being more inclusive to voters, creating greater interest in governance due to greater personal representation, and through a method that is built upon existing models making it relatively simple to understand for a new model.

Integrity: While not as simple as first past the post; voting is still transparent and simple enough for the average voter to understand. This makes vote tallies easy enough for each elector to know clearly if they elected a candidate or not. When overlapping election districts are combined to form a single overlapping election districts election system, they can enable large majorities of electors to directly elect candidates of choice.

Local Representation: The AV PR model is built on local constituencies, ranging from small local areas to larger overlapping and adjoining areas that create area based representation of small, medium sized and larger overlapping constituencies. Elected representatives are directly responsible for issues within their areas of representation, which may be focused within local districts or across the common interests of local districts within larger areas of representation. Electors in AV PR election models have geographical representation from 3 Members of Parliament to facilitate their concerns.

End Results/Aim: To create an electorate that has greater representation in Parliament of their own personal and therefore meaningful choice. By doing so, this will create more interest and trust in governance and those who govern them.

AboutElectionDistrictsVoting.com

ElectionDistrictsVoting.com focuses on improving the way politics works through nonpartisan education, advocacy and modern election reform. Its mission is to advance voting rights.

Election reforms include:

1. FPTP PR (<http://electiondistrictsvoting.com/fptp-pr/>)
 2. AV PR (<http://electiondistrictsvoting.com/av-pr/>)
 3. Reformed STV (<http://electiondistrictsvoting.com/reformed-stv/>)
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