

ELECTORAL REFORM / CITIZEN BRIEF

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I would like to register my support for the Mixed Member Proportional method, with:

- two ballots: one for the local MP (elected as we do now, by the first-past-the-post system) and the second ballot for the party of choice.
- seats to be allocated to each party in proportion according to the vote on the party ballot.
- the number of elected MPs in each party to be subtracted from their allocation and additional seats assigned to parties to reflect the proportional vote.
- additional MPs to be selected by each party from a list created within the party by committee or membership-vote.
- size of parliament to vary according to the number of top-up seats that may be required.
- abolition of the Senate (eventually).

I am supporting this system because I think it provides the following benefits.

This form of MMP retains all the strengths of our current system because local MPs continue to represent their constituents the way they do now. I hope the new system will not redistribute ridings to reduce the number of local MPs. Local representation is important and should not be weakened.

The party or parties in power (either on their own in a majority or together in a coalition) will actually be chosen by the will of the majority of the people, a huge democratic improvement over our current system.

I see the additional Party-selected MPs as being a big plus. These people could be strong leaders who would not necessarily be appropriate local representatives. They may be chosen from various lists created by the parties: experts in various fields, acknowledged wise elders, representatives of disadvantaged groups, etc. I see that these MPs could provide some of the current value embodied in the Senate (a reason among others for why I favour the eventual abolition of that unaccountable group).

A weakness in this system is that it may be seen as undemocratic for parties to appoint people to fill the additional seats. I think parties may choose to make the list more democratic by holding elections within the party, but I do not see that as compulsory. I have been thinking about the alternative method suggested: in which the parties provide a list of names on the party ballot in the general election. I am interested to learn more about how this might work. However I think it would be too difficult for the electorate to make itself fully informed about these candidates, even if they were assigned on a regional basis. Also I do not see the need to create

more regional representation, as we already have the many local MPs in place. What I do see the need for is more MPs of whom we can say they are the best-of-the-best.

I believe there is one more thing that could benefit our society tremendously if this system were implemented. It would dramatically improve the engagement of Canadians with their political party of choice. The political parties are powerful mechanisms we already have in place at the riding level all across Canada. They are democratic institutions just as Parliament is. Anyone can join a party, vote and speak up for their ideas and values and inform policy. If voters knew that their party vote made a difference, they would be more motivated to take their party affiliation and involvement seriously. Having the power to add representatives who may reflect the best talent within the party would make party participation much more relevant. I am enthusiastic about this because I feel nothing is more important than the engagement of regular citizens in local communities with what they know is the joint task of making our country a better place.

SUMMARY

This citizen supports electoral reform of the Mixed Member Proportional type, with additional MPs to be selected by each party from a list created within the party by committee or membership-vote.