

Written Submissions To:

ERRE
Special Committee on Electoral Reform

By: Raymond Li, Toronto

Please find below some of my proposals for Electoral Reform in Canada:

CLOSE RUNNER-UP PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (CRUPR)

What it is:

My first proposal is that we should have a modified version of the Party List Proportional Representation System (PLPR), but doing away with the Party List. Instead, additional seats to keep the representation of Political Parties proportional are given to those candidates who belong to a Party requiring additional representation, but awarded to those candidates who lose to the first round winner by the least number of votes.

Procedures:

Riding boundaries will not have to be significantly modified for this system. Voters first elect a local candidate (Member Elect) by a first-past-the-post or ranked ballot vote (the writer prefers ranked ballot). After one winner is selected by whichever method is chosen for the Member Elect for every riding, additional Members (Member Proportionate) are apportioned to under-represented parties in sufficient numbers to bring the total number of Members of Parliament (MPs) in rough proportionality to the popular vote.

Rather than allow the party executive of the under-represented Parties select candidates from a prepared list, those Parties are required to appoint to those seats their own candidates who lost by an absolute least number of seats.

Vacant seats between general elections for any party can be filled by offering the vacancy to the next candidate (including for the governing Party) who lost by the least number of votes.

In the event a by-election is necessary: where a single Member Elect represents a riding, we can have a by-election for a single Member Elect. In a multi-member riding, consisting of a Member Elect and a Member Proportionate, we can elect 2 members. The top vote getter becomes Member Elect after the by-election, and the second top vote getter becomes Member Proportionate. Voter disapproval can be expressed by upsetting the ranking of Member Electorate to Member Proportionate status.

Rationale:

- 1) Having a **CRUPR** system of appointing the Members Proportionate, rather than have the Party executive select them means that each MP is required to have run a campaign and earned votes from voters. A Party List system allows Members Proportionate to be designated without any voter input.
- 2) The Party List system creates a class of MPs who are not directly accountable to an electorate, but rather, to the Party executive that appoints him/her. Beholden to the executive for the seat, it is, at least in appearance, it may be difficult for a Party List appointed MP to stand up to his or her own Party on questions of conscience.
- 3) There is also no way for the electorate to express displeasure at an underperforming Party List appointed MP by “voting the bums out”. Whereas, in the CRUPR system, each Member Proportionate is subject to facing the electorate in the next general election and can either be “elevated” to Member Elect status by winning more votes, be re-elected Member Proportionate by losing by a small margin, or losing the seat by losing by a larger margin than another candidate of one’s own party.
- 4) The writer submits that the **CRUPR** system is simpler for the voter to use than the Multi-Member Proportional Representation (MMP) system, for instance, because the voter need not cast two separate votes, one for a local candidate, and a second one for the Party. The allocation of Members Proportionate seats is based strictly on a mathematical formula that can be easily explained and understood, but need not be understood for the voter to exercise his rights.
- 5) **CRUPR** is fair. While some ridings will have a single MP, while other ridings have more, the ridings with multiple MPs are the ones where the electorate is itself most divided. The multiple MPs (one can easily imagine a 3-way tie) will in many instances vote in ways that cancel each other out, but can give additional voice on issues of unanimous consensus within the multi-member riding. In any event, they will represent the views of that local riding in a proportionate way where the electorate is most divided.
- 6) The Member Elect who faces the prospect of having a Member Proportionate in his or her riding is the weakest performer who still manages to win the majority of votes. Can it honestly be said that the candidate with 20,010 votes deserves a seat more than his or her rival who wins 19,990 votes?
- 7) In the riding with the closest winning margin, the selection of the close runner-up for the Member Proportionate seat also dispels part of the incumbency advantage just in those ridings where it matters.

DO BOTH RANKED BALLOT AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (CRUPR)

Ranked Ballot and Proportional Representation are not mutually exclusive, why not do both? I would propose doing CRUPR with a Ranked Ballot system.

Procedure:

Voters rank a single candidate from their own riding; the ballot need not be more complicated than that. After selecting a single Member Elect from ranked ballots, a proportional weighting of the popular vote is made using the 1st ranking votes of all voters. Parties found to be under-represented based on the ranked ballot vote are awarded additional Members Proportionate seats. These seats are awarded to candidates who lose by the least number of first round votes. It may occasionally happen that a candidate with more votes in the first round will lose in subsequent rounds. In those cases, they have in some sense “lost” by a negative number of votes, and should deserve a higher ranking than a fellow candidate of the same party who loses by a larger margin in the first round of counting, but picks up “second-choice” votes of other voters who have less invested in that candidate being selected.

Rationale:

1. Doing both Ranked Ballot and Proportional Representation eliminates the need to choose between these two alternatives.
2. In a subsequent referendum, the electorate can choose between 4 choices all of which they have experienced in a ranked ballot referendum:
 - a. First-Past-the-Post
 - b. Ranked Ballot, no Proportional Representation
 - c. Proportional Representation, no Ranked Ballot
 - d. Both Ranked Ballot and Proportional Representation

VOTE REPORTING

As a separate issue, the writer concurs with the Electoral Officer of Canada that in the age of the internet, the existing law forbidding the reporting of East Coast initial results before polls close on the West Coast is untenable.

Rather than permit open reporting of East Coast results before West Coast polls have closed, the writer respectfully submits a better and simpler solution would be to forbid the announcing of poll results on the East Coast until West Coast polls are closed. The outcome of races on the East Coast cannot be impacted by the delay in declaring which candidate is leading in an East Coast contest. The polls on the East Coast can start counting as soon as polls close and simply hold on to those results until polls have closed on the West Coast. It would then simply take a matter of minutes for all the counted votes to be tabulated and announced.

All of which is respectfully submitted by:

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