

John Bidochka  
Regina, Saskatchewan

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The Honourable Maryam Monsef  
Minister of Democratic Institutions  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Congratulations on your election in Peterborough-Kawartha, as well as in successfully forming government. We are confident that you will do your best as Minister of Democratic Institutions.

I hold no political party membership of any kind, but have been an advocate for electoral reform since 2004. In the last twelve years and five elections, I have gotten the sense that people do not see their vote as counting for much, which results in low voter turnout, voter apathy (especially among young voters), and strategic voting, which is negative reinforcement at its finest.

We live in an era where election results are skewed and misleading, where two-thirds of Parliamentarians are elected with less than 50% support in their respective ridings.

In 2015, 206 of 338 victories were won with most of each riding's voters casting ballots for other candidates, and in the case of five certain Quebec ridings, the victors received as little as 28.64% support.

I have a proposal which I hope will be tabled as your committee begins its work.

I'm not suggesting that electoral would completely eliminate these problems, but it would mitigate much of it. In my view, any efforts we can put forward would only be of benefit to Canadians in the long term, and I would be remiss if I did not try to contribute.

First, I wish to explain how I arrived at this idea. I credit former Scarborough-Rouge River Liberal MP Derek Lee for the inspiration.

In 2005, I was a regular viewer CPAC's program "Focus", and that Spring one of their programs was on the subject of electoral reform. The guests were Mr. Lee, former Conservative MP Chuck Strahl (Chilliwack-Fraser Canyon), and former NDP leader Ed Broadbent.

The focus of the program was the Mixed-Member Proportional system favoured by many countries, including New Zealand. Mr. Lee thoughtfully and articulately made the case against what many perceive to be the major flaw in the MMP voting, which is the "candidate list", a list of ranked members, submitted by the parties themselves, from which candidates would be chosen to fill "at large" seats if the proportion of their respective party's vote requires it to match the percentage of seats to the popular vote.

Mr. Lee's quote from the show was thus;

*"the person on a party list in a PR system is the ultimate manifestation of political patronage, where the person is beholden to no one but the party bosses who put him or her there."*

I later wrote him a letter challenging his comments, and in my proposal, suggested that a PR system does NOT have to be this way.

Indeed, many people that I have spoken with are NOT in favour of the “list” – some have gone on to say that even though they favour a proportional system, they would not support it if it included a “party list”.

I proposed to Mr. Lee, a system of proportional representation that does NOT require a party list, but rather, chooses its **at-large members** from a list created by the voters themselves. There is no reason why a candidate who lost by only a handful of votes, should not have the chance to represent their constituents if they have significant support from voters.

Lee wrote back to say this was a "good idea", and one that "should be made part of the debate". His letter is attached for your reference.

My proposal is based on the following three criteria, based on concerns I have heard from people over the past decade.

1. Voters value local representation
2. Some voters wish to keep the ballot the same
3. No party-compiled candidate’s list.

I have found that voters have difficulty supporting any electoral reform initiative if some combination of the above three criteria are not met.

I define the “DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT” to be the mathematical difference between *what is* and *what should have been*. In recent elections, if you compare the percentage of seats won by a party versus their popular vote, you can find discrepancies to be as high as a 15%.

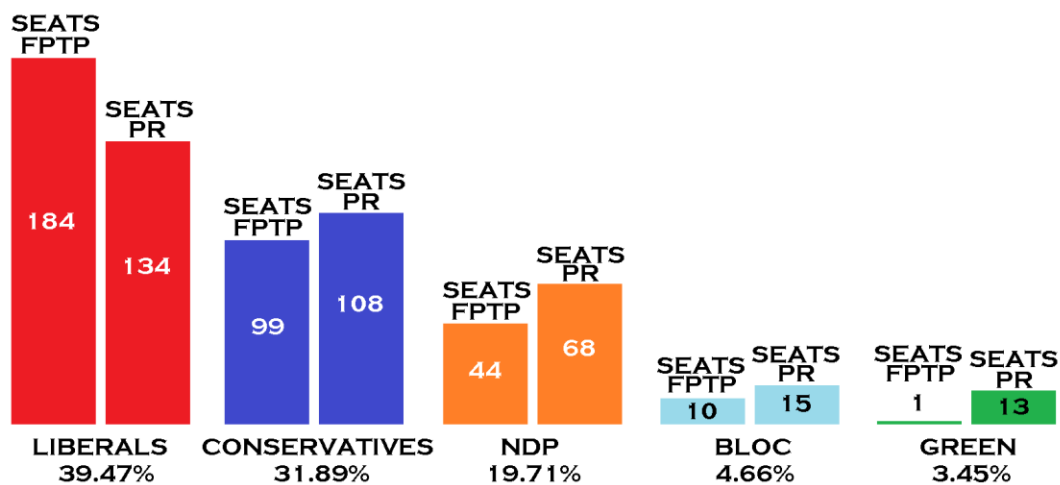
		2015	2011	2008	2006
<b>LIB</b>	Vote %	39.47	18.91	26.26	30.23
	Seat %	54.44	11.04	25.00	33.44
	Dif	14.97	7.87	1.26	3.21
<b>CPC</b>	Vote %	31.89	39.62	37.65	36.27
	Seat %	29.29	53.90	46.43	40.26
	Dif	2.6	14.28	8.78	3.99
<b>NDP</b>	Vote %	19.71	30.63	18.18	17.48
	Seat %	13.02	33.44	12.02	9.42
	Dif	6.69	2.81	6.16	8.06
<b>GRN</b>	Vote %	3.45	6.78	6.78	
	Seat %	.30	.32	0	
	Dif	3.15	6.46	6.78	
<b>BQ</b>	Vote %	4.66	6.04	9.98	10.48
	Seat %	2.96	1.30	15.91	16.56
	Dif	1.70	4.74	5.93	6.08

Given that, I propose the following:

- 15% of Parliamentary seats be designated as “at-large” seats
- The “at-large” seats be filled from the highest ranking “defeated” candidates list.
- The “at-large” candidates have sought election from within provincial boundaries.

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	YU	NW	NU	ALL
<b>Regular Seats</b>	36	29	12	12	103	66	8	9	4	6	1	1	1	288
<b>At-Large Seats</b>	6	5	2	2	18	12	2	2	n/c	1	n/c	n/c	n/c	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	42	34	14	14	121	78	10	11	4	7	1	1	1	338

My proposal calls for Parliamentary seats to be divided up as 288 geographically-based riding seats, plus 50 total “at-large” seats, totalling 338. Of course, a boundary redraw will become necessary.



The above graphic demonstrates how each party’s Parliamentary seat count would have differed if the last election had been conducted using a proportional system versus the current first-past-the-post system, recognizing that voting intentions would most certainly change under those circumstances. If we were to treat the entire country as one big region, we could very easily match each party’s seats to the popular vote (Single Transferable Vote method), but then local/regional representation is lost.

Using my modified-MMP proposal, a Federal election would see tabulations made within provincial boundaries first before totalling all the results nationally.

We could use my home province of Saskatchewan as an example.

Since 2004, the first-past-the-post system has allow the Conservative Party to win the vast majority of Saskatchewan’s 14 seats with approximately 50% support. Support for Liberal and New Democratic Parties has usually been overwhelmed by Conservative Party support, especially in rural areas.

If Saskatchewan had 12 first-past-the-post constituency elections and 2 at-large seats on offer, the results may have played out like so:

FPTP CONSTITUENCY ELECTIONS (SK)			PR AT-LARGE DESIGNATIONS (SK)		
Gerry Ritz	CPC	Battlefords - Lloydminster	Lawrence Joseph	LIB	At Large 1
Kelly Block	CPC	Carlton Trail - Eagle Creek	Louis Browne	LIB	At Large 2
David Anderson	CPC	Cypress Hills - Grasslands			
Georgina Jolibois	NDP	Desnethé - Missinippi - Churchill River			
Tom Lukiwski	CPC	Moose Jaw - Lake Centre - Lanigan			
Randy Hoback	CPC	Prince Albert			
Erin Weir	NDP	Regina - Lewvan			
Ralph Goodale	LIB	Regina - Wascana			
Brad Trost	CPC	Saskatoon - University			
Sheri Benson	NDP	Saskatoon West			
Robert Kitchen	CPC	Souris - Moose Mountain			
Cathay Wagantall	CPC	Yorkton - Melville			

When the twelve constituency elections are tallied, it becomes apparent that the Conservatives are over-represented, the NDP are on par, and the Liberal Party is under-represented, so therefore they would qualify for a “top-up”. The Green Party, not reaching the minimum threshold, does not qualify.

It is at this point that we would refer to the list of *DEFEATED CANDIDATES* to see which Liberal candidates will fill those “at-large” seats:

#### DEFEATED SASKATCHEWAN FEDERAL CANDIDATES - 2015

CONSERVATIVE		LIBERAL PARTY		NEW DEMOCRATIC		GREEN PARTY	
Trent Fraser	34.9	Lawrence Joseph	33.8	Claire Card	31.5	Elaine Hughes	2.8
Randy Donauer	32.9	Louis Browne	27.5	Nial Kuyek	30.2	Bob Deptuck	2.7
Michael Kram	30.3	Tracy Muggli	26.4	Scott Bell	30.1	Bill Caton	2.7
Rob Clarke	30.1	Cynthia Marie Block	25.2	Lon Borgerson	28.4	Shawn Setyo	2.3
		Lisa Abbott	24.5	Dustan Hlady	23.7	Greg Chatterson	2.3
		Della Anaquod	22.8	Doug Ottenbreit	20.2	Lynn Oliphant	2.2
		Gordon Kirkby	19.8	Glenn Wright	18.6	Frances Simonson	2.0
		Perry Juttla	17.9	Glenn Tait	17.6	Byron Tenkink	1.9
		Brooke Malinoski	17.7	Vicky O'Dell	13.7	Warren Koch	1.8
		Larry Ingram	16.5	Trevor Peterson	13.2	Mark Bigland	1.8
		Marvin Wiens	14.9	April Bourgeois	12.5	Mikaela Tenkink	1.7
		Alexander Slusar	14.4			Tamela Friesen	1.7
		Steve Bebbington	13.5			Lois Mitchell	1.7
						Valerie Harvey	1.5

Looking at the list of Liberals that attracted significant support without actually winning, we would pick from the candidates at the top until the at-large seats are filled. In this example, Lawrence Joseph and Louis Browne would be Saskatchewan’s “at-large” Parliamentarians.

The Conservatives still have the most seats at eight (8), the NDP retain their three (3) seats, but now, the Liberal seats, at three, are closer to what “voter intent” was.

It is still not a completely proportional result, but the democratic deficit is reduced from 42% total representative inaccuracy to 13%. In provinces like Ontario and Quebec, this modified-MMP system would become more accurate as each seat would represent a smaller percentage than it does in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, etc.

Once this process is repeated in every province, the total result is thus:

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	NL	PEI	YT	NT	NU	NATIONAL
<b>LIB</b>	15	9	3	6	55	29	5	7	6	4*	1*	1*	1*	147
<b>CPC</b>	13	21	8	5	43	13	3	2						103
<b>NDP</b>	11	4	3	2	20	20	2	2	1					65
<b>BQ</b>						15								15
<b>GRN</b>	3			1	3	1								8
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>338</b>

Due to rounding errors in regions with fewer seats, the result is not as “pure” as what the Single Transferable Vote system would deliver. However, the democratic deficit *is reduced* from 29.6% representative inaccuracy to 7.7%. As well, local representation is upheld, and the ballot itself remains unchanged. I believe this to be a fair compromise.

The chart below compares each party’s seats under the “first-past-the-post” system, the proportional “single transferable vote” system, and my proposed modifications to the “mixed member proportional” system:

	FPTP	STV	MMP MODIFIED
<b>LIBERAL PARTY</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>CONSERVATIVE</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>NEW DEMOCRATIC</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>GREEN PARTY</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>

The Law Commission of Canada has recommended a Mixed Member Proportional voting system, and thankfully, the “patronage list” is not included, but in their proposal, provinces with fewer Federal constituencies (ie. Saskatchewan) are not granted local representation, and the ballot, while fair, is far more complex than some voters might like.

To conclude, making the system more fair and proportional is only part of the issue – this proposal might also help mitigate voter apathy, increase turnout, eliminate strategic voting, and above all, foster a collaborative and cooperative working relationship between all parties in Ottawa. Having the federal parties work together is at the core of nearly every conversation I have had over the years.

You have a commitment to democracy as I do I as an everyday Canadian, and I applaud you in bringing this important and timely issue to the forefront. I hope my proposal will be considered by your committee, and that the process will be as inclusive and diverse as Canadians themselves.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

John Bidochka  
Regina-Lewwan