

Electoral Reform for Canada

Summary STV - Voters Choice Electoral Reform

Canada is a Representative Democracy. We should ensure our elected representatives reflect the diversity of our people and variety of schools of thought within the Nation.

I believe a change to Single Transferable Vote in Multi Member Districts (PR-STV) will provide the best results for Canada's Representative Democracy.

STV Advantages:

There are no safe seats

Voters have more choice

The elected body is far more representative

STV is the only voting system that has a chance of improving the accountability of all MP's to voters. STV is a purely candidate-based system that implements the essential principle of voters' directly electing all MPs from a choice of candidates by Political Party and within Political Party.

The following brief contains a number of other recommendations with regard to voting age, First Nations, online voting, universal registration and mandatory voting.

These recommendations meet the five principles announced by Maryam Monsef, Minister of Democratic Institutions.

After the voting system is in place for 3 election cycles certain key elements should be entrenched to prevent Political tinkering.

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Voters Choice Electoral Reform

Canada is a representative democracy. We should ensure our elected representatives reflect the diversity of our people and variety of schools of thought within the Nation.

There is a significant amount of misinformation and Political bias distorting the conversation about electoral reform. It is hard for voters to understand real facts and options regarding electoral reform.

The current First Past The Post “FPTP” system coped, up to a point with a two party system. We have several Political Parties now and need to change the voting system to provide voters with a fully range of choices by Political Party and within Political Party. Strategic voting has been a major factor in elections, voting against what we do not want but unable to vote for what we want without wasting our vote. No more should 40% of the vote provide a Political Party with 100% of control.

My electoral reform recommendations:

1. Elect 5 MP’s in Multi Member Districts by Single Transferable Vote (average) (MPs/District always an odd number)
2. Reduce voting age to 16
3. Seats for Native Canadians based on population
4. Internet voting - web sites, smart phones, etc.
5. Universal Voter Registration
6. Mandatory voting
7. Entrench voting system after 3 cycles

These recommendations meet the five principles announced by Maryam Monsef, Minister of Democratic Institutions. I discuss with my recommendations in relationship to these principles.

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1. Restore the effectiveness and legitimacy of the voting by reducing distortions and strengthening the link between voter intention and the electoral result.

First Past the Post often leaves the majority of voters unrepresented in their local District. Many District elections are won with 40% of the vote, leaving 60% of the voters unrepresented. The link between voter intention and electoral result is broken. This link is broken at the local District level, Provincial level and National level. Voters are casting strategic votes for a lesser of evils instead of voting with their personal values.

Single Member District elections do not provide a majority of voters with effective and legitimate results. Most voters go unrepresented in Single Member Districts. Voters feel election results are legitimate if the share of votes cast reasonably corresponds to the number of seats won in the election. Single member ridings are a win/lose for Political Parties, not a win/win for voters and MPs.

Alternative Vote in Single Member Districts leave as many as 49% of voters in each District unrepresented. In a Federal election we are electing 338 MPs. We are not electing one single position like a President of a Country. We do not have to find a single representative in each District. There is no need for AV in Single Member Districts. We can provide 85% of voters with representation aligned with their values by combining five individual Districts to one Multi Member District.

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1. Restore the effectiveness and legitimacy of the voting by reducing distortions and strengthening the link between voter intention and the electoral result. (continued)

Mixed Member Proportional “MMP” voting systems attempt to provide effective and legitimate results at the National and Regional level but does not at the local District level. Elections in single member districts using FPTP or AV will not result in a link between voter intention and electoral results. These local District elections will result in safe seats, disempowered voters and this portion of the elected body will not be representative. The MPs from local District will leave as many as 60% of local District voters unrepresented, based on values. Party proportionality is restored on a regional basis. The MMP method is preferred by Political Parties implementing proportional representation. Independent minded voters understand there are better options.

Single Transferable Vote using Multi Member Districts “PR-STV” provides proportional results on a local District, Region and National basis. **“In a 5-seat District, about 85% of voters would normally see a candidates elected from the Party of their first choice.”** www.stvforcanada.com. Candidates from each Political Party will run several candidates in each multi member district resulting in choice for the voter by Political Party and within each Political Party. PR-STV voters rank individual candidates from all Political Parties. Voters increased level of choice will encourage high grading of candidates by the Political Party and the voter. Voters will see the results as effective and legitimate at all levels. Increased levels of proportionality can be achieved by increasing the number of MPs elected in each District (say from 5 to 7 or 9) or by using STV+.

Using PR-STV there are no safe seats, voters have more choice and the elected body is far more representative.

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2. Encourage greater engagement and participation in the democratic process, including inclusion of underrepresented groups.

Reduce the voting age to 16 which also engages young voters.

Electoral reform should also make provision for First Nations who have been under represented in the House of Commons. In the process of electoral reform we should set aside seats for First Nations based on population. These seats will be filled with First Nations elected by First Nations.

New Zealand “NZ” has set aside seats in its House of Representatives for Maori peoples based on population and can be seen as a precedent.

Australian Senate PR-STV has led to several Aboriginal Senators without institutionalizing the process.

PR-STV provides the voters more choice causing the elected body to be far more representative, thereby increasing diversity. The graph on page 10 shows the percentage of women elected in the Senate using STV is consistently higher than in the House of Representatives which uses AV. (1948-2014)

Online voting systems can encourage participation using an Elections Canada web site or smart phone or tablet applications. Secure on line voting occurs regularly in the Corporate world for annual general meetings using a unique identifier which can be part of voter cards. Care must be taken to ensure any electronic voting system is secure and does not remove existing rights.

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3. Support accessibility and inclusiveness to all eligible voters, and avoiding undue complexity in the voting process.

We must ensure all obstacles to voting are removed. We should start to view voting as a responsibility not just a right.

Universal Voter Registration can capture voter registration information at Federal and Provincial levels from all interactions with our Governments. The goal is to maximize background registration of voters. This information would be shared with Federal and Provincial election bodies and remain confidential. Elections Canada will continue to be the place where all Federal voters are registered.

Mandatory voting would increase the turnout. Australia uses this approach for many decades and gets significantly higher turnout than Canada. We also need to remove all artificial restrictions on voters. If we use Mandatory voting we must also use a rotation of ballots to reorder the candidates' names, called Robson Rotation.

On line voting will support accessibility to many people by using web sites and smart phones.

None of the voting systems are complex for voters.

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4. Safeguard the integrity of our voting system;

Elections Canada must remain Independent and free from political influence. There have been few cases of election fraud so I view it as a minor concern.

After the voting system has been in place for about three election cycles PR-STV and Direct Voting should be entrenched constitutionally to prevent Political tinkering.

5. Preserve the accountability of local representation.

All of the voting systems will yield the same total number of MPs with the same ratio of voters to MPs. MPs elected in single member districts appear more accountable to the Party leader than the voter.

STV Multi Member Districts can have 5 to 9 members per District meaning larger Districts. Candidates from the same Political Party compete for votes increasing voter choice. Voters will be free to seek out the MP they believe aligns with their personal values. The benefits of STV are more important than the greater distance to a local MP. The actual number of seats in a District may be varied for urban and rural areas to allow reasonable access to their MP.

STV is the only voting system that has a chance of improving the accountability of all MP's to voters. STV is a purely candidate-based system that implements the essential principle of voters' directly electing all MPs from a choice of candidates by Political Party and within Political Party.

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Quote from - Proportional Representation Society Of Australia
Advantages of Proportional Representation (STV)

There are no safe seats

With single member electorates safe seats are common. Political parties generally put most of their efforts into trying to please the minority of voters that are in marginal seats. With multi-member electorates every seat is marginal and the parties must take more interest in the views of all voters. Voters also tend to take more interest in politics if their vote is more likely to actually change something.

Voters have more choice

Major parties endorse several candidates for each multi-member electorate. Voters can choose between parties and between different candidates from within the same party. This contrasts with single member electorates (and party list PR) where the parties and the factions within parties have much more control over who is elected, and the voters have correspondingly less.

The elected body is far more representative

This is a good thing for democracy, whether the elected body is the parliament of a large country, or the executive of a small organization. Unless proportional representation applies, there is a mismatch between the level of voters' support for a particular school of thought and the representation it receives.

<http://www.prsa.org.au/pr.html>

Other references:

<http://www.stvforcanada.com>

Why B.C. Citizens Chose STV.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7_qbft1sSs

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We are a democracy

(... or might be one that works)

“An effective and articulate vote must afford the voter much more choice than is offered by a mere choice between parties. At a minimum voters must be able to choose between individual candidates notwithstanding their party affiliations. In a democracy, people matter most; citizens, voters candidates and representatives. Our vote must respect that principle.

To take full advantage of the rich resource of political thought in the country the system should work hard to ensure that every voter in every corner of the country gets a rep and that each representative is delivered into the House with a mandate that empowers them to stand, speak and vote in accordance with the constituency that put them there. The simplest way to accomplish this is to establish ridings that elect multiple representatives using a preferential ballot. Happily, this is a prerequisite of choosing individuals.

Voter choice and representation improves with each additional representative elected in a district even if the size of each riding must be increased. Incidentally, this approach will also serve to effectively reduce excessive party polarization and moderate the centripetal tendencies of a zero- sum party culture.

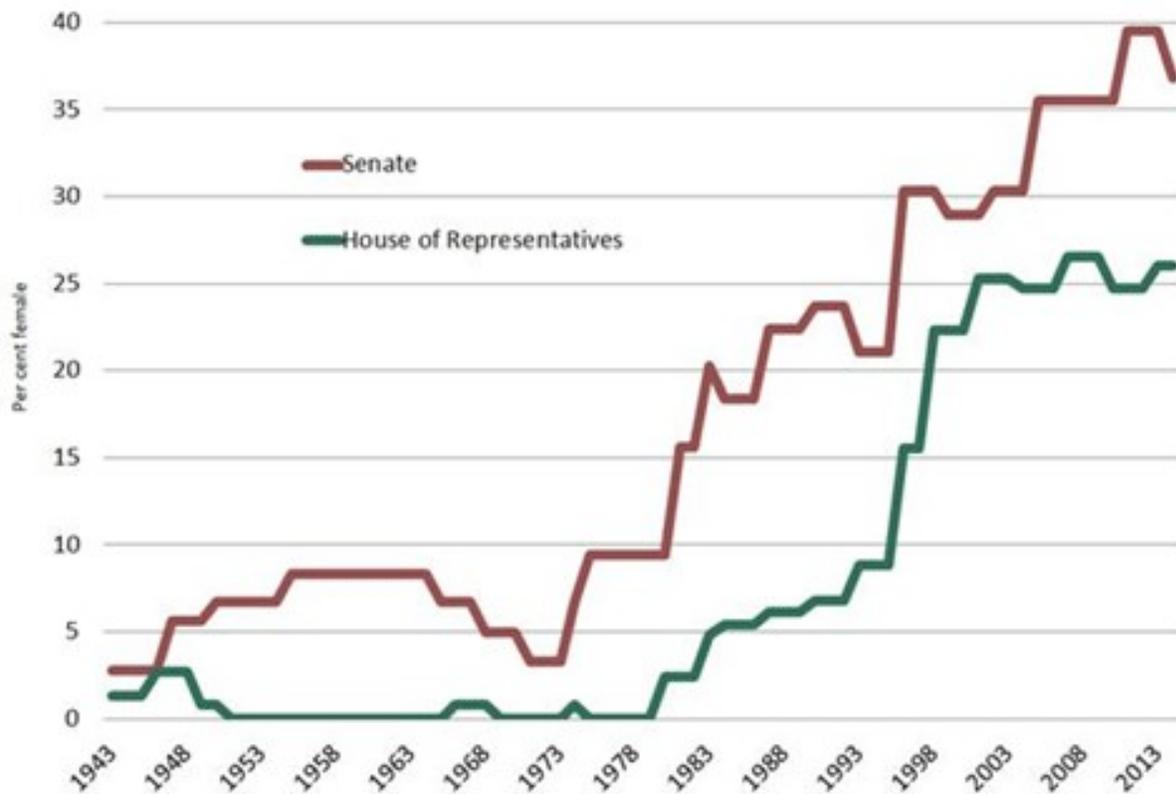
Ultimately, voters must necessarily be empowered in such a way that they can faithfully empower their representatives. Only then can we become a sufficiently integral part of a sustainable democracy. When Parliament is redesigned along these lines then we *will* be a democracy.”

Mark Henschel 2013-02-27

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Proportion Of Women Elected in Australia Senate with STV House of Representative with AV

Figure 5: Proportion of women senators and members in the Commonwealth Parliament, 1943–2013



Source: Compiled by Parliamentary Library from Parliamentary Handbook

Representation of women in Australia parliaments 2014
www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/WomanAustParl#_Toc392833819

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Sample STV Ballot							
Berry Party		Apple Party		Insect Party		Animal party	
Strawberry		Fuji		Worm		Dog	2
Raspberry		Gala	4	Mosquito		Cat	
Blackberry		Goodland	5			Horse	1
Blueberry	3	Honeycrisp				Cow	
Currant		MacIntosh				Mule	
Gooseberry		Spartan					
Cranberry		Janagold					
5 MP's Elected							
Number your choices 1 - ?							