

Presentation before the  
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I have published a book and several articles in scientific journals on electoral systems. When I worked at the Library of Parliament, I helped with the work of the 1983-84 Joint Committee on Senate Reform, which at the time was looking into whether to use a proportional model to elect senators. I have appeared numerous times before federal committees for 25 years, and before special committees of the National Assembly of Quebec. In 2003-2005, the Government of Quebec consulted me on voting system reform, and my work influenced the design of the model in the draft government bill.

I've looked through some of your past meetings and noted the widespread disagreement about the main purpose of your mandate. Some of you seem to favour a proportional electoral system, others seem very hostile to it, and others seem especially willing to listen to stakeholders before stating their preferences.

Rather than focus on highly political issues such as choosing the best model or how to achieve it, I have decided to focus my presentation on the model I know best, the mixed-member proportional (MMP) model. This model seeks to offer the best of both worlds, but of course can't satisfy everyone because no model can do that. Introducing this model would involve the following:

1. It would entail a radical change in the way of doing politics in this country. It is very unlikely that in the future we will see a party win a parliamentary majority on its own. Government coalitions will become increasingly unavoidable. But we don't have a culture of coalitions here in Canada. Coalitions are frowned upon by politicians and by some Canadians. Politicians will adjust to it, but it won't be easy. In general, even well-established proportional models become vulnerable with the sudden emergence of new political formations. Or new parties are perceived as dangerous extremists with which no other party wants to form a coalition, or they owe their success to the fact that voters are fed up with all the established parties, and prefer to sit in opposition for fear of tarnishing their image. Or they take too hard a line during negotiations. This is a challenge that can be met.
2. The introduction of proportional representation will require painful adjustments within established political parties, and significant resistance is expected. If a party currently holds five out of five seats in a region, proportional representation means that it will no longer hold five, but only three, or maybe even two. For the five current members to decide to support a change in the electoral system, it is a truly existential problem, since some of them will be left behind, and no one can say who, which will make them even more nervous.

3. Designing the model will be hard work because it not only combines proportional representation with all its complexities, it combines a majority model. Someone said that it's the "Mercedes model," which is a good metaphor, not just geographically.
4. In Germany, Scotland and Wales, the model was introduced from scratch because there was no elected parliament at the time. The transition was easier; there were no established interests among those making the decision. New Zealand is the only place I know of where the model replaced an assembly composed entirely of members elected in single-member constituencies, like yours. And the model there was not freely chosen by parliamentarians: it was imposed on them by a public referendum.
5. Introducing the mixed-member proportional model in Canada would be in the context of 338 members elected in as many constituencies. The question of the total number of members to elect will come up, because this model provides two sets of representatives. Suppose you stay with 338: to make way for list members, you will have to reduce the number of constituencies to 160 or 200, and these constituencies will be larger. Virtually no constituency will escape unscathed. Almost all members will have to accept new voters in their constituencies who may or may not support them, as well as adapt to a far vaster constituency.
6. One way around this problem is to keep the 338 existing constituencies unchanged, and increase the total number of members to make way for list members: this will give a total of 500 (with two-thirds constituencies , one-third list), 560 (if the ratio between the two categories is 60:40) or 675 (if you opt for a 50:50 ratio). I wish good luck to the person responsible for selling these figures to Canadians, referendum or not.
7. The next question to come up will be the role and status of list members. Reform proposals typically don't have much to say on this matter. They simply say that these members help make parliament more representative of real party strength in public opinion (which is undeniable) and of the demographic reality because there will be more women, Aboriginal people, etc. (which is very likely).
8. But what will these members actually do? There's no clear answer because things are not done the same way everywhere. There are at least two possible scenarios: the GERMAN scenario, which is also the practice in New Zealand, and the WELSH scenario. Scotland lies in the middle.
9. The German scenario, the better one in my opinion, is that members are all equal in law because they represent the people as a whole, not a constituency or a party. There are not two classes of members in law or in fact. There are members who have been elected

- under different procedures. The allocation of seats on the assembly floor is random. Salary and benefits are the same. Judging by the figures for the last 60 years, the likelihood of moving up to senior positions (prime minister, minister, speaker, chair of a parliamentary group) is the same. No list member is considered a loser because he was beaten in a constituency. Almost all have been, because 96% of them were candidates both in a constituency and on a list. It is thought that at least they were on solid ground and fought like the others, and gained experience in the field. Their association with a constituency does not stop the night of their defeat, they may open an office, and they meet with voters who prefer to deal with them because of their party or because of their good contacts in high places; there are no reports of conflicts with the duly elected members. Such an arrangement works well because it is of the consensual society in which it exists, whether in terms of labour relations or federalism.
10. The other possible scenario, the Welsh scenario, is very different. There are twice as many constituency members in Wales as list members: 40 versus 20. They are overwhelmingly Labour, because the Labour Party is the strongest, and list members sit overwhelmingly in opposition. Over the years, list members have become second-class members. It is extremely rare, even when they sit on the right side, that they become ministers. On the assembly floor, they are grouped together and relegated to the backbenches. In the minds of politicians, it's as if the "real" politicians are those who were elected in a constituency.
  11. The question of lists. Compensatory seats will be awarded from lists established by the parties. Almost everywhere the model exists, it is a closed list, where people are elected in the order of their inclusion on the list. It is possible to have an open list, where voters can indicate a preference for a candidate and change the order of election decided by the party. But this means that, in addition to the competition between the parties, there will be extra competition between candidates of the same party. This is perhaps why the current system in Bavaria is the only one where the list is open. Preferences often change the outcome, because voters punish the bad candidates, which is good for democracy.
  12. The problem of dual candidacies will arise. With an MMP model, one can be elected either by constituency or on a party list. For a candidate, which option offers the best chance of success? It's hard to say because the more success a party has in the constituencies, the less success it will have on the lists: it's the logic of compensation. If a party manages a clean sweep in the constituencies, it will have zero list seats because it has already reached its quota. However, if the party loses in all constituencies, all its members will be elected on the list. Because the end result is unknown when people announce their candidacy, all legislatures allow the same candidate to contend for a constituency and stand on their party list. This is called dual candidacy. A party list includes all candidates for constituencies first, followed by others. This gives a minimum of security to candidates. Chancellor Kohl had wanted to run in his place of birth even

though it was not a safe seat for his party. He was beaten in the constituency but got a second chance on the list. In Germany, everyone found it acceptable, but in Wales, the Labour government found it immoral and in 2006 convinced the British government to ban dual candidacy, which was restored seven years later. In New Brunswick, Quebec and Prince Edward Island, dual candidacy was excluded from proposed reforms because the principle faces strong opposition from those, members or not, who firmly believe that the only legitimate election takes place in a constituency and do not want to see a member they defeated sitting across from them.

13. Last point, because it is a federal assembly. List seats must be distributed among the parties based on the principle of proportionate representation of the provinces. Compensatory seats must be allocated in a way that does not alter the proportion of seats allocated to each province.

In conclusion, MMP is the proportional model most often proposed in Canada. It's a formula that has worked very well overall where it exists, but so far it has been a difficult sell to Canadians, because it involves changes that are not to everyone's taste. I will be happy to answer your questions, however I must point out that I have to leave at 4 p.m.