



BETTER CHOICES

Voting System Alternatives for Canada





Written by

Mark Coffin

Matt Risser

Edited by

Jesse Hitchcock

Research Support by

Angela Hersey

Marla MacLeod

BETTER CHOICES

Voting System Alternatives
for Canada

BETTER CHOICES

VOTING SYSTEM ALTERNATIVES FOR CANADA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
I) INTRODUCTION	12
II) CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	14
III) FIVE VOTING SYSTEM OPTIONS FOR CANADA	16
FIRST-PAST-THE-POST (FPTP)	16
ALTERNATIVE VOTE (AV)	17
PARTY LIST PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (LIST PR)	21
MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (MMP)	23
SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE (STV)	29
IV) CRITERIA ASSESSMENTS	34
1) VOTE FAIRNESS and ACCOUNTABILITY	34
2) VOTER PARTICIPATION	39
3) SIMPLICITY	40
4) STRONG PARLIAMENT	42
5) COLLABORATIVE POLITICS	46
6) EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT	49
7) GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION	51
8) WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION	55
V) SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS	58
VI) GLOSSARY	61

Recommended Citation:

Coffin, M. & Risser, M. (2016). *Better choices: voting system alternatives for Canada*.
Springtide Collective. Halifax, NS.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

- This paper models how five different voting systems could work for Canada, and the impacts those systems could have beyond electoral politics.
- The paper is being released at a time when the Government of Canada and Parliament of Canada are actively considering an alternative system to first-past-the-post, and inviting Canadians to contribute to the conversation.
- Voting systems are the foundation of our public institutions. These systems determine what Parliament looks like, and influence the quality and brand of executive government, and the quality of laws, government services and programs that affect every Canadian.
- In the paper, we offer *'proof of concept'* models for five voting systems that could be used in Canada. The key element of each model is the electoral district map and associated ballots.
- Any change in the federal electoral system would be constrained by the political boundaries of the provinces. A change in federal electoral system, means changing how the citizens of the provinces decide who should represent their province in Ottawa.
- We provide proof of concept electoral district maps for each system in three provinces:
 - a small province of 10 MPs (New Brunswick),
 - a mid-sized province of 42 MPs (British Columbia), and
 - a large province of 78 MPs (Quebec).
- The models are based on three provinces that vary in size because the Canadian constitution demands that each member of Parliament be elected from a province or a territory. The proportional representation systems modelled in this paper vary slightly in how electoral districts appear depending on the size of each province, and population density and distribution.
- A Special Committee on Electoral Reform has been struck by Parliament appears to be considering the five systems modeled here. At the time of writing, however, there have been no electoral-district-map-based models produced for any of the alternate systems for the committee or Canadians to considerⁱ. We present these here.
- Finally, we evaluate each system's performance against eight criteria: (1) Vote fairness and accountability; (2) Voter participation; (3) Simplicity, (4) A strong Parliament; (5) Collaborative politics; (6) Effective government; (7) Geographic representation; (8) Women's representation
- This paper mirrors a report titled "Better Choices Nova Scotia" released earlier this year as part of Springtide Collective's Make Democracy Better project. Through this project, over 400 Nova Scotians participated, and expressed a clear desire to 'improve the voting system' in Nova Scotia, and

i. <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/kady-opposition-parties-join-forces-on-electoral-reform-committee-to-push-liberal-action>

one can presume, they may have similar hopes for federal politics.

VOTING SYSTEM OPTIONS FOR CANADA

- There are two main families of voting systems used throughout the world and modeled in this paper: **winner-take-all** systems, and **proportional representation (PR)** systems. The **winner-take-all systems** modeled in this paper are characterized by single-member districts where the winner is the candidate who receives the most votes - a **plurality** in the case of the **first-past-the-post system** or a majority in the case of the **alternative vote system**. In both winner take all systems modeled in this paper, the number of districts and MPs both remain at 338 (the current number).

Winner-Take-All Systems

- **First-Past-the-Post (FPTP):** In the FPTP system voters mark their ballots for one candidate only, and the candidate with more votes than any other candidate wins, regardless of whether or not they have a majority.
- **Alternative Vote (AV):** In the AV system voters rank the candidates on the ballot in order of preference. If one candidate receives a majority of first choice votes, they are elected. If no candidate receives a majority of first preference votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and a second round of counting occurs, where the lowest ranking candidate's votes are redistributed to the second choice marked on each ballot. The process repeats itself until one candidate receives a majority of votes.

Proportional Representation Systems

- In **proportional representation** systems the share of the popular vote a party and its candidates earn are reflected in the number of seats the party holds in Parliament. In all but one of the proportional systems modelled in this paper, this is done through the use of large multi-member districts. The list PR systems modelled here involve more than 338 MPs, since additional '*adjustment seats*' are added in each province. A total of 68 seats would be added to Parliament based on this model. However, an electoral boundaries commission with the right resources could easily propose a functional list PR system with 338 seats.
- **List Proportional Representation (List PR):** In list PR systems voters cast one vote for either the party (if the system uses a **closed list**) or a candidate from that party (if the system uses an **open list**). In both cases the vote counts towards the total share of seats awarded to that party. In the model illustrated here, anywhere from two to twelve MPs per district. The district borders follow naturally distinct communities, and the number of MPs is based on the population within the borders. In each province, a set of "**adjustment seats**" would be allocated province-wide to improve proportionality of the final results, where seats are not assigned to a particular district.

FINDINGS: SYSTEM PERFORMANCE AGAINST CRITERIA

Based on the research reviewed for this paper, our evaluation of each of the voting systems against the criteria noted above is summarized below.

	Winner-Take-All Systems		Proportional Representation Systems		
	First-Past-the-Post (FPTP-CAN)	Alternative Vote (AV-CAN)	List Proportional Representation (List PR-CAN)	Mixed Member Proportional (MMP-CAN)	Single Transferable Vote (STV-CAN)
VOTE FAIRNESS & ACCOUNTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disproportionate results - High number of wasted votes - Low vote equality 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Results are proportionate 95 - 99% of the time. - Low number of wasted votes - High vote equality: generally separate from party preference, or voter's district. 		
Accountability of Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vote-splitting means a candidate can be opposed by a majority of voters and still be <i>elected, and re-elected</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If a majority of voters oppose a candidate, they can prevent that candidate's election or re-election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual candidates held to account by constituents through open list voting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local representatives are held to account as with FPTP - Voters have no influence over candidates elected via the closed party list. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All candidates held accountable by their district and must earn the support of voters
VOTER PARTICIPATION	Winner-take-all systems have lower voter participation than proportional ones		Proportional systems have higher voter participation than winner-take-all systems		
30 Year Voter Turnout Average (1986-2016)	59.9%	- <i>No available data</i>	68.3 %	76.6%	70.4%
SIMPLICITY CASTING VOTES	Simple	Casting votes is more complicated than in FPTP, but simple to explain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More complicated ballot with open list voting, still relatively simple to vote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The two-vote, one-ballot system is simple to explain and use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ballot is complicated of involving ranked voting and large numbers of candidates
UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy to understand district results - Can be difficult to understand disproportionate election results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy to understand district results - Can be difficult to understand disproportionate election results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The allocation of adjustment seats can make the results in this system harder to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The use of adjustment seats can make it hard to understand how proportionality is achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voters must understand how fractional vote transfers, quotas, and surplus votes work to understand election results
STRONG PARLIAMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The single governing party most often holds a majority of seats in Parliament, preventing meaningful exploration of policy alternatives, amendments to legislation or the adoption of opposition legislation - Filibustering frequently used by opposition to delay and inconvenience the government - Large parties dominate Parliament; few small parties are represented - Minority governments are less common, and when present, increase the relevance of Parliament 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single-party-majority governments are rare, so governments face a stronger test when meeting a parliament that can easily '<i>make or break</i>' a government through confidence votes - Opposition members can propose alternative legislation and propose amendments to government legislation, and see meaningful consideration and debate on those proposals - Large parties play a dominant role in Parliament and in government; Small parties win more seats in PR systems and are sometimes junior partners in coalitions 		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More small parties field candidates in AV elections, but can be even less likely to be elected than in FPTP 			

	Winner-Take-All Systems		Proportional Representation Systems		
	First-Past-the-Post	Alternative Vote	List Proportional Representation	Mixed Member Proportional	Single Transferable Vote
COLLABORATIVE POLITICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single-party-majority governments are most common, and there is little need for coalition government or supply and confidence agreements. - Large parties tend to adopt a pattern of adversarial dialogue that exaggerates the differences between parties, rather than finding areas of common agreement - In minority governments, there are short term incentives to collaborate, and supply and confidence agreements are common, - There are no long-term incentives for collaboration in minority or majority government 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coalition governments are most common form of government, requiring collaboration between member parties, - Single party majority governments are rare, while coalition governments are the most common and negotiate supply and confidence agreements as needed 		
EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single-party majority governments do not have to negotiate with other parties and can quickly make decisions and implement election promises 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coalition governments may take longer to reach decisions as negotiations between governing parties (and potentially with Parliament) is required 		
Leadership Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elections occur on average every 3.2 years - Minority governments are more unstable than majority ones, holding office for shorter periods of time - Change in governments typically involve power moving from one party to its opponent party 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elections occur on average every 3.3 years - Strong continuity of parties that form government, where at least one party in a governing coalition finds itself in the coalition formed after the subsequent election, leading to a relay-race-like pattern of policy continuance 		
Policy Stability & Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy stability in majority and minority governments is often only lasts as long as the governing party holds power - Many policies and laws are often scrapped, or reversed completely when the governing party changes 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policies are more stable over time - Government policies align more closely with the views and values of the 'median voter' - Policies outperform winner-take-all systems in various areas including: economic growth, human development, environmental sustainability, and reductions in income inequality 		
GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local representation via single-member-districts only - Local issues from swing ridings, and ridings represented by members of the governing party carry disproportionate weight on the statewide agenda 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every elected representative is accountable to the voters in a specific region of the province - Multiple members representing each district mean that no single politician or party can claim to be the voice for the entire district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong balance between local interests and statewide interests due to local and statewide representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every elected representative is accountable to the voters in a specific area of the province - Multiple members represent each district, no single candidate or party can claim to be the voice for the entire district
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION	Fewer women represented in parliaments		More women represented in parliaments		
Seats held by women: (1996-2016)	17.6%	25.0 %	28.8%	30.2%	30.1%
Seats held by women in 2016	21.8%	26.7%	33.7%	33.6%	34.2%

- **Mixed Member Proportional (MMP):** The mixed member proportional (MMP) system combines elements of FPTP and List PR. Voters cast two votes: one for a local candidate; another for their preferred party. After the local district candidates are elected, the **party votes** are considered, and candidates are drawn from the party's list and into Parliament to ensure that the total number of seats held by each party are roughly proportional to the party vote for each party.
- **Single Transferable Vote (STV):** In the STV system, voters rank candidates in multi-member districts in order of preference. A formula based on the number of votes cast, and seats available is used to calculate a winning quota or threshold of votes required to win. Candidates who reach or exceed the quota are elected, and surplus votes (votes for a winning candidate that exceed the quota) are transferred and redistributed in subsequent rounds, until enough candidates reach the quota required to fill the available seats. Votes for last placed candidates are considered and redistributed once surplus votes are redistributed in each round, if no candidate reaches the quota. The number of MPs per List PR district can vary from 3 - 7 in this model based on the size of the population within the district boundaries.
- **Candidate selection:** Despite common misconceptions, in both winner-take-all and PR voting systems, party members can influence what candidates represent each party in an election, and in each system modelled here voters have influence over which candidates from each party get elected. Independent candidates can also seek election in each system.

NEXT STEPS

The findings of this paper are meant to inform the national discussion on voting system reform in Canada. The Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE), Members of Parliament, and the Minister of Democratic Institutions are inviting Canadians to contribute to the discussion on electoral reform. We hope this paper can help both parliamentarians and Canadians have an informed discussion about the options available beyond first-past-the-post.

Events and information pertaining to the ERRE process can be found at Canada.ca/Democracy and through the constituency office of your local Member of Parliament.

I) INTRODUCTION

I) INTRODUCTION

"It's not the voting that's democracy, it's the counting."

- Tom Stoppard

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how five different voting systems could work for Canada. This paper is meant to help Canadians understand the various options, and their impacts, as the Parliament of Canada's Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE) invites their participation on choosing a new electoral system throughout the fall of 2016.

Canada's voting system is one of the oldest elements of our democracy – unchanged in how it translates votes into law-making and representative power since its inception. The Canadian electoral process has evolved to include many reforms common to most western democracies. For instance:

- voting rights have expanded to include women, indigenous people, and most recently, inmates;
- the transparency and independence of the voting process has improved through time;
- campaign finance regulations have been imposed for individuals, and donations from trade unions and corporations are now banned entirely.

All of these changes have improved the electoral process in Canada. In addition to these reforms, other western democracies have moved away from the first-past-the-post voting system in favour of one of a wide variety of alternatives.

When you look beyond the first-past-the-post voting system, there are as many variations on voting systems as there are countries that use them. This paper is about learning from those countries and their experience with alternative systems, to support the public and elected officials in identifying the best voting system for Canada.

Why Voting Reform?

There are many starting points for reforming democracy, politics, and public institutions in Canada, so why start with the voting system?

Voting systems are the foundation of our public institutions. We use our voting system to elect members of our Parliament who craft the laws of the land. The composition of Parliament determines the quality and brand of executive government (Prime Minister and Cabinet) that we have. That executive is responsible for hiring and firing the senior public servants who oversee critical public services offered to Canadians. While citizens interact in many different ways with government, elections are the only direct opportunity available to every Canadian to shape our government and hold our elected officials accountable.

A structure is only as strong as the foundation on which it rests. Finding the best voting system to serve the public interest improves the likelihood that everything derived from it - Parliament, executive, public services, laws and budgets - also serves the public interest.

Will a change in the voting system address all of the challenges facing our democratic institutions? Probably not. Improvements beyond voting systems are also critical, but as the findings of this paper suggest, the impact of voting system reform can extend far beyond what happens on election night. It's worth understanding what that impact could be.

The need for a public dialogue on voting system reform

Electoral reform has been an on-again, off-again topic of conversation across the country for over a decade. The conversation has traditionally been confined to academia, those apart of small political parties, and a handful of pundits. Now, for the first time in Canadian history, the scale of the discussion is broadening to include the Canadian public, and it appears the next election may very well be fought using a system other than first-past-the-post.

Here are some of the recent developments that brought us here:

- In the 2015 election, the Liberals, NDP and Green parties ran on platforms that committed to a change in voting system. The NDP and Green parties proposed moving to a proportional voting system, while the Liberals simply committed to ensuring the 2016 election was the last election under first-past-the-post.
- In June of 2016, the House of Commons struck a multi-party Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE) to examine “viable alternatives to the first-past-the-post voting system for Canada. They were also tasked with considering the introduction of online and mandatory voting, and to report back to Parliament no later than December 1st 2016.

Our approach

In this paper we present some basic criteria for evaluating voting systems. Then, we model and explain how five voting systems would work if adopted by Canada. We provide proof-of-concept electoral maps and ballots for each. Next, we evaluate each system based on the criteria presented.

Finally, in the summary section, we evaluate the systems against one another and highlight the trade-offs between choosing different systems. We stop short of recommending one system over another, and instead hope to give voters and political leaders the best information available to decide which system is best.

II) CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

II) CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

To evaluate the voting systems explored in this paper, the first question we consider is: on what grounds do we evaluate them? In this paper we assess each voting system on eight different criteria - some of which are related to the voter's engagement with the system (1, 2 & 3), others related to the type of parliament, politics and government it produces (4, 5 & 6), and two that relate to the type of representation it provides (7 & 8). We believe that, collectively, these criteria provide a comprehensive picture of the effects a voting system can have.

These criteria are:

1. Vote fairness and accountability
2. Voter participation
3. Simplicity
4. A strong parliament
5. Collaborative politics
6. Effective government
7. Geographic representation
8. Women's representation¹

Assessing a variety of criteria - even the ones that one might not find particularly meaningful - is important because it allows us to understand the trade-offs between systems. In some voting systems, satisfying one criterion may mean sacrificing another. Evaluating the systems against these criteria side-by-side means making these trade-offs obvious. It also gives us the opportunity to expose potentially false assumptions that one might hold about the effects of each system.

The criteria presented here are similar to those used by other researchers for evaluating the effects of voting systems on government and society. A key question that we invite the reader to reflect on here is:

- Which of these criteria are most important when choosing a voting system to work best for all Canadians?

¹ Initially, we intended to evaluate the representation of women and minority groups in each voting system, but the data available for the latter were insufficient to draw any firm conclusions.

III) FIVE VOTING SYSTEM MODELS FOR CANADA

III) FIVE VOTING SYSTEM MODELS FOR CANADA

FAMILIES OF VOTING SYSTEMS

There are two main families of voting system used throughout the world and presented here: **winner-take-all** systems, and **proportional representation (PR)** systems.

Winner-take-all systems

The **Winner-take-all systems** reviewed in this paper are characterized by single-member districts where the winner is the candidate who receives the most votes - either a **plurality** in the case of the **first-past-the-post system** or a majority in the case of the **alternative vote** system. Multi-member winner-take-all systems exist, but none are reviewed in this paper.

A) FIRST-PAST-THE-POST (FPTP)

The first-past-the-post (FPTP) system is a system for electing representatives to single-member districts. It is the electoral system used across Canada for federal, provincial, and municipal elections. This system is also used in the United States, the United Kingdom, and India.

Districts: In the FPTP system, a state is divided into smaller districts of roughly equal population. Each district is represented in the House of Commons by one elected official.

Casting Votes: The ballot lists all eligible candidates, and the voter places one mark beside their preferred choice.

Counting Votes: Once voting concludes, the total number of votes cast for each candidate is counted, and the candidate with more votes than any other candidate (a **plurality**) is declared the winner. A candidate can win with less than fifty percent of the vote, as long as they have more than any other candidate.

Threshold: Unlike in other systems reviewed here, under the FPTP system there is no winning threshold of vote-share required for a candidate to be declared elected. Despite its well known name, there is no post (threshold), and it cannot be passed. The candidate with the most votes wins.

Seat Vacancies When the seat for a district is vacated between general elections (due to resignation, recall, or death of the representative), a **by-election** is held for that district, using the exact same process as the individual district would use during a general election.

Canadian FPTP (FPTP-CAN) The FPTP system modeled in this paper is identical to the existing voting system in Canada, with 338 ridings, and 338 MPs, each belonging to one of those ridings. *See FPTP Map, P. 18 and FPTP Ballot, P. 19*

B) ALTERNATIVE VOTE (AV)

The alternative vote, is a system of electing representatives to single-member districts using a preferential ballot, also known as a ranked ballot. This system is used in the Australian House of Representatives, the Papua New Guinea Parliament (from 1964-1975), and for presidential elections in Ireland. It is also used to elect leaders for many provincial and federal political parties in Canada and elsewhere.

Districts: In the AV system, just as in the first-past-the-post system, a state is divided into smaller districts of roughly equal population, each of which is represented in Parliament by one elected candidate. The differences between AV and FPTP are in how the ballot is marked and in how the ballots are counted.

Casting Votes: The ballot lists all eligible candidates and voters rank candidates in order of preference starting with their first choice (1, 2, 3 and so on).²

Counting Votes: If one candidate receives a majority of first choice votes, they are elected. If no candidate receives a majority of first preference votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and a second round of counting occurs, where the lowest ranking candidate's votes are redistributed to the second choice marked on each ballot. The process repeats itself until one candidate receives a majority of votes.³

Threshold: The winning threshold for a candidate to be elected in the AV system is 50% plus one vote.

Seat Vacancies When the seat for a district is vacated between general elections (due to resignation, recall, or death of the representative), a by-election is held for that district, using the exact same process as the individual district would use during a general election.

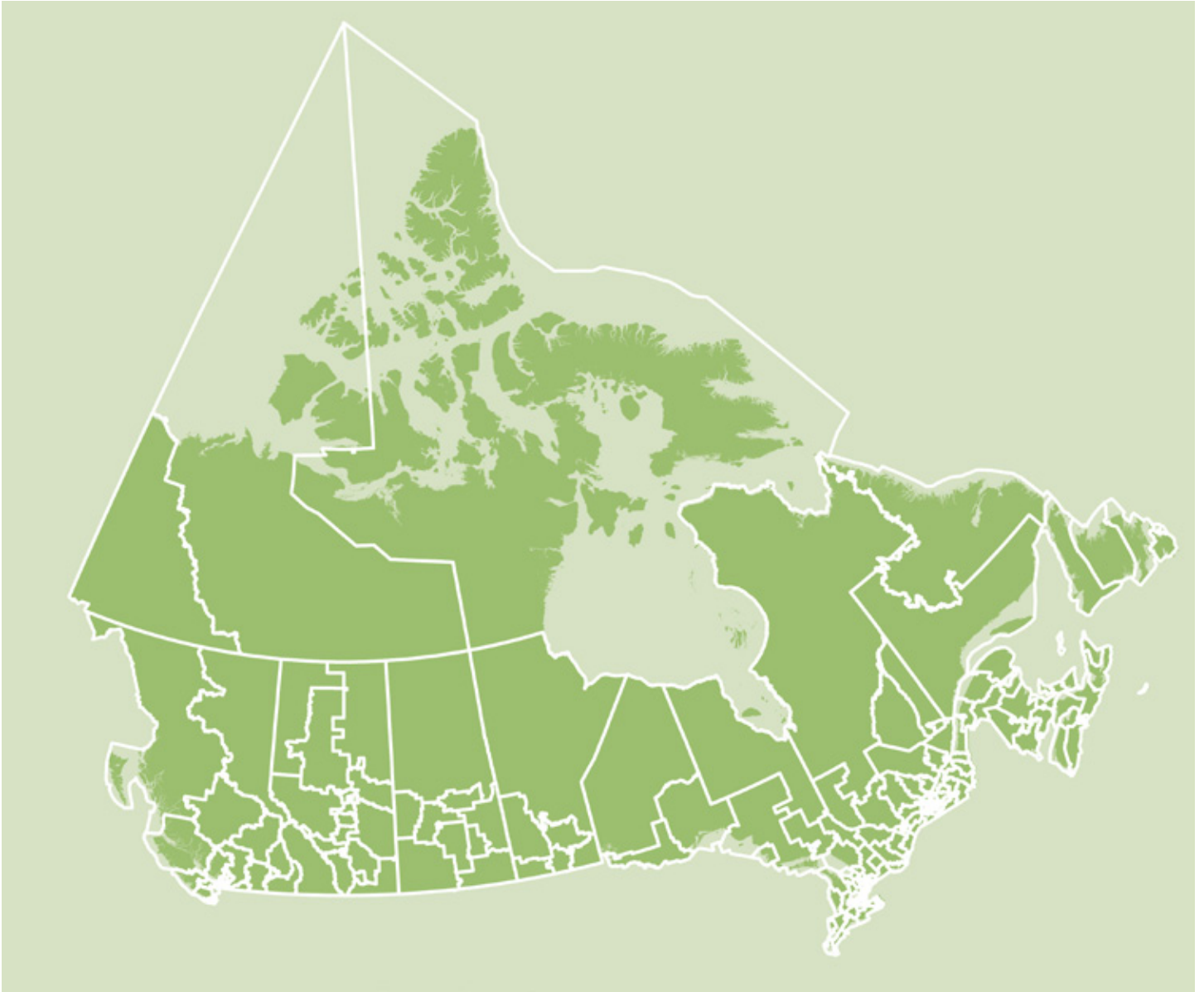
Canadian AV (AV-CAN) The AV system modeled in this paper uses the same electoral map as the FPTP system, with 338 districts, and the same number of MPs.

See AV Map, P.18 and AV Ballot, P.19

² In some AV systems voters must rank every single candidate, such as in elections for the Australian House of Representatives. In others, voters can rank as many or as few candidates as they desire, such as in Irish presidential elections.

³ The majority required to win is defined as: "the majority of votes still *in play*" in the final round of voting. If a voter's ballot is *'exhausted'* after a round of voting (meaning there are no more rankings to draw from) then that vote is subtracted from the total votes used to calculate the majority.

First-Past-the-Post & Alternative Vote *Electoral Districts Map*



 = MLAs / District

First Past the Post *Ballot & Instructions*

First Past the Post

You have one vote.

Vote by placing an X in the space next to the candidate you choose.

Agnes MACPHAIL
Pioneer Party

Celine DION
Bonhomme Party

Candy PALMATER
Beavertail Party

Alan SYLIBOY
Maple Party

*Where this system is used:
Canada, United States, United Kingdom, India.*

How it works:

*One candidate will be elected for your district.
To win, a candidate must earn more votes than
all other candidates.*

Alternative Vote *Ballot & Instructions*

Alternative Vote

This is a preferential ballot.

Place the number "1" in the space next to the candidate who is your first choice, and rank any additional preferences you wish to make in the order of your preference starting with the number "2".

2 Agnes MACPHAIL
Pioneer Party

3 Celine DION
Bonhomme Party

4 Candy PALMATER
Beavertail Party

1 Alan SYLIBOY
Maple Party

Where this voting system is used:

*Australian House of Representatives, Political
Party Leadership Races, Academy Awards Voting*

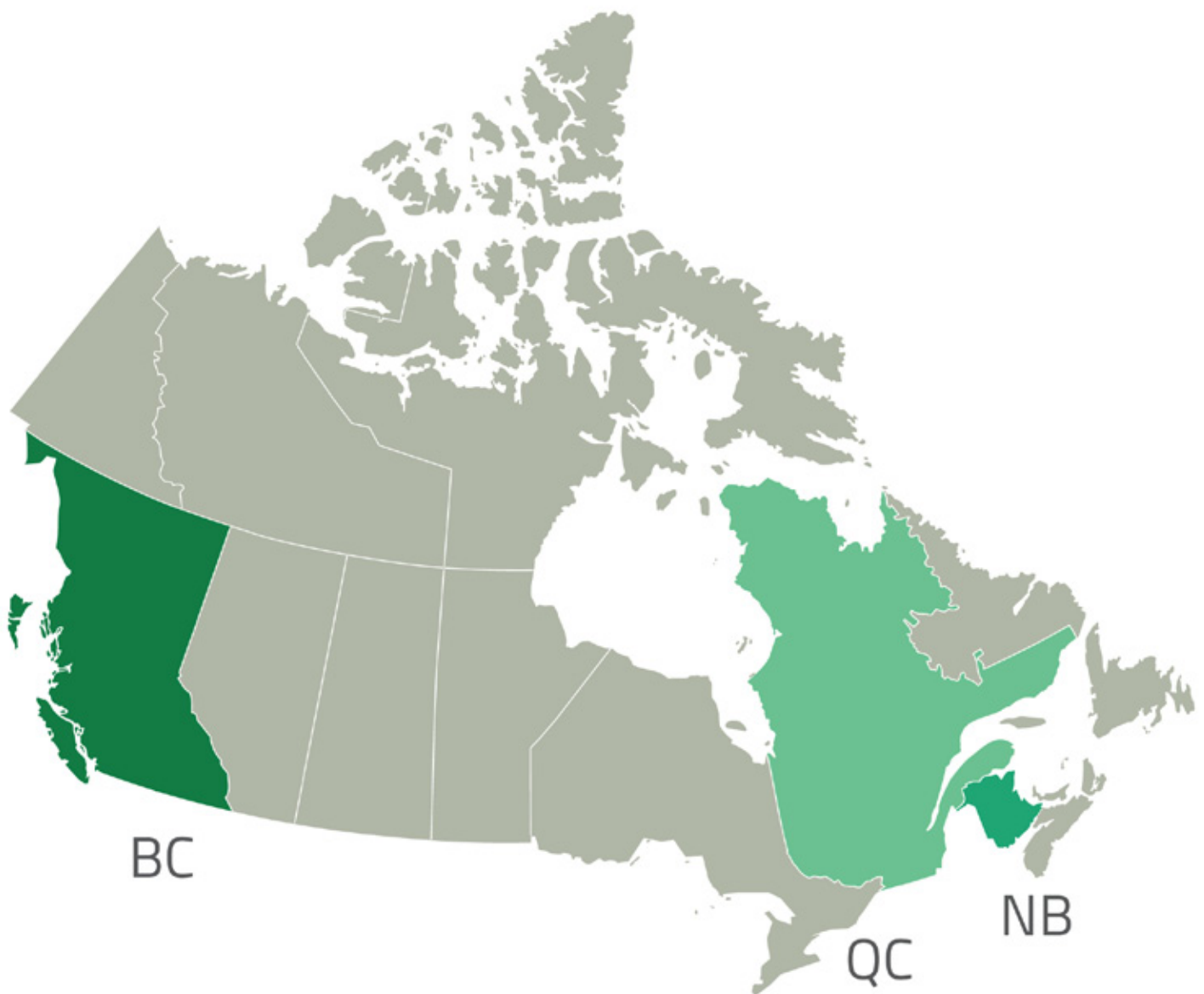
How it works:

*One candidate will be elected for your district. To
win, a candidate must earn more than 50% of the
vote. If no candidate receives more than 50% of the
vote after first preferences are counted, the second
choices of the candidate with the fewest votes
will be redistributed and so on until a candidate
receives 50% of the remaining votes.*

Model Provinces: BC, QC, NB

For the proportional representation system that follow, we present 'proof-of-concept' maps for three provinces' federal electoral districts, where we've chosen provinces with a range of population sizes. We present:

- a small province (New Brunswick)
- a mid-sized province (British Columbia)
- a large province (Quebec)



Proportional Representation Systems

The **proportional representation** systems reviewed here are characterized by the use of multi-member districts and parliaments where the share of seats a party has roughly reflects the share of popular vote the party and its candidates earn. The PR systems reviewed here are: list PR, mixed member proportional (MMP) and the single transferable vote (STV).

C) PARTY LIST PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (LIST PR)

As the name suggests, List PR systems require parties to submit a list of candidates to be elected for each multi-member district.

Districts: There are no single-member districts in most List PR systems. States that use List PR either divide the state into several large multi-member regional districts, like Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, or treat the entire state as one single district, like Fiji, Israel or the Netherlands.

Adjustment Seats: States that use multi-member regional districts for List PR also have **adjustment seats** used at the statewide level to compensate for any disproportionality that results from the allocation of district seats. For instance, if a party receives 12 percent of the popular vote across a province, but wins no seats in any district, **adjustment seats** are awarded to the party to ensure that party received as close to 12 percent of the province's seats in Parliament as possible.

Casting Votes: The voters in List PR systems have one vote. If the system is a **closed list** system, like those in Spain, Israel or Argentina, the parties determine the ranking of candidates from their party and voters simply cast their ballot for their preferred party. The ranking of the candidates on the list determine the order in which the candidates are elected. If the system is an **open list** system like Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Fiji, voters select their preferred candidate within the list provided by each party, and the vote for that candidate counts toward the popular vote for that party, and improves the ranking of that candidate on the party's list.

Counting Votes: In closed and open list systems elections officials count the votes and award a share of seats to each party that roughly corresponds to the share of the votes that party (or its candidates) received.

- In a **closed list** system, the candidates who ranked highest on each party's list are awarded seats in Parliament until the number of seats held by candidates from that party roughly match the share of the popular vote the party received.

INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

Candidates without a party affiliation are eligible to run as independents in any of the systems modeled here. In FPTP, AV, STV, and local district elections in MMP they are listed on the ballot for their district like any other candidate. In List PR and MMP multi-member district elections, independent candidates can be listed on the ballot as if they were their own party, and are elected if they win enough votes to warrant a seat.

CANDIDATE SELECTION

In all of the voting systems presented in this paper, each party is responsible for determining how candidates who represent that party are chosen. Under the FPTP system, local district associations of each party organize a nomination contest and an election is conducted by the local party members to decide which candidate will be put forward as the party's sole nominee for that district. Candidate nomination could work exactly the same way in an AV system.

For PR systems with multi-member districts, a similar process could be used to nominate multiple candidates using larger district associations, or nominations could be conducted through votes of entire party memberships in the case of the regional lists that each party would develop in the MMP model presented here.

- In an **open list** system the same process applies, but the party list candidates who received the most votes become the first awarded seats in Parliament for their party. Many open list systems are not completely open so each party's ranking of their own candidates has some influence on which candidates get elected first - candidates at the top of the list still require support, but require a lower threshold to win than candidates lower on the list.

Seat Vacancies: When an elected official's seat is vacated between general elections, the seat is typically awarded to the next available and willing candidate from the list proposed by the party in the previous election.

Thresholds: List PR systems often employ minimum thresholds that each party must meet to receive seats in Parliament. Two thresholds could be used to win federal seats:

- a party must earn a minimum percentage of votes across the province in question - typically set at 3 - 5 %.
- a party must earn a minimum percentage of votes in a multi-member district - typically 10 - 12 %.

Thresholds are generally used to limit the prevalence of extremist views, and the proliferation of numerous small parties.

Canadian List PR (List PR-CAN): The List PR system modeled in this paper has the following characteristics for the provinces we have modeled it for⁴:

- Multi-member districts are made up of 2 - 9 MPs per district. Districts with larger populations have more MPs, and those with fewer have less.
- Adjustment seats are assigned for each province, and are assigned based on total population of each province.

See List PR Map, P.24 and List PR Ballot, P.25

DISTRICTS LANGUAGE

Throughout the paper the term "district" is used on it's own to refer to single-member-districts. The term region is used to apply to an area represented by a multi-member district that is larger than a single-member district, but within a state (the province or country being governed).

⁴ While not modeled here, a closed list and/or single province-wide district could also be used for a list PR system

Province	# of Multimember Districts X # of MPs	Adjustment Seats	Total MPs
New Brunswick	2 X 5 MPs TOTAL MPs = 10	2	12
Quebec	1 X 2 MPs 3 X 4 MPs 1 X 5 MPs 1 X 6 MPs 1 X 7 MPs 4 X 9 MPs 1 X 10 MPs TOTAL MPs = 78	16	94
British Columbia	3 X 2 MPs 1 X 3 MPs 1 X 4 MPs 2 X 6 MPs 1 X 8 MPs 1 X 9 MPs TOTAL MPs = 42	8	50

D) MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (MMP)

The mixed member proportional (MMP) system combines elements of FPTP and List PR. It originated in Germany and is still used there, along with New Zealand, Scotland, Wales, and other countries.

Districts: There are two types of districts in all MMP systems. The local single-member district is standard across all systems. Then, as in List PR, a province can be divided into several large multi-member regional districts as Scotland does, or treat the entire state as one single multi-member district, as New Zealand does.

Casting Votes: In an MMP system, voters typically cast two votes: one for their preferred local candidate and another for their preferred party. As with List PR, **open** or **closed lists** can be used to determine the rank of candidates on the party list. However, open lists are not currently used in any MMP system.

Counting Votes: First, the votes cast for all local, single-member districts are counted to determine the winners using the FPTP method. The candidate with more votes than any other candidate is elected. Then, the **party votes** are counted and list seats are awarded to 'top-up' parties that earned a larger share of party votes than their share of local seats won of the total seats there are in Parliament. The allocation of the party vote is meant to ensure that the final seat count for each party is as proportional as possible to their share of the **party vote**.⁵

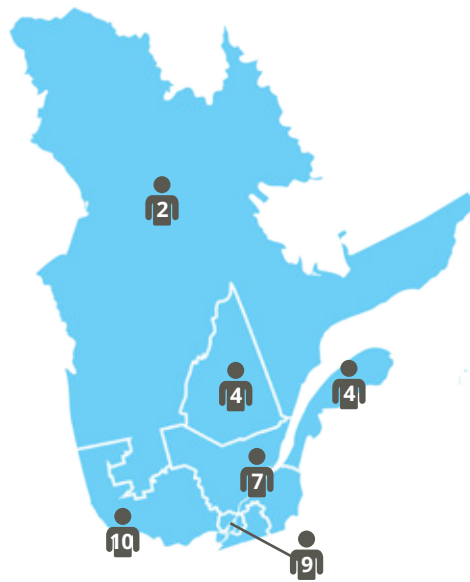
Dual Candidacy: In some countries, candidates are permitted to run both

⁵ Sometimes, parties accumulate overhang seats. An overhang seat is any seat that is won in an MMP election at the local district level that is beyond the number of seats required to ensure seat share and vote share are equal. For instance, if a party wins 10 of 100 seats, but has only earned 8% of the popular vote, then there are two overhang seats. In order to compensate for the occurrence of **overhang seats**, some states, like New Zealand, add members to parliament to improve proportionality. This is generally unnecessary with sufficient list seats and large enough regions, which are used in the model described for Canada below.

List Proportional Representation *Electoral Districts Maps*



BC

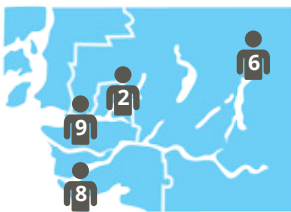


QC

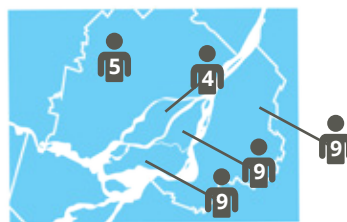


NB

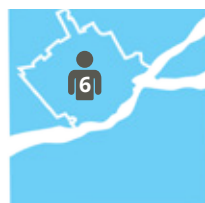
VANCOUVER



MONTRÉAL



QUEBEC CITY



 = MLAs / District

List Proportional Representation

Ballot & Instructions

Open List Proportional Representation				
<p><i>You have one vote.</i> <i>Place an X in the space next to the candidate for whom you wish to vote.</i> <i>Your vote counts for both your candidate and the party they belong to.</i></p>				
Pioneer Party	Bonhomme Party	Beavertail Party	Maple Party	Independent Candidate
<input type="checkbox"/> Agnes Macphail	<input type="checkbox"/> Celine Dion	<input type="checkbox"/> Bruce Guthro	<input type="checkbox"/> Ellen Page	<input type="checkbox"/> Rick Mercer
<input type="checkbox"/> Rocket Richard	<input type="checkbox"/> Rock Voisine	<input type="checkbox"/> Tommy Chong	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Portia White	<input type="checkbox"/> Colin Mochrie
<input type="checkbox"/> Vince Coleman	<input type="checkbox"/> Louise Arbour	<input type="checkbox"/> George Elliot Clarke	<input type="checkbox"/> Alan Syliboy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Viola Desmond	<input type="checkbox"/> Mario Lemieux	<input type="checkbox"/> Candy Palmater	<input type="checkbox"/> Buffy Sainte-Marie	

Countries that use this system: *Sweden, Netherlands*

How it works: *The number of votes received by each party will determine the share of seats they hold in Parliament. The candidates who receive the most votes within each party will rank higher on their party lists, and be the first to receive a seat in Parliament when their party has earned enough votes.*

Closed List Proportional Representation				
<p><i>You have one vote.</i> <i>Place an X in the space next to the party you wish to support.</i></p>				
Pioneer Party	Bonhomme Party	Beavertail Party	Maple Party	Independent Candidate
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agnes Macphail	Celine Dion	Bruce Guthro	Ellen Page	Rick Mercer
Rocket Richard	Rock Voisine	Tommy Chong	Portia White	
Vince Coleman	Louise Arbour	Shaun Majumber	Alan Syliboy	
Viola Desmond	Mario Lemieux	Candy Palmater	Buffy Sainte-Marie	

Countries that use this system: *Israel, Italy, Spain, Guatemala*

How it works: *The number of votes received by each party will determine the share of votes they hold in Parliament. The candidates who appear first on the list provided by each party will be the first to receive a seat in Parliament when their party has earned enough votes.*

in local districts and on their party's lists. If the candidate is successful in their local district election they are dropped from the party list and the list seat is awarded to the next highest person on the party list.

Thresholds: As in List PR, an MMP system may employ a minimum threshold of the popular vote that each party must earn in order to receive seats in parliament. An additional threshold that may be used in MMP systems is reached when a party wins a pre-set number of local district elections.

For instance, if the popular vote threshold were set to five per cent, and the district threshold were set to one district seat, a party that had earned one district seat, but only four per cent of the popular vote across a province, would be awarded roughly four per cent of that province's seats in parliament for having reached one of the thresholds.

Seat Vacancies: When a local district seat becomes vacant, it is filled via a **by-election**, just as in an FPTP or AV system. When a member elected via the party list vacates their seat between general elections, as in List PR, the seat is typically awarded to the next available and willing candidate from the list proposed by the party in the previous election.

Canadian MMP (MMP-CAN): The MMP system modeled in this paper has roughly half the number of single-member districts in each province as currently exist in first past the post system used now. The remaining MPs would be drawn from the multi-member district(s) that make up each province.

- The largest possible multi-member district would be the size of a single province, and in the case of the small province modeled in this paper, that is the size of the multi-member list district we illustrate.
- These multi-member districts can follow provincial boundaries, or be smaller depending on population. For the purposes of demonstrating how a province-wide list would work, we simply use provincial boundaries, but multi-member districts comparable in size to the List PR model (with half the number of MPs) could also be used to ensure MPs are accountable to a geographic region, and indeed in larger provinces, it would be critical to do so if an open-list were to be used (and understood) by voters.⁶

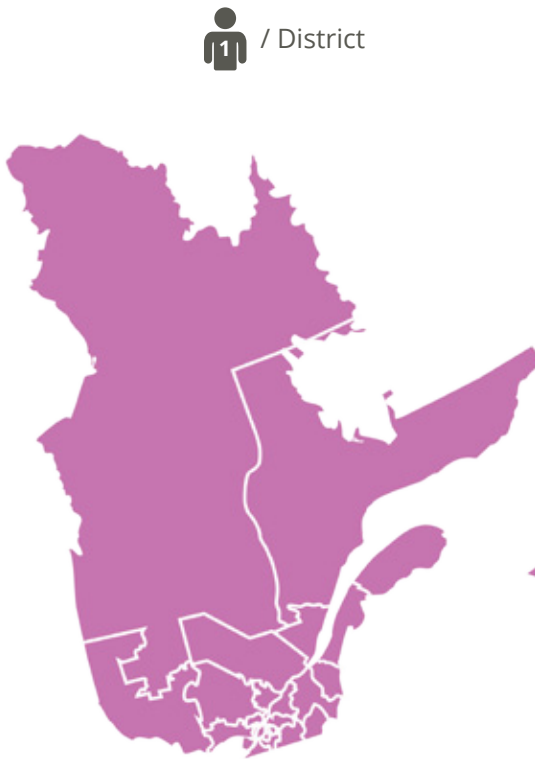
Province	Single District MPs	# of Multimember Districts X # of MPs	List Seats	Total MPs
NB	5	2 X 5	5	10
BC	21	1 X 21	21	42
QC	39	1 X 39	39	78

⁶ While not modeled here, an open list and/or regional multi-member districts could also be used within an MMP system for Canada, using the same boundaries proposed for the List PR system modeled previously.

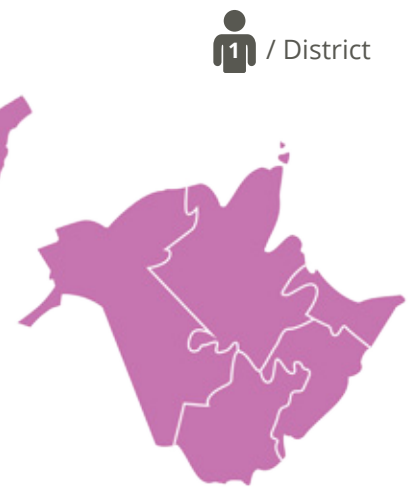
Mixed Member Proportional *Electoral Districts Maps*



BC



QC



NB

VANCOUVER



VICTORIA



MONTRÉAL



QUEBEC CITY



 = MLAs / District

Mixed Member Proportional Representation *Ballot & Instructions*

Mixed Member Proportional Representation - Closed List*			
You have two votes			
	Party vote	District Vote	
	<i>This vote determines the share of seats each party will hold in the legislature.</i>	<i>This vote determines who will be elected to the legislature from your district.</i>	
Vote here	<i>Place an X in the space next to the party you support.</i>	<i>Vote by placing an X in the space next to the candidate you choose.</i>	Vote here
	Bonhomme Party	Viola DESMOND - Pioneer Party	
	Beavertail Party	Rick MERCER - Independent	
	Maple Party	Alan SYLIBOY - Maple Party	
	Colin MOCHRIE - Independent	Celine DION- Bonhomme Party	
	Pioneer Party	Candy PALMATER- Beavertail Party	

Countries that use this system:

New Zealand, Germany, Lesotho,

How it works:

District Vote: To win a candidate must earn more votes than all other candidates.

Party Vote: After the winners of the local district elections are known, the party vote will be used to ensure that - of the seats in parliament for that province - the total share held by each party roughly matches the total share of party votes received in that province. The candidates who appear highest on the list provided by each party will be the first to receive a seat in Parliament when their party has earned enough votes.

** While we model a closed list ballot here, an open list MMP ballot is also possible, where the party vote resembles the ballot previously modelled for List PR.*

E) SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE (STV)

The single transferable vote (STV) is a system for electing representatives to multi-member districts using a preferential ballot. This system is used in Ireland, Malta, the Australian Senate, and in many municipal and organizational elections (for governing boards and councils) worldwide.

Districts: In the STV system, a state is divided into several multi-member districts. For example, in Australia, each of the country's six states is its own district, with 12 senators elected from each.

Casting Votes: In an STV voting system the voters rank candidates in order of preference. Because the election is for a multi-member district, the number of candidates is typically quite large, with each party running multiple candidates in each district.

Counting Votes & Thresholds: The first step in determining the winners in an STV election is to calculate the winning threshold, known as a quota, which is the number of votes a candidate must receive in order to win. The quota is calculated based on the number of seats available and the number of valid votes cast. It is typically the lowest number of votes that only the winning number of candidates can receive.

Once a quota is established, the first preference on each ballot is counted and all candidates who meet the quota are declared elected. Then, if the total number of seats available is not filled on a first count, counting proceeds to a second round. The **surplus votes** received by winning candidates in the previous round (votes in excess of the quota) are then 'transferred' to the next preference choice marked on the ballots added to the totals of the remaining candidates.

If no candidates exceed the quota using the **surplus votes** in a single round, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and the second preference on those ballots are added to the tallies of each of the remaining candidates. This process continues until all seats are filled.⁷

Seat Vacancy: When the seat for a district is vacated between general elections, there are multiple options to choose from in an STV system, and only one of those options involves holding a **by-election**.

- 1. Countback:** The countback method involves re-running the election using the previously cast ballots in order to elect the candidate with the next highest level of support.
- 2. Replacement Lists:** Winning candidates in an STV election create an ordered list of successors to replace them. If they vacate their seat, the first candidate on the departing candidate's replacement list becomes the new representative.
- 3. Appointment:** In some municipal STV systems, the departing member nominates their successor and the council votes to approve the nominee.

⁷ For a detailed explanation of how STV works see here: <http://www.ecanz.gov.au/systems/proportional/>

- 4. By-election:** A by-election is run using a ranked ballot and each party nominates only a single candidate (independents may also run) and the single vacancy is filled.

Canadian STV (STV-CAN): The STV system modeled in this paper has the following characteristics:

Province	# of Multimember Districts X # of MPs	STV MPs
New Brunswick	2 X 2 MPs 1 X 6 MPs	10
British Columbia	5 X 3 MPs 4 X 5 MPs 1 X 7 MPs	42
Quebec	2 X 2 MPs 3 X 4 MPs 5 X 5 MPs 5 X 6 MPs 1 X 7 MPs 1 X 8 MPs	78

See STV Map, P. 31 and STV Ballot, P. 32

Summary

There are many voting systems used in democracies around the world that could have been included in this paper. We chose the five of the most popular systems, each of which could be adapted to the Canadian context.

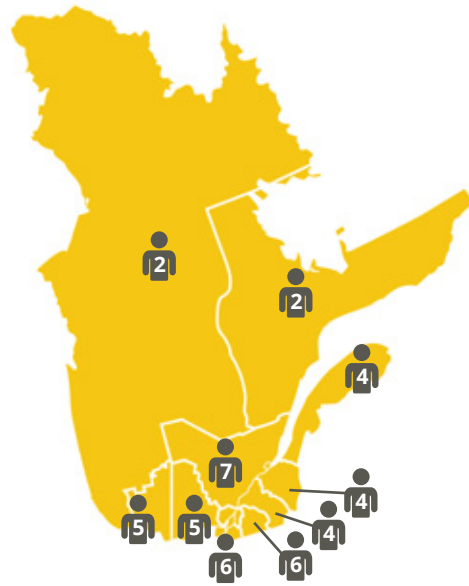
The question we invite readers to reflect on at the end of this section is: at a practical level, which of these systems best meets the needs of Canadians, and fits the political and cultural context of Canada?

Single Transferable Vote

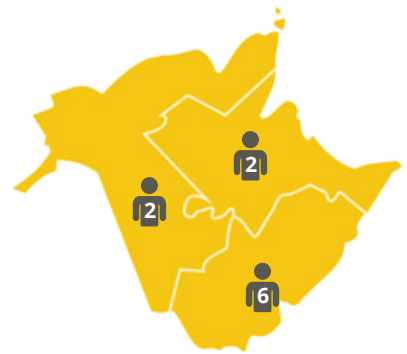
Electoral Districts Maps



BC



QC

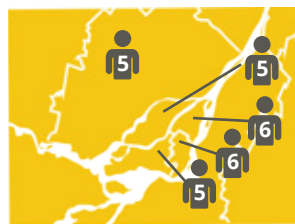


NB

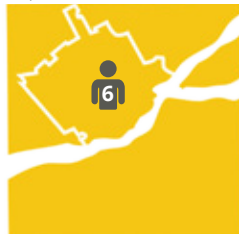
VANCOUVER



MONTRÉAL



QUEBEC CITY



 = MLAs / District

Single Transferable Vote

Ballot & Instructions

Single Transferable Vote

By placing the numbers in the space next to the candidates of your choice 1 to n in order of your preference. You may vote for as many candidates as you wish, including candidates from different parties.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 Agnes Macphail Pioneer Party	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 Celine Dion Bonhomme Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Samantha Bee Beavertail Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Ellen Page Maple Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Rick Mercer Independent
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 Rocket Richard Pioneer Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Rock Voisine Bonhomme Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Tommy Chong Beavertail Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Portia White Maple Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Colin Mochrie Independent
<input type="checkbox"/> Vince Coleman Pioneer Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Gabriel Nadeau- Dubois Bonhomme Party	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 Shaun Majumder Beavertail Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Alan Syliboy Maple Party	
<input type="checkbox"/> Viola Desmond Pioneer Party	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 Mario Lemieux Bonhomme Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Candy Palmater Beavertail Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Gord Downie Maple Party	

Countries that use this system:

Ireland, Australian Senate, Malta

How it works:

Depending on the size of your district, 2 - 9 candidates will be elected.

If less than five candidates meet the threshold required to win initially, votes will be transferred based on the rankings provided, as many times as necessary until five candidates have reached the threshold. The threshold is calculated as follows:

$$\left(\frac{\text{Total Votes Cast}}{\text{Seat} + 1} \right) + 1$$

IV) CRITERIA ASSESSMENTS

WASTED VOTES IN CANADA

In Canada's 2015 election under first-past-the-post, 338 members of Parliament were elected - only 133 of whom earned the support of >50% of voters in their riding. In the other 205 ridings, the majority of votes were cast for candidates who did not earn a seat in Parliament.

Source: Antony Green (October 21, 2015). "Canada 2015 - Would Preferential Voting Have Made a Difference?". blogs.abc.net.au. Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

IV) CRITERIA ASSESSMENTS

In this section, we assess each system against each of the criteria set out in Section II. We do this by first making broad statements that apply to the performance of each system family (winner-take-all and proportional representation) against the criteria. Then, if there is variance or noteworthy findings within a system family, we present the findings (or identify any unresolved questions) about how each specific system measures up against the criteria.

Following the review in each section, we provide summary rankings of all systems on each criterion against one another.

1) VOTE FAIRNESS and ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Proportionality, wasted votes, and vote equality:** The share of seats a party holds in Parliament should roughly reflect the share of votes the party and its candidates receive. The number of wasted votes - votes that do not contribute to electing a representative - should be low, and the electoral power of one citizen's vote should be roughly equal to any other citizen's vote.
- **Accountability:** The system should enable voters to hold representatives, parties, and governments to account, and remove governments unwanted by the majority.

Winner-Take-All systems

Proportionality, wasted votes, and vote equality

Winner-take-all systems do not translate the popular vote share a party receives into a comparable share of seats for that party in Parliament, as all seats are elected from local, single-member districts, and there is no mechanism to adjust for proportionality.⁸ Winner-take-all systems have the highest number of **wasted votes** and voter inequality of any system.

Accountability: representatives, parties, and governments

Winner-take-all systems generally enable voters to hold individual elected representatives to account as all representatives are accountable to a local district. AV provides greater accountability at this level than FPTP.

Voters, however, cannot easily and fairly hold parties and governments to account in winner-take-all systems. In tight district-level races, a small number of voters (tens or hundreds) in **'swing districts'** can determine the outcome of a local election, and have greater influence than a larger number of voters in **'safe districts'**. When this occurs across many districts at once, the total share of seats a party holds becomes disproportionate to the share of the popular vote their candidates earned, and governments that have lost significant popular support (or never had it in the first place) can remain in office while sufficiently **popular parties** are underrepresented.⁹

⁸ Bogdanor, V. (1997). *First-Past-The-Post: An electoral system which is difficult to defend*. *Representation*, 34(2), 80-83.

⁹ Reynolds, A., Reilly, B., & Ellis, A. (2005). *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

There are, of course, instances where sitting governments are fairly unseated or re-elected with popular support, but this has more to do with chance and the intricacies of electoral math than with the fairness of the system.

First-Past-the-Post

Proportionality, wasted votes, and vote equality

The share of votes cast for candidates of each party does not translate into a comparable share of seats in Parliament for that party. Five majority governments have been formed in Canada since 1993 under FPTP, none of whose candidates earned a majority of the popular vote but all of whom held a majority of seats in Parliament. This phenomenon is often referred to as a **false majority**.¹⁰

	Popular Vote for Governing Party	Seat Share for Governing Party
1993 Election (Liberal Majority - Chrétien)	41.2 %	60 % (177/295)
1997 Election (Liberal Majority - Chrétien)	38.5 %	52 % (155/301)
2000 Election (Liberal Majority - Chrétien)	40.9 %	57 % (172/301)
2011 Election (Conservative Majority - Harper)	39.6%	54% (166/308)
2015 Election (Liberal Majority - Trudeau)	39.5%	54% (184/338)

Source: History of Federal Ridings Since 1867. Library of Parliament. <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E>

There are generally more **wasted votes** in the FPTP system than any other system.¹¹ It is possible, and common, for the number of wasted votes to be a majority of the votes in FPTP elections. Vote equality is extremely low in FPTP.

Accountability

Even when the majority of voters in a district are dissatisfied with the representative for their district but are divided in their choice of alternative candidate, the **incumbent** may still win a **plurality** of support and serve another term. As can be seen in some of the examples provided, small shifts in support among voters can greatly affect government and party status in Parliament.

FPTP is often perceived as a system that allows voters to easily hold governments to account.¹² Pundits and the media refer to major victories

¹⁰ Russell, P. H. (2008). Two cheers for minority government: The evolution of Canadian Parliamentary democracy. Emond Montgomery Publication.

¹¹ Electoral Systems. (2016).

¹² Norton, P. (1997). The case for First-Past-the-Post. *Representation*, 34(2), 84-88.

Norris, P. (1997). Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems. *International Political Science Review*, 18(3),

as 'tides', 'crushing defeats' or 'landslide victories' when **incumbent** governments lose a large number of seats, and another party's candidates are elected in their place. Often, these victories and defeats are more a consequence of electoral math than large swings of votes from one party's candidates to another's.

Alternative Vote

Proportionality, wasted votes, and vote equality

AV does not solve the problem of disproportionate results encountered in the FPTP system. While it is an alternative to FPTP, it is not a proportional system and can produce results that are less proportional than FPTP.¹³ Compared to FPTP, there are fewer **wasted votes** in AV, as a candidate must receive more than 50% of the votes to win, but as many as 49% of votes within a district may still be wasted, and potentially more at the statewide level. AV and FPTP have a similar levels of vote inequality; there are still **swing ridings** where a small number of votes are worth more than a large number in '**safe seats**', and parties work harder to win votes to earn the former.

Accountability

The option to rank second and third choice candidates allows voters to express preferences, and a small fraction of the time, second choice ballots do make a difference in electing someone who was not the lead candidate in the first round of voting. For instance:

- In 21 Australian general elections using AV over a 77 year period, just six per cent of the leading first-choice candidates were defeated after proceeding to count second choice votes.¹⁴
- In Manitoba and Alberta, where AV was used for 15 elections over three decades, second choices changed the outcome only 2 per cent of the time.¹⁵

AV is often presented as a system that is more fair because it can be used to prevent the election of a candidate (often an **incumbent**) that the majority of voters do not want in a riding even when the voters don't necessarily agree on the best alternative. This reasoning assumes the majority of voters '*don't want*' the same thing and that preventing someone from holding office is more important than ensuring those who do hold office are reflective of what voters want.

At the statewide level, however, AV allows for similar accountability as FPTP. Like FPTP, AV is unreliable for holding parties and the governments they are a part of to account.¹⁶

AUSTRALIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH AV

Australia has used AV for electing members of its House of Representatives since 1918, and is one of the only countries that uses AV. Single parties regularly form majority governments with less than 40% of the popular vote. Twice in Australian elections (1975 and 1996) the party that formed government was not the party whose candidates earned the most votes

Source: Farrell, D. M. (2011).

297-312.

13 Farrell, D. M. (2011). *Electoral systems : a comparative introduction* (2nd ed.). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Renwick, A. (2011). [The Alternative Vote: A Briefing Paper](#). Political Studies Association.

14 Fair Vote Canada. (2009). [The Alternative Vote \(or Instant Run-off Voting\): It's no solution for the democratic deficit](#). Toronto, ON.

15 Jansen, H. J. (2004). The Political Consequences of the Alternative Vote: Lessons from Western Canada. *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, 37(3), 647-669.

16 Johnston, L. (2007). [From Votes to Seats: Four families of electoral systems](#). Toronto, ON, Canada: Ontario Citizens' Assembly Secretariat.

Proportional Systems

Proportionality, wasted votes and voter equality

Systems of proportional representation generally have higher voter equality than winner-take-all systems. Each proportional system reviewed here includes one or more large multi-member districts that make this voter equality possible.

When the size of these districts increases, proportionality and voter equality improves, and the number of **wasted votes** shrinks. Lower victory thresholds for parties (in MMP and List PR) and candidates (in STV) also improve proportionality.

Accountability: representatives, parties and governments

Representatives: Each PR system has different methods for electing representatives to Parliament, so the question of accountability of representatives is addressed within the individual sections.

Parties: Because all PR systems translate the share of popular vote a party earns into a comparable share of the seats they win in Parliament, parties are generally held to account in proportion to the votes they lose and gain at election time. In highly proportional systems, the results are proportional 95-99% of the time.¹⁷

Governments: Governing coalitions are formed from negotiations between parties following an election without the direct consent of the voters.¹⁸ Some critics view the prevalence of **coalition governments** in PR systems as a threat to democratic accountability since voters have little influence (at election time) over a party's presence or absence in the coalition formed after an election. A member party of a governing coalition can lose support at election time, and still remain part of the next governing coalition, but would likely hold proportionately less power.

List PR

Proportionality, wasted votes, and voter equality

The most proportional voting systems in the world are List PR systems.¹⁹ The following factors improve the level of proportionality, voter equality, and reduce the number of **wasted votes**:

- **Large districts:** The larger the size of the districts, the greater the level of voter equality. When a state is divided into many regional districts, the proportionality and voter equality is generally lower, and the number of wasted votes increases.²⁰

THE FDP IN GERMANY

In Germany, The Free Democrats (FDP), a centre-right liberal party, has been a junior party in coalition governments 75 % of the time since the end of World War Two, despite never having won more than 13% of the popular vote.

(Farrell, D.M. (2011); Álvarez-Rivera, M. (2014)).

¹⁷ Lijphart, A. (2012). *Patterns of democracy : government forms and performance in thirty-six countries* (2nd ed.). New Haven Conn: Yale University Press.

¹⁸ Reynolds, et al.. (2005); Johnston, (2007).

¹⁹ Reynolds et al., (2005); Electoral Systems. (2016); Johnston, (2007)

²⁰ Farrell, D.M. (2011).

- **Low (or no) thresholds:** List PR systems with no thresholds have the highest proportionality. Most List PR systems, however, have a threshold. The more small parties there are running in elections that do not meet the threshold, the higher the number of wasted votes and disproportionality.²¹

Accountability of Representatives

List PR systems that use an **open list** allow voters to hold individual representatives within a party accountable for their performance while **closed list** PR systems do not.

Mixed Member Proportional

Proportionality, wasted votes, and vote equality

An MMP system can be proportional and fair when the proper conditions are in place. As with List PR systems, larger district size and reasonable thresholds will improve fairness and proportionality, and a third variable - the ratio of list to local seats - also has a significant impact on proportionality in MMP systems.

The system can be proportional as long as there are enough list seats to compensate for any disproportionality that results from local district elections, or if the number of seats in Parliament is enlarged when the results are disproportional. When these conditions are absent, an MMP system can be as disproportionate as a winner-take-all system.

Accountability of Representatives

Voters can hold local district representatives elected under MMP to account as easily as they can in the FPTP system. When a closed list is used to elect party seats, as is the case in all-existing MMP systems, it can be difficult for voters to hold some elected members of a party to account should the party continue to be successful.

Some MMP systems allow **dual candidacy** whereby a candidate can run for a local district election, and also be named on the party's list. This can limit accountability to voters, as a local candidate who was '*rejected*' by voters locally can still end up getting elected from the party list.

Single Transferable Vote

Proportionality, wasted votes, and vote equality

STV provides the most choice and power to voters of any of the voting systems reviewed here. The single most important factor in improving fairness in STV is district size. The larger the district size, the more proportional the results will be. States that use STV must balance the need for large enough districts to ensure sufficient proportionality with the need for small enough districts to keep the ballot simple for voters

²¹ Farrell, D.M. (2011).

(with a reasonable number of candidates).

When you simply consider the first choice rankings of voters, however, larger parties generally receive a slightly larger share of seats than their share of first choice rankings under STV while smaller parties receive a slightly smaller one.²²

Accountability of representatives

All elected members are accountable to a multi-member district, giving voters a greater ability to hold their representatives to account at election time.

Summary & Ranking: Vote Fairness and Effectiveness

	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
VOTE FAIRNESS & ACCOUNTABILITY	- Disproportionate results - High number of wasted votes - Low vote equality - Difficult for voters to hold parties and governments to account		- Results are proportionate 95 - 99% of the time. - Low number of wasted votes - High vote equality: generally separate from party preference, or voter's district. - Easy for voters to hold parties to account - Governing coalitions are formed without direct consent of voters		
Accountability of Representatives	-Vote-splitting means a candidate can be opposed by a majority of voters and still be <i>elected, and re-elected</i>	- If a majority of voters oppose a candidate, they can prevent that candidate's election or re-election	- Individual candidates held to account by constituents through open list voting.	- Local representatives are held to account as with FPTP - Voters have no influence over candidates elected via the closed party list.	- All candidates held accountable by their district and must earn the support of voters
RANKING	5	4	1	1	1

2) VOTER PARTICIPATION

In this section we break from the format of previous sections as voter participation numbers are quite easy to compare across systems without the need for detailed commentary on each system.

PR systems generally have higher voter turnout than winner-take-all systems:

- In a study conducted in 1990, of 509 national elections in 20 countries over the previous hundred years, voter turnout in countries using PR systems averaged 82.1%, which is roughly eight percentage points more than FPTP systems, and six points higher than single-member majority systems (a category that includes AV).²³
- In 29 national elections examined from 2004-2008, the turnout reported in the countries using FPTP systems (the UK, US, and Canada) was lower than all but one of the countries using a PR system.²⁴

²² Gallagher, M. (1978). Party Solidarity, Exclusivity and Inter-Party Relationships 1922-1977: The Evidence of Transfers. *Economic and social review*, 10(1), 1.

²³ Blais, A., & Carty, R. K. (1990). Does proportional representation foster voter turnout? *European Journal of Political Research*, 18(2), 167-181.

²⁴ Baston, L. (n.d.). "PR Myths: The Fact and Fiction on Proportional Representation." The Electoral Reform Society.

AV systems may perform moderately better than FPTP:

- According to voter turnout statistics in three Canadian provinces that used AV in the first half of the 20th century and Australia prior to the introduction of compulsory voting (1925), AV had no clear effect on voter turnout when transitioning from FPTP.²⁵
- The study previously noted found **majoritarian systems** like AV score two percentage points higher on voter turnout than FPTP systems and five percentage points lower than PR systems.²⁶

Voter turnout over from 1986-2016 by system

We reviewed voter turnout rates over a thirty-year period for OECD member states using the systems described here.²⁷ We also included Malta, a non-OECD member,²⁸ and removed any states with compulsory voting laws.²⁹

System	Average Turnout (1986-2016)	Average Turnout (Most Recent Elections)	Lowest Average Turnout (1986-2016)	Highest Average Turnout (1986-2016)
FPTP	59.9%	57.2%	United States: 58.3%	UK: 68.1%
LIST PR	68.3%	65.3%	Switzerland: 46.3%	Denmark: 85.7%
MMP	76.6%	71.0%	Hungary: 65.5%	New Zealand: 79.8%
STV	70.4%	72.1%	Ireland: 67.8%	Malta: 95.1%

Summary & Ranking: Voter Participation

	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
VOTER PARTICIPATION	Winner-take-all systems have lower voter participation than proportional ones		Proportional systems have higher voter participation than winner-take-all systems		
30 Year Voter Turnout Average (1986-2016)	59.9%	- No available data	68.3%	76.6%	70.4%
	5	4	3	1	2

3) SIMPLICITY

- ***Casting Ballots:*** *The ballot should be easy for voters to complete and cast.*
- ***Understanding the Results:*** *Voters should be able to easily understand how the votes are counted and translated into elected representation.*

²⁵ Jansen, (2004); Renwick, (2009)

²⁶ Blais & Carty (1990)

²⁷ Authors' Calculation: using data from IDEA. (2016). [International IDEA Voter Turnout Database](#). All averages were calculated using a weighting based on the number of registered voters in each included country.

²⁸ Malta was included to provide an additional reference point for STV.

²⁹ Countries using STV: Malta & Ireland. Nations using List PR: Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Iceland, Israel, and Switzerland; Nations using MMP: Germany, Hungary and New Zealand; Nations using FPTP: Canada, United Kingdom and United States..

Winner-Take-All systems: FPTP & AV

Casting ballots: Both winner-take-all systems reviewed here are relatively simple for the voter, with the AV system being slightly more complicated due to rankings. Based on the number of spoiled ballots in AV systems, there is evidence to suggest that some people do not understand preferential voting.³⁰

Understanding the results: The results are generally simple, as the winning candidate is the one with the most votes (in the case of FPTP) or the majority of votes (in the case of AV). In the case of AV, again, the counting is more complicated than the single count of FPTP. In both cases, a party can win the majority of the seats without receiving the majority of the votes, and another party can win a significant share of votes without winning any seats; this can be difficult for voters to understand.

Proportional Systems

List PR

Casting ballots: List PR can be as simple for the voter as FPTP. In **Closed list** PR systems, only one vote is cast: a vote for the voter's preferred party. In **Open list** PR systems, ballots are more complicated as voters can indicate their preferred candidate within the party of their choice.

Understanding the results: The general principle of proportionality in List PR is simple to explain. However, if the seats are region-based (as opposed to statewide), and if **adjustment seats** are used to improve proportionality it can be difficult for voters to understand exactly why and how certain candidates are elected.

Mixed Member Proportional

Casting ballots: Most MMP countries use a two-vote, one-ballot system wherein one vote is cast for a candidate in their local district and a second vote is cast for the party,³¹ which is simple when a closed list is used.³²

Understanding the results: Voters may find it difficult to understand how the ballots are counted since the influence of the **party vote** is dependent on the results of the local district ballot, which increases fairness but adds another step to generating election results.³³

Single Transferable Vote

Casting ballots: STV is the most complicated voting system examined in this paper and that is often cited as its major downside.³⁴ Choosing an STV system means sacrificing simplicity for the maximum level of choice

³⁰ Renwick, (n.d.) Jansen (2004).

³¹ Massicotte, L. (2004). *In Search of a Compensatory Mixed Electoral System for Quebec*. Political Science Department, University of Montreal.

³² The vote would be more complicated with an open list, though no states use an MMP ballot with an open list, nor does the model presented here recommend an open list with MMP.

³³ Massicotte, L. (2004).

³⁴ Law Commission of Canada. (2004). [Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada](#). Public Works and Government Services Canada; Reynolds, et al. (2005).

VOTER TURNOUT IN CANADA

Canadian voter turnout has steadily declined over the last 30 years. Voter turnout in 1988 was 75%, in contrast to the 2008 and 2011 elections where turnout hovered around 60%. The 2015 election marked the first upward trend in voter turnout in decades, with 69% of eligible voters casting ballots. It should also be noted that declining voter turnout over the last half-century has by no means been limited to winner-take-all democracies, but that proportional democracies seem to have maintained higher turnout during this period.

Source: Elections Canada

for the voters.

The United Kingdom’s Independent Commission on the Voting System described STV as “a caricature of an overzealous American breakfast waiter going on posing an indefinite number of unwanted options, ... [which] becomes both an exasperation and an incitement to the giving of random answers”.³⁵ A voluntary ranking system can simplify the voting process for voters (though at the cost of proportionality).³⁶

Understanding the results: Tabulating votes in the STV system is always complicated. Voters must understand concepts like fractional vote transfers, quotas, and **surplus votes** in order to understand how votes translate into seats.

Summary & Ranking: Simplicity

	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
SIMPLICITY CASTING VOTES	Simple	Casting votes is more complicated than in FPTP, but simple to explain	More complicated ballot with open list voting, still relatively simple to vote	The two-vote, one-ballot system is simple to explain and use	Ballot is complicated of involving ranked voting and large numbers of candidates
UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS	Easy to understand district results Can be difficult to understand disproportionate election results	Easy to understand district results Can be difficult to understand disproportionate election results	The allocation of adjustment seats can make the results in this system harder to understand	The use of adjustment seats can make it hard to understand how proportionality is achieved	Voters must understand how fractional vote transfers, quotas, and surplus votes work to understand election results
	1	3	2	4	5

4) STRONG PARLIAMENT

- **Holding government to account:** *Parliament should serve as a check on the executive of government, and hold government to account. Parliaments should be able to make or break a government by votes of confidence, and compel a government to act when necessary.*
- **Policy exploration:** *Parliament should be a forum for exploring alternative policies to those proposed by the government.*
- **Small and large parties:** *Parliament should include small parties as well as large parties.*

Winner-Take-All systems

Holding the government to account

In winner-take-all systems, single-party majority governments are the most common, and the governing party dominates Parliament and committees.³⁷ Dissident backbench members of the governing caucus would, therefore, be required in order to hold the cabinet government

³⁵ Law Commission of Canada. (2004).

³⁶ Proportionality is reduced if many votes are “exhausted.” Votes are exhausted when one’s preferred choices are eliminated but one hasn’t expressed any further preferences so the vote has to be removed for the purposes of calculating the quota.

³⁷ Bogdanor, V. (1997).

to account. By and large, the established culture of party discipline in Canada and the provinces prevents this from happening.³⁸

Opposition parties under single-party-majority governments have few meaningful opportunities to effect, initiate, or prevent policy changes. They are limited to posing questions to the government in question period, debating them, and introducing bills that would only ever pass with government support.

When opposition members in a majority house (nationally or provincially) cannot influence policy, they **filibuster**. To filibuster is to exploit the rules of the House to slow the passage of legislation that, in most cases, will inevitably pass. This can involve exhausting speaking time limits, proposing numerous amendments, and calling for lengthy recorded votes.³⁹ These tactics rarely succeed in stopping or changing the proposed legislation and are simply an inconvenience for the government.⁴⁰

Small and Large Parties

Large parties are well served under winner-take-all systems. The two largest parties typically alternate as the governing party.⁴¹ Small national parties, such as the Green Party of Canada, do not perform well in winner-take-all systems, despite potentially having significant statewide support, simply because “they tend to lose in each district.”⁴² By contrast, small regional parties, such as the Bloc Quebecois, perform disproportionately well in winner-take-all elections. There is little incentive to start, join, or vote for new statewide parties in winner-take-all systems because of how difficult it is to break into the electoral competition.

Minority Government

Single-party minority governments occur in winner-take-all systems, but are less common than single-party majorities. In the last two decades, single-party minority governments in Canada were more common than at any other time, but in the last four years, they have been on the decline, and there are currently no minority governments anywhere in the country. Opposition members, and small parties in particular, can have greater influence over the legislative and budgetary agenda in minority Parliaments as they are necessary for bills to pass.

First-Past-the-Post

Small and Large Parties

Large parties dominate in FPTP, while smaller parties are often underrepresented in Parliament. The electoral history of the Green Party of Canada demonstrates this effect – in the 2004, 2006 and 2008 elections

38 Much of the culture of party discipline in Canada has been traced back to the process that party's use to choose their candidates. Two key reforms that are independent of the electoral system and have been proposed by political scientists and some lawmakers are removing the “leader's veto” on who gets to be a candidate for the party, and giving party caucuses the power to hold leaders accountable, either through legislation or party policy. See: Aucoin, P., Turnbull, L. B., & Jarvis, M. D. (2011). *Democratizing the constitution: Reforming responsible government*. Emond Montgomery Publications.

39 LaRoche, J. (2015). [5 things to watch in Nova Scotia legislature fall sitting](#). *CBC News: Nova Scotia*.

40 Over the last seven years of minority governments in Nova Scotia, opposition parties have filibustered legislation in round-the-clock sittings that have resulted in minimal changes to laws proposed.

41 Reynolds et al. (2005).

42 Lijphart, A. (2012).

the party earned between 4.3% and 6.8% of the popular vote without winning a single seat in Parliament. In 2011, their popular vote share dropped to 3.9% but they were able to earn a single seat by concentrating campaign efforts in one small regional district. Similarly, geographically concentrated parties are able to win seats more easily under FPTP by virtue of having their support concentrated into local ridings.⁴³

Alternative Vote

Parliament elected in an AV election ends up functioning almost identically to the one generated from a FPTP election.

Small and Large Parties

Large parties remain the dominant players in Parliament under the AV system. Because it is easier for candidates from small parties to win first place votes, AV tends to result in a larger number of small parties and candidates running in elections.⁴⁴ However, it is their second choice that generally holds more weight and that typically goes to a larger party,⁴⁵ so there are fewer small parties represented in the parliament than under a proportional system or even a first-past-the-post system.⁴⁶ Proponents of AV argue that the presence of more small parties in elections is still a positive impact as it may force large parties to stake out positions on the issues that are otherwise only championed by small parties.

Proportional Systems: List PR, MMP & STV

A check on the executive, and exploring alternative policies

Elections in PR systems rarely result in single-party-majority governments.^{47,48} Since it is unlikely for a single party to hold a majority of seats in Parliament, and the government cannot depend on a majority of lawmakers to *'toe the line'*, the government faces a stronger test when facing Parliament. This increases the likelihood that:

- questions and criticisms from other parties are taken seriously;
- alternative policies are given meaningful consideration;
- Parliament can stop or amend legislation introduced by the government when necessary; and
- Parliament can *'make or break'* a government (or threaten to do so) through confidence votes.

In proportional systems, Parliament stands on a more equal footing with the executive and can hold it accountable. This effect - of having to carefully negotiate with and anticipate the responses of other parties - is likely felt outside Parliament in a variety of settings, including: coalition cabinet discussions, informal conversations among lawmakers, and in media dialogues that shape how the public thinks about politics.

43 History of Federal Ridings Since 1867. Library of Parliament. <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E>

44 Renwick, A. (2011).

45 Renwick, A. (2011).

46 Jansen, H. J. (2004).

47 Special circumstances in Ireland and the two-party system in Malta have resulted in exceptions.

48 Kerevel, Y. (2010). [The legislative consequences of Mexico's mixed-member electoral system, 2000–2009](#). *Electoral Studies*, 29(4), 691–703.; Lijphart, A. (2012).

Small parties win more seats under PR systems than in winner-take-all systems while large parties continue to play a dominant role in parliament and in government.⁴⁹ Small parties are often minor players in coalitions, while large parties tend to lead them.⁵⁰ The presence of smaller parties ensures that both the government and parliament explore a wider range of policy ideas than would occur without small parties present.

PR systems provide more space for diversity and dissent, which causes these states to outperform non-PR systems in key areas of policy and decision-making. One researcher emphasizes three scenarios where this is the case:⁵¹

- **Policy innovation:** PR countries are more likely to explore alternative policies. For instance, countries with proportional voting systems were found by one researcher to be more likely to introduce rights and benefits for same-sex couples.
- **Long term policy-making:** Countries with PR systems are less likely to pursue popular 'quick-fixes', and more likely to adopt approaches that anticipate long term issues. For example, PR systems are less likely to pass tough-on-crime legislation, and more likely to approve of environmental protection policies.
- **Limited elite control over decision-making:** The likelihood of dissent within the political system is greater, which reduces the peer pressure toward accepting 'groupthink', and policies are assessed from a greater diversity of perspectives.

Summary & Ranking: Strong Parliament

	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
STRONG PARLIAMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The single governing party most often holds a majority of seats in Parliament, preventing meaningful exploration of policy alternatives, amendments to legislation or the adoption of opposition legislation - Filibustering frequently used by opposition to delay and inconvenience the government - Large parties dominate parliament; few small parties are represented - Minority governments are less common, and when present, increase the relevance of parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single-party-majority governments are rare, so governments face a stronger test when meeting a parliament that can easily 'make or break' a government through confidence votes - Opposition members can propose alternative legislation and propose amendments to government legislation, and see meaningful consideration and debate on those proposals - Large parties play a dominant role in parliament and in government; Small parties win more seats in PR systems and are sometimes junior partners in coalitions 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More small parties field candidates in AV elections, but can be even less likely to be elected than in FPTP 			
	4	5	1	1	1

49 Reynolds et al. (2005).

50 Johnston, (2007).

51 Orellana, S. (2014). *Electoral Systems and Governance: How Diversity Can Improve Policy-making*. Routledge.

5) COLLABORATIVE POLITICS

- *The system should incentivize collaboration, consensus building and compromise **between** and **within** political parties.*

Formal collaboration between parties happens in two key ways within any political system: strong collaboration through **coalition governments**, and moderate collaboration through **confidence and supply agreements**.

In the case of **coalition governments**, cabinet members will be drawn from the caucuses of multiple parties that agree on a common head of government and a common agenda for that government, while their party caucuses are expected to support the cabinet.

In the case of **confidence and supply agreements**, government is formed by one or more parties that don't hold a majority of seats in Parliament, and there is an agreement from a minor party to support the government on confidence motions and spending bills, often in return for support for a key policy initiative or spending priority of the minor party.

Winner-Take-All systems: FPTP & AV

Single-Party Majority Government

There is no need for either **coalition government** or **confidence and supply agreements** (or even informal cooperation) under single-party majority rule.⁵² Large majority governments are able to make decisions without support of other parties; the only compromise and cooperation required are from the party's own backbenchers.⁵³

Governing parties and opposition parties tend to adopt a pattern of adversarial dialogue that focuses on and exaggerates the differences between parties rather than seek areas of common agreement.⁵⁴ For a party looking to gain or hold onto power under a winner-take-all system this is a logical electoral strategy to adopt.

Minority Government

Minority governments in winner-take-all systems are more collaborative with opposition parties than majority governments under the same system since multi-party support is required to approve legislation and budgets.⁵⁵ Minority governments and their opposition have a short-term incentive to collaborate to get legislation passed and prevent too-frequent elections. However, with no reason to expect that the next government will also be a minority one, there is no long-term incentive for collaboration when 100% of the power could sit with a single party following the next election. This is in contrast to the long-term incentive for collaboration in PR systems, which we explore later.

⁵² Electoral Systems. (2016); Reynolds et al., (2005)

⁵³ Norris, P. (1997).

⁵⁴ Lijphart, A. (2012).

⁵⁵ Russell, P. H. (2008).

The title of Peter Russell's book on the experience of minority government in Canada - *Two Cheers for Minority Government* - captures the level of enthusiasm warranted toward collaboration in winner-take-all minority governments.⁵⁶ Russell reserves his third cheer for countries like Denmark and Norway that embrace a culture of **coalition governments**.

First-Past-the-Post

Collaboration under the FPTP system is not impossible, but it more often appears as a gesture of unity in the face of a present danger rather than a consequence of the voting system. For instance, coalitions have been used to ensure stability during wartime. There was a wartime coalition in Canada during World War One, and there were **coalition governments** in Britain during World Wars One and Two.

Alternative Vote

Advocates of AV suggest that the ranked ballot encourages candidates with common values and positions to '*play nice*' during election campaigns, and to encourage each candidate to appeal to the others in order to win their second choice votes while not necessarily forming formal coalition agreements once elected.⁵⁷ There is limited evidence to suggest candidates and parties are either more collaborative, or less collaborative when a ranked ballot is used. Ranked ballots can even increase vote splitting among secondary parties.⁵⁸

The end result of an AV election is unlikely to be a **coalition government** or a **confidence and supply agreement**, where cooperation between parties is essential to have new laws or spending approved. What is more probable is that an AV system would result in **false majorities** of adversarial parties, or unstable minorities much like FPTP.⁵⁹

Proportional Systems: List PR, MMP & STV

Because PR elections rarely result in a single party holding a majority of the seats, states that use PR systems generally have **coalition governments**. Coalition governments require more collaboration between member parties⁶⁰ and are more transparent in their decision-making as a result.⁶¹ PR systems generally adopt a more collegial approach to decision making in comparison to the adversarial and combative nature of decision-making in winner-take-all systems.⁶²

Mixed Member Proportional

Internal party tension

In MMP there is some concern about fragmentation *within* parties because there are two '*classes*' of members within each party. Members

⁵⁶ Russell, P. H. (2008).

⁵⁷ Jansen, H. J. (2004); Electoral Systems. (2016)

⁵⁸ Jansen, H. J. (2004)

⁵⁹ Fair Vote Canada. (2009).

⁶⁰ Reynolds et al., (2005)

⁶¹ Law Commission of Canada. (2004).

⁶² Ibid.

elected by a local district tend to make local interests a higher priority and fight for them, while members elected from party lists tend to focus on broader, statewide issues and party loyalty.⁶³ One researcher has found that any difference in the behaviour and voting preferences of local district and party list representatives is minimized when **dual candidacy** is permitted.⁶⁴

Single Transferable Vote

STV is sometimes considered a double-edged sword with respect to collaborative politics. On the one hand, STV enjoys all the collaborative benefits of PR systems more generally.⁶⁵ On the other hand, while STV (like other PR systems) promotes collaboration *between* parties, a system like STV has the potential to generate competition and conflict *within* parties.

Because candidates of the same party must compete with each other, candidates frequently defeat **incumbents** from their own parties. There is a fear that this could result in 'excessive localism' as candidates compete within and across parties to prove to their local districts that they should be re-elected. Despite these claims, researchers have found no material evidence to suggest that STV causes excessive localism in and of itself; they generally regard this phenomenon to be a unique cultural feature of Irish politics but that, even in Ireland, its effect is arguably overstated.⁶⁶

Summary & Ranking: Collaborative Politics

	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
COLLABORATIVE POLITICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single-party-majority governments are most common, and there is little need for coalition government or supply and confidence agreements. - Large parties tend to adopt a pattern of adversarial dialogue that exaggerates the differences between parties, rather than finding areas of common agreement - In minority governments, there are short term incentives to collaborate, and supply and confidence agreements are common, - There are no long-term incentives for collaboration in minority or majority government 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coalition governments are most common form of government, requiring collaboration between member parties, - Single party majority governments are rare, while coalition governments are the most common and negotiate supply and confidence agreements as needed 		
	5	4	1	1	1

63 Reynolds et al., (2005); Electoral Systems. (2016); Kerevel, Y. (2010).

64 Kerevel, Y. (2010).

65 Lijphart, A. (2012).

66 Rae, D. W. (1967). *The political consequences of electoral laws*. New Haven: Yale University Press.;

Gallagher, M. (2000). The (relatively) victorious incumbent under PR-STV: legislative turnover in Ireland and Malta. *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the single transferable vote*, 81-113.

6) EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

- **Strength and Decisiveness:** *The executive of government should have the ability to act decisively and with authority when required.*
- **Leadership and Policy Stability:** *The leadership, policies, laws and budgets enacted by parliament should be relatively stable over time.*
- **Policy Responsiveness:** *The policies, laws and budgets should be responsive to changes in broadly shared societal values and ideals.*

Winner-Take-All Systems: FPTP & AV

Strength and decisiveness

Single-party majority cabinets, are the most common in winner take all systems and do not have to negotiate with other parties to make decisions and implement promises they made to voters.⁶⁷

Winner-take-all systems are commonly assumed to create strong and stable governments, but this stability and strength lasts only as long as a government's term in office. When the governing party changes following an election, many policies and laws are often scrapped, or reversed completely.⁶⁸ This leads to instability for citizens, businesses, community organizations, and other levels of government who must adapt to the ways of 'the new boss'.

Some have assumed that more economic stability would exist under winner-take-all systems than proportional ones, but the systems are comparable in terms of economic stability. The research on the effect of a state's voting system on the economy is mixed. Some studies suggest that voting systems do not have any clear impact on the ability of a government to manage the economy,⁶⁹ while other research - namely that by Knutsen - shows that winner-take-all systems have worse economic performance than PR systems.⁷⁰

Minority Government

Less frequently, in winner-take-all systems, a minority government is formed, which leads to some instability. The end of a minority government's term is nearly impossible to predict, and minority governments have shorter terms in office - about half that of a majority government in the same system in the Canadian experience.⁷¹ This limits the ability of governments to create long-term, stable policy frameworks.

Proportional Systems

Government in PR systems is found to be at least as effective as other voting systems when it comes to leadership stability, policy stability, and creating policies that align with the values of voters.⁷²

67 Norton, P. (1997).

68 Farrell, D. M. (2011).

69 Norton, P. (1997).

70 Doorenspleet, R. (2005). [Electoral Systems and Democratic Quality: Do Mixed Systems Combine the Best or the Worst of Both Worlds? An Explorative Quantitative Cross-national Study](#). *Acta Politica*, 40(1), 28-49.

71 Authors' Calculation: In the last 25 years of government in Nova Scotia, the average term length for minority governments was 2.4 years, while the average majority government's term was 4.5 years.

72 Lijphart, A., (2012)

SINGLE-PARTY MAJORITY GOVERNMENT IN LIST PR

Single-party-majority governments only occur about 10 percent of the time following List PR elections.

Source: Norris, P. (1997).

WHEN GERMAN GOVERNMENT FALLS

In Germany, MMP was primarily introduced to solve the problems of party fragmentation and government instability, which has largely been achieved. Since adopting MMP, Germany has only had two instances where governments have been re-formed in between elections

Source: Johnston, L. (2007)

NEW ZEALAND, NEW VOTING SYSTEM?

New Zealand's government, which transitioned from a FPTP voting system to an MMP one in 1996, did so without disruption or decline in the quality of governance. The lawmakers elected through different means - either PR lists or single-member districts - tend to attend to different issues once elected, proving beneficial to the overall effectiveness and perspective adopted by government

Source: Kerevel, Y. (2010).

Leadership stability

Governments under PR systems are no less stable than governments formed under other systems, and elections are no more frequent. Between 1945 and 1998, countries using FPTP held elections every 3.2 years on average, while countries using PR systems held elections an average of every 3.3 years.⁷³

The things that make **coalition governments** effective - stability and consistency of policy - can sometimes mean that it can be hard to act decisively and quickly. However, as one political scientist noted, "Governments [in winner-take-all systems] may be able to make decisions faster than governments [in proportional systems], but fast decisions are not necessarily wise decisions."⁷⁴

There is always a risk that a **coalition government** with multiple parties will be unable to work together effectively. As with winner-take-all systems, some governments lose the confidence of parliament and collapse. When this happens in PR systems, a new government is typically negotiated among a new combination of parties and there is no need for an election.⁷⁵ This is in contrast to the conventional approach in Canada of heading straight to the polls when a government loses the confidence of parliament.

Policy stability

There is strong government policy stability in PR systems.⁷⁶ One reason for this would appear to be the continuity of parties that form government, where at least one party in the governing coalition in power before an election is often a part of whatever coalition is established following an election.⁷⁷

This creates a relay race-like pattern to the way the new coalition handles policy initiatives and strategies it inherits from the old coalition. Longer-term planning is possible under PR systems because governments are less likely to adopt radically different policy approaches than their predecessors with fewer and less extreme shifts in government policy compared to winner-take-all systems.⁷⁸

Policy responsiveness

Relative policy stability would appear to give PR systems an edge over non-PR systems on a variety of metrics.⁷⁹ In a study previously referenced, PR democracies show a one percentage point increase in economic growth compared to winner-take-all systems, using a century's worth of data,⁸⁰ and are more likely to have a surplus than a deficit in any given year, with a lower national debt on average.⁸¹ Several studies show that there are

73 Pilon, D. (2007). *The Politics of Voting, Reforming Canada's Electoral System*.

74 Lijphart, A., (2012)

75 Johnston, (2007).

76 Reynolds et al., (2005)

77 Saalfeld, T. (2005). *Germany: Stability and Strategy in a Mixed-Member Proportional System*. In Michael Gallagher and Paul Mitchell (Ed.),

The Politics of Electoral Systems. Oxford : Oxford University Press.

78 *Electoral Systems*. (2016); Johnston, (2007).

79 Fair Vote Canada. (n.d.). [Why proportional representation? A look at the evidence](#). Toronto, ON.

80 Knutsen, C. H. (2011). [Which democracies prosper? Electoral rules, form of government and economic growth](#). *Electoral Studies*, 30(1), 83-90.

81 Orellana, S. (2014).

greater political efforts to reduce income inequality in countries using PR systems,⁸² and that when the degree of proportionality in a system increases, inequality decreases at a statistically significant level.^{83 84 85} PR countries garner higher scores on the UN Index of Human Development, which measures health, education, and living standards,⁸⁶ and scores six points higher on the Yale Environmental Performance Index, which measures performance in ten policy areas ranging from air quality and resource management to biodiversity and climate change prevention.⁸⁷

In general, PR systems tend to align more closely with the views and values of the 'median voter',⁸⁸ increasing the likelihood that changes in policy and laws are responsive to shifts in popular opinion.⁸⁹

Summary & Ranking: Effective Government

	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT					
Strength	- Single-party majority governments do not have to negotiate with other parties and can quickly make decisions and implement election promises		- Coalition governments may take longer to reach decisions as negotiations between governing parties (and potentially with parliament) is required		
Leadership Stability	- Elections occur on average every 3.2 years - Minority governments are more unstable than majority ones, holding office for shorter periods of time - Change in governments typically involve power moving from one party to its opponent party		- Elections occur on average every 3.3 years - Strong continuity of parties that form government, where at least one party in a governing coalition finds itself in the coalition formed after the subsequent election, leading to a relay-race-like pattern of policy continuance		
Policy Stability & Responsiveness	- Policy stability in majority and minority governments is often only lasts as long as the governing party holds power - Many policies and laws are often scrapped, or reversed completely when the governing party changes		- Policies are more stable over time - Government policies align more closely with the views and values of the 'median voter' - Policies outperform winner-take-all systems in various areas including: economic growth, human development, environmental sustainability, and reductions in income inequality		
	4	4	1	1	1

7) GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

- *The system should ensure balanced representation for local and regional issues, as well as broader statewide issues.*

Winner-Take-All systems: FPTP & AV

Both winner-take-all systems reviewed in this paper have only local, single-member districts. This gives local issues a strong voice, but because there are no elected representatives accountable to a regional

82 Iversen, T., & Soskice, D. (2006). Electoral institutions and the politics of coalitions: Why some democracies redistribute more than others. *American Political Science Review*, 100(02), 165-181.

83 Verardi, V. (2005). Electoral systems and income inequality. *Economics Letters*, 86(1), 7-12.

84 Lijphart, A. (2012).

85 Birchfield, V., & Crepez, M. M. (1998). The impact of constitutional structures and collective and competitive veto points on income inequality in industrialized democracies. *European Journal of Political Research*, 34(2), 175-200.

86 Carey, John M. & Hix, Simon (2009). "The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems." PSPE Working Paper 01-2009. Department of Government, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

87 Orrelana (2015); Lijphart, A. (2012).

88 Lijphart, A. (2012).

89 McDonald, M., Mendes, S. and Budge, I. (2004). "What are Elections for? Conferring the Median Mandate. *British Journal of Political Science* 34: 1-26, Cambridge University

or statewide constituency, there is little direct incentive for political candidates to focus on them during campaigns or while in government.

Local issues can carry disproportionate weight on the statewide agenda in winner-take-all systems. Parties often compete for votes in **'swing districts'** by making special promises that are not made in other ridings, and delivering on those promises once elected. This disproportionate influence can manifest through the election of regional parties (such as the Bloc Quebecois in federal politics) and the development of regional factions within major parties.

However, not all local districts are well served under a winner-take-all system. Coupling single-member districts with party politics means that while all districts have a voice in Parliament, not all of them have a voice in the governing party. Parties tend to ignore regions where they have little chance of gaining a seat, turning elections into "contests between regions rather than contests between parties."⁹⁰

Proportional Systems

List PR

When List PR systems use one single statewide district, like Israel and the Netherlands, there is no local representation in Parliament. When List PR systems use several smaller multi-member districts, like Argentina or Portugal, more localized, regional representation is provided, but not nearly as localized as the winner-take-all systems reviewed here.

Mixed Member Proportional

When party list seats are allocated statewide or in large enough districts, there can be a strong balance between the broader interests represented by multi-member districts and the local interests represented by local districts. If the size of multi-member districts is too small, however, politics becomes overly localized, the results become less proportional

⁹⁰ Cairns in Law Commission, (2004) p. 70.

AV VERSUS STV DOWN UNDER

In Australia, AV is used to elect members of the House of Representatives, and STV is used to elect members of the Senate, which provides the opportunity to compare women's success in two voting systems within the same country and culture. Since 2001, female lawmakers consistently held more seats in the Senate with women's representation averaging 10.1 percentage points higher than in the House of Representatives.

Source: Parliament of Australia (2015). Women in the Parliament.

Australian Parliaments	House	Senate
44th (2013)	26.7%	42.1%
43rd (2010)	24.7%	36.8%
42nd (2007)	27.3%	35.5%
41st (2004)	24.7%	35.5%
40th (2001)	25.3%	28.9%
Average	25.7%	35.8%

VISIBLE MINORITIES

It's unclear under which system visible minorities are best represented. It appears that minorities may be better represented under winner-take-all systems, namely, FPTP. Canada and the United States both use FPTP, and have higher ratios of visible minorities in parliaments than established democracies that use PR, with the exception of the Netherlands.¹ However, this isn't necessarily a result of the system itself. In some FPTP jurisdictions, district boundaries are drawn to ensure minority communities constitute a majority of certain districts, increasing the likelihood that a member of a specific community will win a seat.² A more random drawing of electoral boundaries under FPTP or AV systems might not produce the same level of diversity.

While there is little comprehensive data on minority representation in PR systems, some argue that because the system does not force parties to nominate the most broadly 'electable' candidate in each riding, as winner-take-all systems do, there is a greater opportunity for underrepresented groups to be represented in parliaments. Electoral Systems. (2016).

In any case, any voting system that does not have a mandatory quota for the representation of minority groups will always depend on voters' attitudes toward those groups that have been traditionally underrepresented.

¹ Bird, K. (2003). *The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities in Established Democracies: A Framework for Comparative Research*. Academy of Migration Studies in Denmark (AMID), Aalborg University.
² Bird (2003)

LIST PR COUNTRIES LEAD IN WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

The OECD countries that consistently report the highest share of seats held by women in national parliaments are countries that use List PR: Iceland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden. None of these countries have legislated quotas for women's representation.

MMP AND THE MAORI IN NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand, in its change from a FPTP system to MMP, experienced a marked increase in minority representation. Under its last FPTP parliament, 7% of MPs were Maori, which rose to 16% under MMP. In the first ten years under MMP (1993-2002), New Zealanders witnessed the percentage of representatives of Pacific Islander heritage increase from 1% to 3% and representatives of Asian heritage from 0 to 2%.

Source: Reynolds et al. (2005).

and most advantages of the MMP system become lost.

Single Transferable Vote

STV systems balance local representation and the representation of larger regions through the use of larger multi-member constituencies. Every elected representative is accountable to the voters in a specific area, often a large community or group of small communities who may already share some common identity with one another. Candidates can succeed by appealing to local communities within the larger district (e.g. people who live in suburbs) and/or by appealing to less definable communities of interest spread across the entire region (people who share a set of common political values and ideals), provided they have enough supporters to meet the quota.

Larger districts mean that candidates must consider a broader range of issues when seeking election and re-election, and the fact that each district has multiple members mean that no single candidate or party can claim to be the voice for the entire district.

Summary & Ranking: Geographic Representation

	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local representation via single-member- districts only - Local issues from swing ridings, and ridings represented by members of the governing party carry disproportionate weight on the statewide agenda 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every elected representative is accountable to the voters in a specific region of the province - Multiple members representing each district mean that no single politician or party can claim to be the voice for the entire district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong balance between local interests and statewide interests due to local and statewide representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every elected representative is accountable to the voters in a specific area of the province - Multiple members represent each district, no single candidate or party can claim to be the voice for the entire district
	4	4	2	1	2

8) WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

- **Women's representation:** *The system should improve gender-parity in elected representation.*

Women are underrepresented in Parliaments generated by all voting systems used around the world. According to data from the International Parliamentary Union, there are only two countries where the number of women outnumber the number of men in parliament - Rwanda and Bolivia - and both countries use gender quotas to ensure this.

In some voting systems, however, women hold a significantly greater share of lawmaking seats than others.

Winner-take-all systems

Winner-take-all systems have the lowest representation of women in elected positions. One theory that might explain this underrepresentation is that single-member constituencies lead parties to put forward the most broadly acceptable candidates in their riding - generally white males.⁹¹

Proportional Representation

The literature suggests that proportional representation, particularly **closed list PR**, correlates with increased female representation⁹² because List PR allows the parties to put forth a list of candidates that reflect the diversity of the population across the state, rather than being rewarded for putting forth the most '*electable*' candidates in each local district, as in winner-take-all systems.⁹³

91 Reynolds et al., (2005).

92 Ballington, J. (1998). [Women's parliamentary representation: the effect of list PR](#). *Politikon*, 25(2), 77-93.;

Schmidt, G. D. (2009). [The election of women in list PR systems: Testing the conventional wisdom](#). *Electoral Studies*, 28(2), 190-203.

93 Reynolds et al., (2005).

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN CANADA

Election Year	Seats Won by Women
2008	22.4 % (69/308)
2011	24.7% (76/308)
2015	26% (88/338)

Source: Elections Canada. Past election results.

COMPULSORY VOTING AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

Compulsory voting laws seem to have a negative effect on women's representation. Each percentage increase in turnout in compulsory systems reduces women's representation by 0.14% according to researchers who reviewed a half-century worth of data in 20 industrialized democracies, covering the years 1950-2000.

Source: Studlar, D. T., & McAllister, I. (2002). Does a critical mass exist? A comparative analysis of women's legislative representation since 1950. *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(2), 233-253.

Women’s representation by system:

We reviewed women’s representation in national parliaments over a 19-year-period in OECD member states using the voting systems evaluated in this paper.⁹⁴ We also included Malta, a non-OECD member and -with the exception of Australia - removed any states with compulsory voting laws for consistency with the method used in evaluating voter participation.⁹⁵

We produced a weighted average for each system based on the size of the voting-aged population in each country. Based on this review, STV and MMP have the strongest record for women’s representation in national parliaments. FPTP ranks last place for women’s representation. AV is only used in one country (Australia), and List PR ranks close to AV, while showing better women’s representation in recent years.

System (Countries included)	Share of Seats Held by Women (1997-2016 Avg.)	Share of Seats Held by Women (2016 Avg.)	Lowest Share of Seats Held By Women (1997-2016 Avg.)	Highest Share of Seats Held by Women (1997-2016 Avg.)
FPTP (3)	17.6%	21.8%	United States: 16.3%	Canada: 22.4%
AV (1)	25.0%	26.7%	Australia (House): 25.0%	Australia (House): 25.0%
List PR (15)	28.8% ¹⁰⁰	33.7%	Czech Republic: 16.3%	Sweden: 44.7%
MMP (3)	30.2%	33.6%	Hungary: 9.6%	Germany: 32.6%
STV (3)	30.1%	34.2%	Malta: 9.4%	Australia (Senate): 33.8%

Summary & Ranking: Women's Representation

	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION	Fewer women represented in parliaments		More women represented in parliaments		
	5	4	3	1	1

Now that the reader has a fuller understanding of the impact that the voice of voting systems have had on countries around the world, we now invite the reader to consider the question: what might a better voting system mean for Canada?

⁹⁴ Authors' calculation using data from Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2015). [Women in National Parliaments](#), and weighted each country's data based on voting aged population. The impact of this is that countries with more voters have a greater impact on the averages shown, and smaller countries, a lesser one.

⁹⁵ Malta and Australia were included to provide sufficient reference points for STV systems, and in the case of Australia, the only reference point for AV systems.

V) SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

V) SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Choosing a voting system is no simple decision. The mechanics of voting systems can be complicated and the political factors that contribute to finding the best system for Canada make the choice complex. There is no *'one-size-fits all'* approach to finding the best voting system for any jurisdiction, but it is helpful to consider trade-offs to help simplify the decision.

The rankings on all criteria reviewed in the previous section are summarized below. In addition to the ranking summary, a total score for each system is developed via a **Borda count**. A Borda count is a way of translating rankings into points. In the borda count used below, any first place ranking is worth five points, a second place ranking is worth four points, third place rankings are worth three points, fourth place rankings are worth two, and fifth place rankings are worth one point. The 'borda total' provides a aggregate score of how each system performs across all criteria.

	First-Past-the-Post (FPTP-CAN)	Alternative Vote (AV-CAN)	List Proportional Representation (LIST PR-CAN)	Mixed Member Proportional (MMP-CAN)	Single Transferable Vote (STV-CAN)
BORDA METHOD					
VOTE FAIRNESS & EFFECTIVENESS	5	4	1	1	1
VOTER PARTICIPATION	5	4	3	1	2
SIMPLICITY	1	3	2	4	5
STRONG PARLIAMENT	4	5	1	1	1
COLLABORATIVE POLITICS	5	4	1	1	1
EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT	4	4	1	1	1
GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION	4	4	2	1	2
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION	5	3	3	1	1
	FPTP-CAN	AV-CAN	LIST PR-CAN	MMP-CAN	STV-CAN
BORDA POINTS TOTAL	15/40	17/40	35/40	37/40	34/40

The individual criteria assessments suggest that PR systems vastly outperform winner-take-all systems in most categories, and the Borda scores reflect this. Borda scores are useful as a comparative tool that allows us to assign points on the basis of how the systems compare to one another without assigning quantitative values for things that aren't easily quantified.

We recognize that three systems that score the highest (List PR, STV, and MMP) are also relatively close to one another, so the highest Borda score should not necessarily be interpreted as an endorsement. It's also clear that choice of the system family (PR or winner-take-all) has a greater impact than the type of system chosen within families. The importance placed on each of the criteria reviewed here matters as much as the borda scorings in those categories. The criteria reviewed here cannot

capture the practical fit of a given voting system for Canada, and whether that system will pass the 'sniff test' of legitimacy among voters.

What's next for electoral reform in Canada?

We hope this paper adds value to the current discussion on electoral reform in Canada. We've presented five system models and an evidence-based analysis of the impacts each system has on various aspects of democracy and public policy in states where they are used.

Three wishes

To conclude, we present three wishes for reaching a decision on the next electoral system for Canada:

- **Base the decision on evidence:** We hope that the decision to choose a new electoral system is made based on the evidence from countries where various systems are used.
- **Ensure the decision-making process is deliberative:** We hope that the decision to choose a new voting system can be made in a deliberative fashion - where those charged with the decision are incented to consider opposing views and are given adequate time and freedom to do so.
- **Objective:** We hope that the decision to choose a new voting system for Canada is made objectively. An objective decision can be made by ensuring those charged with the deliberation have no reason to bias or disregard certain pieces of evidence.

The work of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform can be evidence-based, and deliberative, but it cannot be objective, since all committee members have 'skin in the game.'

A national referendum, or public opinion poll can provide an objective sample of Canadians, but it is unlikely to be evidence-based or deliberative, since participants are not incented to explore the range of options, evidence, or hearing opposing views.

The current consultations on electoral reform run by the Minister and MPs across the country cannot claim to be evidence-based, deliberative or objective. The materials presented by MPs and the Minister of Democratic Institutions are descriptive and shy away from discussing impacts of systems, and lack even proof-of-concept models like the ones presented in this paper. Those participating in these consultations are self-selected - primarily a mix of electoral reform advocates, and partisans from all of the parties. Meanwhile, the topic of electoral system redesign has been presented as equal in weight with the questions of online and mandatory voting, which are much less complex than the former.

Alternative Approaches

There are a variety of public engagement strategies that could grant these three wishes. There are 'engagement light' approaches strategies - like deliberative polling and focus groups - that could be designed and completed within weeks and satisfy these conditions. Meanwhile, there are deeper engagement approaches that could do the same - like citizen juries, lotteries, assemblies, and panels empowered with the ability to make a recommendation to Parliament on the best voting system for Canada.

VI) GLOSSARY

VI) GLOSSARY

Adjustment seats (also known as levelling seats, overflow seats, or balance seats): Seats awarded at the statewide level to compensate for any disproportionality that results from aggregate election results at the district or regional level, as required to ensure the final results are as proportional as possible.

At-large: Positions elected to represent a whole region.

By-election: An election held in-between general elections due to a vacancy in an elected position in a specific district.

Closed list: In MMP and List PR systems, an ordered list proposed by each political party that indicates the order in which candidates from that party will be elected when voters cast a ballot for that party.

Coalition government: A government in which members of cabinet are drawn from the caucuses of multiple parties that agree on a common head of government and a common agenda for that government, and their party caucuses are expected to support the cabinet.

Supply and Confidence Agreement: An agreement from a minor party that is not part of the government to support a minority government on confidence motions and spending bills, often in return for support for a key policy initiative or spending priority of the minor party.

Consensus democracy: Consensus democracy “is characterized by inclusiveness, bargaining and compromise; also known as “negotiation democracy” - Arend Lijphart (2012).

District: The geographic area from which elected officials are elected and represent, also known as ridings or constituencies.

Dual Candidacy: Some MMP systems allow for dual candidacy, which means a party member can be a candidate at the level of the single district, and also on the party’s list. If the candidate is elected at a local level, they are removed from the party’s list. If the candidate loses an election at the local level, they may still be elected depending on how well the party performs in popular vote and where the candidate sits on the list.

Electoral district associations: Associations that exist within each political party for party members residing in a given electoral district. They oversee the nominations process for candidates under the FPTP system. In a system with larger, multi-member districts, they could play a similar role for selecting multiple candidates to be put forth by the party.

False Majority: A single party government that holds a majority of seats in Parliament, but whose candidates did not earn the support of

a majority of voters on election night.

Incumbent: An individual who currently holds an elected position.

Independent candidate: A candidate for election who is not officially associated with a political party.

Majoritarian democracy: "The majoritarian model of democracy is exclusive, competitive, and adversarial..." - Arend Lijphart (2012)

Majoritarian systems: Voting systems typically characterized by single-member districts where the winner is the candidate who receives the most votes - either a plurality in the case of the first-past-the-post system or a majority in the case of the alternative vote system.

Open list: MMP and List PR systems in which voters select their preferred candidate from the list provided by each party, and the vote for that candidate counts toward the popular vote for that party and affects the ranking of that candidate on the party's list.

Overhang seat: Any seat that is won in an MMP election at the local district level that is beyond the number of seats required to ensure seat share and vote share are equal. For instance, if a party wins 10 of 100 seats but has only earned 8% of the popular vote, then there are two overhang seats.

Party vote: The vote cast for a political party in an MMP or List PR system.

Plurality: The number of votes cast for a candidate who receives more votes than any other, but not an absolute majority.

Proportional representation systems: Voting systems wherein the share of seats a party or independent has roughly reflects the share of popular vote the party and its candidates earn.

Safe seat: Seats generally understood to be easily won by the incumbent candidate or party in an upcoming election, where there has been a large margin of victory for several elections.

Surplus votes: Votes received by a winning candidate in excess of the quota (or threshold) required to win the seat in an STV election. When fewer candidates have been elected than there are seats available in an STV election, surplus votes are transferred to the next choices of voters.

Swing districts: Single-member districts where parties and candidates know that the results of an election will be close, either from historical precedent or recent polling data.

Wasted votes: Valid votes cast for a candidate who is not elected to Parliament. They should not be confused with spoiled ballots or dis-

qualified ballots where the voter's intentions are unclear to counters and scrutineers.

Winner-take-all systems: Voting systems where the candidates who place first are the ones elected at the local level, and the party that wins a majority of single member districts takes power, leading to results where a single party holds 100% (all) of the lawmaking power.

