



MAKE EVERY VOTE COUNT—ALWAYS!

PPR 123: 'Perfect Proportional Representation' + 'Instant Runoff Voting' = 'True' Democracy!

'NONE-OF-THE-ABOVE!'

Electoral reform is primarily an issue of making the party system work more fairly for every Citizen and each party. In our highly complex modern world, political parties have emerged in the dominant role within our democratic system of governance; elections empower the Citizens to choose their representative from the party they believe will best serve their interests. Overall, this system works well—but only as well as the political parties *truly* serve the people, and only as well as the electoral system elicits the *true* expression of the '*will of the people*', and only as well as elections translate the '*will of the people*' into truly representative electoral results (i.e. without distortion).

Political parties are natural associations of like-minded people who work together for their mutual success. They perform important functions of providing political leadership, informing and shaping public opinion etc. The downside is that they are inherently partisan seekers of power, and various forms of election engineering do much to determine the nature and outcomes of elections.

Most people are unaware of how much impact the electoral system has in shaping the political relationships, shaping the public debate, shaping the public mind and shaping the election outcome.

- Ideally, the electoral system should promote political relationships that are positive, cooperative and constructive—while penalizing the opposite behaviours that are negative, uncooperative and non-constructive.
- Ideally, the electoral system should promote open, issues-oriented and honest public debate and an effective two-way dialogue between the politicians and the People—while penalizing politicians and parties that engage in demagoguery, misinformation, negative and personal attacks.
- Ideally, the electoral system should promote public understanding of the key issues, and public participation in the political process—while penalizing those politicians and parties whose strategy is to misinform people and make them drop out of the political process.
- Ideally, the electoral system should promote citizen participation by making voting easy, making everyone believe that their vote counts, and being scrupulously fair to all voters, politicians and parties by facilitating voters to vote 'honestly' for their true preferences, and by faithfully translating the freely expressed '*will of the people*' into electoral results with no distortion.

The sad fact is that the voting system imposed upon Canada by England more than a century ago, and from which neither country (nor the USA) has yet escaped (in striking contrast to Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland and almost all the other democracies of the world), our First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system is on the wrong side of all of the above criteria. Fortunately, our proposed new voting system, Perfect Proportional Representation (**PPR 123**), is on the right side of all of those criteria!

PPR 123 should be able to transform the quality and culture of Democracy—establishing a higher standard of public trust in politicians and parties, and a higher level of public participation in the political process. But some people will not be satisfied by the options presented by the political parties. There are already some independent candidates and a few smaller parties, but these will have little or no chance of being elected under **PPR 123**. Yet **PPR 123** was conceived to fulfill the promise to “**Make Every Vote Count—Always**”.

There is also the question of compulsory voting (which Australia and about twenty other countries have). This would be more justified under **PPR 123**, given that this is the only voting system that is scrupulously fair to all citizens and all parties. And given that there appears to be a generational decline in political participation, compulsory voting may be important to the health of Democracy.

With or without compulsory voting, it seems only right to enable a dissenting vote be cast as an explicit act (as opposed to abstention, or returning a blank ballot). So the recommendation is that a '**None-of-the-Above**' box should be included at the bottom of every ballot.

If the promise of promise of **PPR 123** to "**Make Every Vote Count—Always**" is to be kept—which surely is the right thing to do—then some representation must be provided for all of the otherwise unrepresented votes: the independent candidates and small parties without representation, and the "None-of-the-Above" votes.

This is the case for the creation of non-partisan representatives—Ombudspersons, who would represent the unrepresented voters of each region or province. Such positions might be filled by the independent candidates with the most votes, or perhaps by distinguished Citizens with no political affiliation. They would probably make a major contribution as public watchdogs, and non-partisan voices of non-ideological neutrality.

Representation for small parties is another issue. A strong case could be made to set a fairly low threshold (e.g. 3%, or maybe less) where representation would be provided at the national (or regional) level, probably by declaring their top candidate or leader to be elected to as an At-large representative, to enable the votes for that party to be represented in Parliament.

These additional representatives would be a small number, but would probably make an important contribution, as well as fulfilling the promise to "**Make Every Vote Count—Always**"!