



MAKE EVERY VOTE COUNT—ALWAYS!

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

Evaluating Electoral Systems

PPR123, through its fulfillment of the promise to "**Make Every Vote Count—Always!**", sets a new standard of integrity for electoral Democracy—while also providing enormous opportunities to realize unprecedented potential benefits from vote reassignment.

But first, it's important to understand the challenges of electoral Democracy, and what it is about each of the established voting systems that makes each of them fundamentally inadequate—making them clear examples of how NOT to do Democracy:

Let's begin with a clear picture of the Democratic criteria for an ideal voting system:

1. It should empower the People to express their *true* preferences.
2. It should elect the local candidate who has the support of a *majority* (i.e. at least 50%+1) of the electorate.
3. It should elect a Parliament that is a true expression of the '*Will of the People*', and is demographically a reflection of the People.

Evaluated against these Democratic criteria, how well do the main electoral systems measure up?

Our existing First-Past-the-Post (**FPTP**) voting system is an abysmal failure on all three Democratic criteria:

1. With only a Single-X, voters cannot express their preferences. If their single choice is defeated, their vote is wasted. Accordingly, many voters are driven to so-called '*strategic voting*' (estimated in Canada at more than 40%), not for their '*true*' preference, but instead for the candidate of the party considered as '*the lesser of evils*', in a desperate vote against a '*more evil*' party. Hence, under FPTP, the true '*Will of the People*' can never be expressed.
2. Under FPTP, with numerous parties and candidates, many representatives are elected with much less than a majority, sometimes less than 30%. While many of those winners may be acceptable to a majority of voters, some would not be—hence there's doubt about the '*democratic legitimacy*' of many of them. 'Vote splitting' between two similar parties can effectively ensure their mutual defeat (e.g. the PC's and Reform parties from 1993-2006) and is an even more serious syndrome of electoral dysfunctionality—but easily prevented by an 'honest' voting system.
3. FPTP invariably produces distorted results that greatly exaggerate the differences between voters and between regions, potentially putting stress on national unity.

The most commonly proposed alternative to FPTP is **MMP** (Mixed Member Proportional). Conceptually, MMP is designed as a '*band-aid*' applied to the democratic wounds caused by FPTP—which it purports to remedy by undemocratically imposing opposite distortions to offset those caused by FPTP, which it sustains as the basis for the election of about two-thirds of MPs (i.e. the constituency MPs). Worse, the '*top up*' members are of a separate class (hence the name '*Mixed Member*')—drawn from '*party lists*' and beholden to the party—not democratically accountable to an electorate. MMP is a violation of the basic principle: '*Two Wrongs don't make a Right*'.

1. MMP leaves FPTP in place to undemocratically wreak havoc upon local elections. Worse, MMP either requires about 50% more seats (for the undemocratic '*top up*' MPs) or about 50% larger ridings, or some combination thereof. The supposed redeeming virtue of MMP is to give voters a second vote—for the party of their choice. Those parties that are under-represented by the constituency elections under FPTP will obtain an appropriate proportionality corrective under MMP. The fact of each voter having two votes can lead to attempts by some parties and voters to '*game the system*', by voting strategically (involving coalition partners) to have *both* votes count (i.e. in the election of both a local and a party MP).
2. MMP retains FPTP with all its flaws as outlined above. MMP is all about proportionality, with no concern for a majority or '*democratic legitimacy*'.
3. Under MMP, Parliament does actually represent the '*Will of the People*' fairly well overall—apart from the equal and opposite democratic distortions caused by both its FPTP and MMP components, which lead to the election of many unjustified members of each kind. The party list members also potentially enable somewhat improved demographic representation of minorities and gender balance.

Given the serious defects of both FPTP and MMP, it's hardly surprising that many people have long sought a better alternative. The Single Transferrable Vote (**STV**) is probably the other most noteworthy electoral system. STV was recommended by the BC Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in 2005. Following a year of study and public consultation, and detailed comparison of the three shortlisted alternatives (STV, MMP, FPTP), STV was chosen over MMP by a margin of 80% to 20% (even though a majority were leaning towards MMP at the outset), and over FPTP by a margin of 93% to 7%.

Prior to **PPR123**, it could reasonably be argued that STV was the best electoral alternative. However, while STV is an exceptionally clever voting system, it is also quite convoluted, confusing and flawed (both practically and democratically).

1. STV provides the most flexibility for voters to express preferences. But STV works by combining adjacent ridings (perhaps 5) into an electoral district, resulting in much larger ballots that some voters might find confusing. STV's districts are not a problem in highly populated urban areas, but are not well suited to Canada's vast sparsely populated areas.
2. STV establishes a quota for election (e.g. approx. 17% in a 5-member district) which is much less than a majority. While this makes it somewhat more possible for a candidate from a small party to be elected, its '*democratic legitimacy*' is seriously compromised and the quota is still too high a barrier for most small parties.
3. STV is considered to be a '*proportional*' representation system. But STV is not a *truly* proportional system, as its granularity or degree of proportionality is severely limited by the magnitude of its electoral districts. However, STV is generally effective in producing a Parliament that represents the '*Will of the People*' reasonably well overall.

In comparison with each of these established electoral alternatives (FPTP, MMP and STV), and evaluated against the same Democratic criteria, **PPR123** can indeed be proclaimed as an ideal voting system:

1. **PPR123** empowers voters to express their *true* preferences.
2. **PPR123** elects the local candidate who has the support of a majority (i.e. at least 50%+1) of the electorate.
3. **PPR123** elects a Parliament that is a true expression of the '*Will of the People*', along with the possibility of demographic rebalancing of Parliamentary voting power as a better reflection of the People.

PPR123 OPTIONS: VOTE REASSIGNMENT & REPRESENTATION FOR UNREPRESENTED PARTIES

In Canada's 2015 election, a total of 8,484,532 votes (48.7%) went to the 338 elected representatives, whereas **8,931,878 votes (51.3%)** went to losing candidates and hence were '*wasted*' by our FPTP voting system. Under **PPR123**, no votes are ever wasted: all votes for losing candidates are reassigned to either an elected or "*At-large*" representative.

- Each party with elected representation retains all 1st-choice votes for losing candidates and reassigns them amongst their elected representatives (at the provincial, regional or national level).
- Parties without elected representation that reach a required threshold (e.g. 3%) would obtain "*At-large*" representatives amongst whom their votes would be reassigned;
- All votes for independent candidates or small parties that fail to reach the threshold (a total of 142,943 votes or 0.8% in 2015), would be assigned to an "*Ombudsperson*" (i.e. a non-partisan "*At-large*" representative).

Hence, the challenging opportunity under **PPR123** is to reassign a total of 8,931,878 votes (51.3%), in the best way possible to enhance the democratic quality of representation. Based upon the new principle of "*The Primacy of the Citizen's Vote*"—whereby every Citizen's vote is always counted with every vote in Parliament—this makes it possible to provide much greater equitability, as well as the potential for demographically balanced voting power in Parliament!

- Equitable to all voters, because all votes would always be counted and count equally.
- Equitable to all parties, because all votes would always be counted and count equally.
- Optional reassignment of votes to achieve gender balance and/or other possible goals related to demographic distribution of voting power in Parliament.
- Parties might potentially develop their own vote reassignment policies to achieve different objectives. Also, the different parties have different numbers and percentages of '*losing*' votes to be reassigned (ranging from just 33% for Liberals to 94% for Greens).
- One possibility would be to create "*At-Large*" seats in regions where the Government had no representation (Liberals have representation in all regions and provinces). This might also be extended to the Official Opposition (Conservatives were shutout in the Atlantic region).
- Another possibility could be to create "*At-Large*" seats for any parties that were shutout in any region but had more total votes there than the average needed to elect a representative. On this basis, with the Liberal sweep in the Atlantic region, "*At-Large*" seats would be created there for a Conservative, an NDP and a Green representative (probably filled by each of their leading candidates in the region). Similarly, the Green party would pick up "*At-Large*" seats in Quebec, Ontario and the Prairie region. These six "*At-Large*" seats would substantially improve the equitability to these parties and their voters, and significantly enhance their effectiveness of representation.

Demographic balancing through vote reassignment under **PPR123** would enable many improvements in the quality of Democracy—with no adverse consequences—since it is entirely based on providing *equal* voting power for *all* votes, including those for defeated candidates (i.e. 8,931,878 votes or 51.3% in 2015) which would otherwise be wasted.

It's important to note that the reason **PPR123** can provide so much greater flexibility and granularity in its capacity to deliver these unparalleled benefits is that the Parliamentary voting power under **PPR123** is based on the *many millions of votes of all Citizens*, rather than just the *several hundred votes of their elected representatives*.