A PROPOSAL FOR

FLEXIBLE MIXED-MEMBER PROPORTIONAL ELECTIONS

IN ONTARIO

by

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A proposal submitted to the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform

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The Ontario Citizens’ Assembly has been given a rare opportunity to propose reforms to the provincial electoral system. To facilitate this process this proposal will present a model of a mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system. Along with this proposal will be a decision-by-decision approach for developing this system. The key strength behind the MMP system outlined here is that it can achieve a strong balance between proportional and local representation while providing extensive flexibility in handling the representative needs of Ontario’s very diverse regions.

The most important decision the Citizens’ Assembly will have to make is whether or not to move away from our current “first-past-the-post” (FPTP) system and adopt proportional representation (PR). Ultimately FPTP and PR systems have different goals: FPTP should provide effective local representation while PR systems should represent the different social and political groups within the population. Both goals are desirable, but both goals also vie for our attention (Nohlen, 1984). The design of an electoral system is necessarily characterized by choosing between competing values and visions of representative democracy and responsible government.

The values underlying the model proposed here are those central to the objectives of Fair Vote Canada. These are

- PR;
- fair representation for women, minorities and Aboriginals;
- accountable government;
- geographic representation; and
- real voter choice.

Moreover, the model presented here is specifically designed to provide the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly with an electoral system which:

is legitimate;

- provides fair representation;
- enhances voter choice;
- improves the effectiveness of parties;
- will promote strong, stable government;
- creates a more effective parliament;
- encourages greater voter participation; and
- keeps governments and legislatures accountable.

The proposal submitted here is for an MMP electoral system. MMP provides a ballot which gives voters choices over their local riding representative and the political parties they would like to see in parliament. The legislature will contain a mixture of local riding election winners and regional representatives aligned with a political party. Overall the legislature will achieve a proportional outcome, with every party receiving a share of legislative seats equivalent to the share of the popular vote it received on the political party section of the ballot.

To approach this model there will be an initial analysis of key flaws in the current FPTP system. A brief overview of the rationale and approach behind MMP systems will serve as the basis for three sets of decisions:

- first, there are decisions related to general regional-list MMP properties recommended for Ontario;
second, there are key trade-offs involved in defining region composition and optional changes to riding boundaries; and 

third, there are possible additions which can be made to this MMP model to achieve objectives beyond proportional and geographic representation.

How Legislatures Look

Electoral systems have powerful effects on how governments operate. However, it is important to differentiate between how electoral systems change the way legislatures look from how they change the way legislatures act. The way legislatures look is a matter of what political parties are represented, where MPPs come from and whether their demographic features reflect those of their constituents. The way legislatures act refers to how they and the governments they form develop policies. How legislatures look and act are closely related, but the distinction is important because electoral design directly changes how legislatures look, whereas changes in how they act emerge from this.

While some legislators sit as independents, most are formally aligned with a political party. With PR the share of the legislature held by each party closely mirrors the share of the popular vote received by each party. FPTP, on the other hand, tends to give a substantial bonus to large or regionally-based parties. Indeed, the bonus given to large parties under FPTP is so great that in a large survey of plurality electoral systems Lijphart found that 93.2% of the time one party gains the majority of seats in the legislature, despite rarely earning a majority of the popular vote (1998).

Representation does not only occur by party affiliation, it also occurs by region. How PR handles regional representation varies greatly depending on the particular model. At one extreme a jurisdiction-wide closed-list system without regional quotas sees no role for regional representation; at the other end of the spectrum the single transferable vote and mixed-member proportional systems not only provide representation from all regions, they are also likely to provide diverse regional representation within party caucuses.

FPTP, which is ostensibly concerned only with local representation and sees no inherent role for political parties, often over-emphasizes regionalism. Parties with geographically concentrated political support receive a greater seat bonus than parties with relatively even, jurisdiction-wide support. In the 2003 Ontario Election the regional bias of FPTP can be shown quite clearly (see Table 1: Regional Bias in Caucus Representation). Looking at five broad Ontario regions, four with 21-26 seats, Northern Ontario with 10, we can see the regional bias in representation. While the Liberal Party received a larger seat share than their share of the popular vote in every region, both the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party were shut out in a number of regions. In 2003 at least 18% of the popular vote was needed for a party to elect representatives in any given region, and even then the results were wildly disproportionate. Toronto, for example, had the PCs taking 1 seat with 29% of the vote and the NDP taking 3 seats with only 18% of the popular vote.

The result is that individual party caucuses show an intense regional skew. Since 1995 the Progressive Conservative party has been consistently under-represented in Toronto, with the exception of the 2003 election where the Liberal party was under-represented in the 905 Toronto suburbs, and the New Democratic Party has been under-represented everywhere except Northern Ontario. Thus while all three parties are active
and receive popular support from across the province, each party caucus is far more geographically concentrated than its popular support.

Table 1: Regional Bias in Caucus Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Share of Popular Vote</th>
<th>Share of Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The North</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and Eastern Ontario</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto Belt (&quot;905 Area Code&quot;)</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto (&quot;416 Area Code&quot;)</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Ontario</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FPTP and Closed-List PR with Political Parties

In practice neither closed-list PR nor FPTP are necessarily effective in providing geographic representation. Closed-list PR does not inherently tie parliamentarians to any particular riding. In practice, political parties in a PR system could potentially gain votes from anywhere in the province, eliminating the practice of effectively “writing-off” ridings parties do not feel they could win, there would still be no direct accountability of
a specific riding to a specific parliamentarian. On the other hand, while FPTP seems
designed to provide balanced geographic representation in parliament, in practice the
strong role played by political parties reduces this role dramatically. Governments and
their cabinets are typically drawn from the largest party in the legislature. However,
FPTP not only provides large parties with a greater share of MMPs than they earn in
popular vote totals, this bonus is made even greater when party support is regional rather
than when it is spread evenly throughout the province. The result is that in practice
cabinets are often quite unrepresentative of the province as a whole.

Hybrid Systems
An alternative to FPTP and closed-list PR would be using a hybrid system in
which voters could elect a local representative and have a direct say in creating a
proportional legislature. A hybrid system would allocate seats in parliament according to
two methods: some parliamentarians would be selected by constituents to represent their
individual ridings while other parliamentarians would be chosen from party lists to
provide proportionality to the legislature. Usually this means that elections use a double-
ballon which gives voters a vote for their local representative and a vote for a political
party.

Sample Hybrid Ballot

Mixed-Member Majoritarian (MMM) vs. Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP)
Hybrid systems fall into two classes, mixed-member majoritarian and mixed-
member proportional. In both cases, “mixed-member” refers to parliament containing
some members selected in local elections while others are selected from party lists in a
PR-style vote. Mixed-member majoritarian systems (MMM) use the FPTP-style elections
to choose part of the legislature. The party votes are then used to divide the remaining
seats proportionally. Assuming voters cast their party ballot to match the party of the
candidate they supported, if 27 seats were added to the provincial legislature for
proportional seats in the 2003 Ontario Election there would be an improvement in
proportionality, but the result would still heavily favour the Liberal Party (see Graph 1: Simulated 2003 Election Results Using MMM).

Graph 1: Simulated 2003 Election Results Using MMM

To contrast, a mixed-member proportional system (MMP), by contrast, does not add the PR seats to the FPTP seats. Instead MMP models recognize that the FPTP members usually run as members of political parties. Since these members are already identified by party, the PR seats can be allocated to parties under-represented through the FPTP seats. This means instead of simply adding the proportional seats directly, they are allocated to compensate for the disproportionality of the first-past-the-post results. Assuming voters cast their party ballot to match the party of the candidate they supported, if 27 compensatory seats were added to the provincial legislature the 2003 Ontario Election would have had proportional results (Graph 2: Simulated 2003 Election Results Using MMP with 27 Compensatory Seats).

Graph 2: Simulated 2003 Election Results Using MMP with 27 Compensatory Seats

If we use an MMP electoral system and simulate the results of the 2003 Ontario Election assuming 45 compensatory seats and 85 riding seats the results approximate strict proportional representation. This represents an approximately 1/3 share of the legislature for use in compensatory seats and 2/3 as riding seats.
MMP electoral systems are structured to achieve proportionality without sacrificing the single-member ridings we rely on for local accountability. Local riding representatives have to cater to the needs of their immediate constituents and ensure that their local needs are effectively met. However, first-past-the-post alone cannot ensure that the larger policies which will shape the province as a whole will receive the depth of discussion which requires representation from all major political viewpoints. MMP ties together accountability to the citizens of a riding with the wider vision of an accountable Ontario government.

**Regional Lists**

Party lists can be constructed which include candidates from across a jurisdiction or they can use smaller regional lists. The use of regional lists has two benefits above a jurisdiction-wide list. First, it ties parliamentarians elected through the proportional part of the ballot to a geographic area, albeit one larger than a single riding. Second, it makes it more likely that party caucuses in parliament will contain members from different regions across the jurisdiction. Since first-past-the-post systematically provides its greatest seat bonuses to parties with geographically concentrated support, the members of party caucuses tend to come from similar areas. However, all three political parties sitting in the legislature have support in areas where they currently elect few MMPs. Using regional lists will help diversify the number of voices within each party caucus.

**Legislature Size**

Generally speaking, the larger the legislature for any given population the more flexibility is offered in the design of the electoral system. In Ontario’s case it is particularly important because we are considering the replacement of a well-established single member plurality riding system. Here the tradeoff is this: if we devise an MMP system do we expand the legislature to add our compensatory seats, or do we carve these seats out of a legislature which does not change in size. If we do the later, this means riding boundaries would have to be enlarged.
General MMP Decisions

There are a number of design issues in MMP electoral systems which must always be decided upon.

Table 2: General MMP Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share of Legislature devoted to PR</td>
<td>Large (1/3) share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculation of Seats</td>
<td>Saint-Lague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Listing</td>
<td>Allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhang Seats</td>
<td>Calculated Province-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calculated regionally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share of Legislature Allocated to Compensatory Seats

The more seats that are allocated to compensatory seats in the legislature, the more proportional the end result will be. In general a legislature containing 1/3 compensatory seats and 2/3 riding seats will produce roughly proportional outcomes. With fewer compensatory seats two possibilities arise. First, we could allow for the inclusion of overhang seats, which would add to the legislature in order to achieve a proportional outcome. While this issue is dealt with in more detail in a later section, with fewer compensatory seats there will be a greater reliance on overhang seats, which will make it difficult to predict how many seats will be in the legislature prior to election night. Second, if there are fewer compensatory seats and no overhang seats are allowed, we may simply have to accept less proportional outcomes.

Calculation of Proportional Seats

Proportional seats used to compensate for FPTP disproportionality have to be allocated seat-by-seat within each region. While there are a few different methods to do this, each of which yields similar results, the method recommended here is the Saint-Lague method. This process involves taking the votes for each party in a region, dividing them by a formula including the number of seats that party has in parliament – both compensatory and FPTP – giving the seat to the party with the largest “party divisor”, then repeating the process until all compensatory seats are allocated. The process works as follows:
Calculation of Compensatory Seats

**Step 1:** Calculate Divisors
Each party in each region will have a "party divisor" determined as follows:

\[
\text{party divisor} = \frac{\text{number of valid ballots for that party in this region}}{2 \times \text{total seats for the party} + 1}
\]

**Step 2:** Allocate one seat
The party with the largest party divisor in each region will be allocated one compensatory seat from that region.

**Step 3:** Repeat
Repeat "Step 1" and "Step 2" until all compensatory seats in each region are allocated.

The d’Hondt and modified Saint-Lague methods, which are alternatives to the regular Saint-Lague methods, both use a similar process except that they tend to favour larger parties.

Dual Listing
MMP systems raise a few unique concerns, the first of which is the question of dual listing. In a hybrid system the issue arises as to whether or not candidates that run for local seats can also appear on regional lists. If this is allowed, then a candidate who loses a local election can still sit in parliament if there are enough proportional votes to bring him or her in from the regional party list. While this could be seen as allowing losers to win, the view here is that although a candidate may seek local support within an individual riding, by appearing on a party list he or she is also indicating a bid for regional support as well.

Limiting strong candidates to either running in a riding or running on a party list can present a difficult decision. If the strong candidate is running on a party list it may not be in his or her best interest to support riding candidates. In fact, every regional riding which his or her party takes makes it less likely that a list candidate will get elected. By prohibiting dual listing, an MMP system would bring the unpredictability of FPTP outcomes to the regional level and would pit different candidates belonging to the same party within a region against each other.

The recommendation here is that candidates be allowed to run in local elections and appear on a party list. However, it must be noted that the use of a “best loser” list for compensatory seats, rather than a closed-list or open-list, would render the dual listing issue irrelevant.

Overhang Seats
A second issue is that the local elections can be so disproportionate that there are not enough compensatory seats in a region to bring about a proportional result. For example, a region with 10 ridings could have every local seat won by a single party that only receives 50% of the vote. In order to bring about a proportional result there would then have to be 10 compensatory seats for that region. However, if there were only 5 compensatory seats available a question arises: how do we achieve proportionality? Overturning the result in a local race should be eliminated as an option immediately since it involves ignoring the local votes from at least one riding. One option is to create “overhang seats”, which means adding seats to parliament for that region until the result becomes proportional.

Although the overhang option is used in Germany and New Zealand, using overhang seats in a regional-list MMP system presents additional challenges. As constructed, the regions developed using this model will have approximately the same number of constituents per seat. For example, if “Region #1” has 2 million constituents and has 20 seats then if “Region #2” also has 2 million constituents we would expect it to have 20 seats as well. In this case, each seat would represent 100,000 constituents. However, if overhang seats are added at the regional level that could mean that “Region #1” would have 25 seats then seats in “Region #1” would each represent 80,000 constituents.

This causes two fundamental problems. First, it violates the principle that voters should receive equal geographic representation. While we should consider violating this principle to ensure proper representation in sparsely populated regions, this should be explicitly outlined before an election. Having it occur after an election through the addition of overhang seats violates the principle in an unpredictable fashion. Second, while a region may receive a good deal of proportionality using overhang seats, this does not guarantee proportionality in the legislature. The choices of regions with overhang seats will be over-represented in the provincial legislature. Thus, unless the regions with overhang seats perfectly match the choices made by the province overall, the legislature will lose some proportionality and will look a little more like the regions with overhang seats.

If the decision is made to include overhang seats when necessary, these issues can be resolved by using province-wide seat totals to allocate overhang seats rather than using regional-list allocations (See Appendix: Overhang Seat Calculations). However, over-reliance on overhang seats to achieve proportional outcomes presents a challenge to electors since it makes the number of seats that will be in the legislature after an election unclear before elections are held.

**Ontario’s Regional Design Issues**

The overarching rational behind MMP electoral systems is that they provide proportionality in the legislature while maintaining local riding representation. However, this involves deciding where greater emphasis should be placed: *local representation* or *proportional representation*. The key strength for Ontario in adopting the MMP model here is that it allows for local representation to be emphasized in geographically large ridings while providing greater proportionality in areas with dense populations. Thus, each region in Ontario can be served by the local-proportional mix most appropriate to its needs.
Table 3: Regional Design Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Property</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riding Seat Minimum</td>
<td>Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory Seat Minimum</td>
<td>One per region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridings per Region</td>
<td>Follow natural boundaries and aim for over 10 seats per region; over 20 seats per region preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculation of Seats</td>
<td>Saint-Lague method by electors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Regions</td>
<td>Used whenever possible; all ridings within a city should always be in the same region, and small rural areas should be grouped together with nearby cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Regions</td>
<td>Used sparingly; only should be used where ridings are geographically very large, making local representation very difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Riding Seats</td>
<td>Can be kept the same; however, in densely populated urban areas (Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, parts of the 905-belt) ridings could be enlarged to add more compensatory seats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allocating Compensatory Seats to Each Region

The number of people living in Ontario’s regions will change over time, and the compensatory seats have to be allocated to each region in a way that takes this into account. These seats should be allocated in a way that ensures each region will produce proportional results and in a way which ensures that every MPP represents approximately the same number of constituents. To achieve the first result could be achieved by ensuring that each region contains at least five riding seats and one compensatory seat.

To achieve the second goal we can use a method of allocating seats similar to the Saint-Lague method for allocating party seats (Tanguay and Geobey, 2005). In this case, instead of using a “party divisor” to allocate seats we would use a “regional divisor”. The process would work as follows:

Calculation of Allocating Compensatory Seats to Regions

**Step 1:** Calculate Regional Divisors

Each region will have a "regional divisor" determined as follows:

\[
regional\ divisor = \frac{electors\ in\ this\ region}{2 \times total\ seats\ in\ this\ region + 1}.
\]

**Step 2:** Allocate one seat

The region with the largest region divisor will be allocated one additional compensatory seat.

**Step 3:** Repeat

Repeat "Step 1" and "Step 2" until all compensatory seats are allocated to their regions.
Unlike the allocation of seats to parties, this regional compensatory seat allocation will occur before the election and Ontarians will know how many compensatory seats their region has before they vote.

**Region Size**

The trade-off between proportionality and local representation exists in determining different region sizes. Generally the larger each individual region, the fewer compensatory seats will be needed in that region to achieve a proportional outcome. However, regions should not be so large as to loose the reflection of its unique circumstances.

One specific note must be made here. In setting Ontario’s regions it is best to follow two general principles. First, there should be an attempt to follow municipal and regional boundaries when possible. Second, larger regions are preferable to smaller ones as they achieve more proportional outcomes. However, it must also be noted that proportionality within regions could also be improved by enlarging individual ridings within it.

**Variable Region Sizes**

The approach to determining the regional allocation of compensatory seats outlined above has a feature which is particularly well-suited to Ontario. By allotting seats based on the population of each region this MMP approach will ensure that each MMP in the legislature will represent approximately the same number of electors. However, this does not mean that each region has to have the same number of electors. Indeed, there are very good reasons why different regions should be of different sizes.

Foremost is that the ridings as currently drawn are a wide variety of sizes. For example, Kenora-Rainy River is over 300,000 sq km in size and contains under 80,000 people while the much smaller Toronto Centre-Rosedale riding contains a population of over 122,000. Large ridings are far harder for MPPs to conduct constituency work in due primarily to travel costs, and key representational issues are likely to be driven by geography.

On the other hand, in densely populated urban areas travel costs are small and populations are often quite transient. Here the primary difficulty is in translating the wide variety of political opinions which exist in close proximity to each other. Indeed, historically in Canada when there have been multi-member ridings they have usually been in major cities. In these regions proportional representation is likely a higher priority than geographic representation, and consequently more individual ridings can be placed in one region.

Once the number and composition of each region has been set the riding boundaries within these regions can be altered. For example, consider a riding with 25 seats – 20 riding, 5 compensatory. If the ridings were merged and their boundaries redrawn such that this region now contained only 15 ridings, the elimination of 5 ridings would lead to the automatic addition of 5 more compensatory seats. As a result, the total number of seats in this region would remain the same. This adds the option of creating larger ridings in densely populated regions to create more compensatory seats.

Here the tradeoff is between proportionality and local representation. However, there are two different approaches which can be taken. A first approach is to have large
regions; the more ridings in a region, the more proportional representation there will be. A second approach is to have smaller regions but to enlarge the ridings within these regions; for two regions with equal populations the one with fewer ridings will have the more proportional representation. Neither approach is mutually exclusive. It would be acceptable to have small regions in Northern Ontario with their current riding boundaries, some regions in Southern Ontario with small regions and enlarged riding boundaries, and other large regions with ridings of about the same size.

**Other Design Considerations**

Beyond the general MMP principles and the specifics involved in defining Ontario’s regions there are other considerations which the electoral system may or may not be used to address. When considering each of these options two points have to be considered. First, are the additional complexities and possible restrictions these add to the voting process justified by the possible goals they will help to achieve. Second, should the objectives these options are meant to achieve necessarily be built into the electoral system or are political parties and voters capable of reaching these goals independently.

**Table 4: Other Design Considerations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory List Options</td>
<td>Closed List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Best Loser”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Elections</td>
<td>Single Member Plurality</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative Vote</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single-Transferable Vote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thresholds</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Regional threshold</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provincial threshold</td>
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<td>Gender parity options</td>
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<td>Two-member ridings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zippered party lists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dual party lists</td>
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<td>First Nations representation options</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Province-wide First Nations STV district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Province-wide First Nations PR List</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PR Ballots: Closed vs. Open lists**

Party lists in any PR system can either be closed or open. With closed lists the candidates representing each party and the order in which they are chosen to join the legislature are set by the party and cannot be altered by the voter. Open lists, on the other hand, allow some form of influence of the voter on who will represent a political party or what order they will join the legislature. A third alternative available to hybrid systems is the “best loser” option, in which the losing FPTP candidates will be added to their parties’ lists in the order of the popular vote they received in their ridings. The recommendation here is to use closed lists, as these would simplify the ballot more than an open list and would lead to more predictable outcomes than a “best loser” list.

**Alternative Ways to Elect Local Candidates**

So far, the approach taken here assumes that local members will be elected using FPTP the alternative vote and the single transferable vote could also be used to elect local members. FPTP represents the smallest change from the current system, and would
function exactly the same as current riding elections. The recommendation here is to use FPTP for local elections since it is the simplest method and the proportional seats negate the disproportionate excesses of FPTP alone.

However, it should be noted that there are alternatives to FPTP in local elections. The alternative vote (AV), also known as the Australian vote because of its use in local elections there, is a ranked ballot used in a single-member riding. The single-transferable-vote (STV) used a ranked ballot in multimember ridings. Both of these local voting systems allow voters to rank their preferences for candidates and do not rely on political party affiliation. In addition, STV provides some measure of proportionality in legislatures.

**Thresholds**

Many PR systems impose minimum vote thresholds to allow parties representation in parliament. For example, in Germany a party must receive 5% of the popular vote or a riding seat in a local election to be represented. The idea is that this will prevent the entry of extreme fringe parties in the legislature, which could destabilize the political system. While there is a solid argument for imposing minimum thresholds, in a regional-list MMP system “natural” thresholds arise. For example, if Ontario were broken into 5 20-seat regions, to receive representation a party would have to either win local elections or receive at least 5% of the popular vote in any region they gain representatives. These “natural” thresholds make the creation of a strict minimum threshold unnecessary.

Moreover, using thresholds can lead to strange results. For example, between 1957 and 1987 in Germany a party just below the threshold would have no representation in the legislature unless they won a constituency seat. However, one additional vote bringing the share of party votes to over 5% would instantly move a party from no seats to 25 seats as it moves past the threshold. This type of artificial threshold artificially inflates or deflates the apparent popularity of parties with a share of the popular vote close to the threshold. A “natural threshold”, on the other hand, lets a party’s share of seats in the legislature grow or shrink smoothly as its popularity rises or falls.

**Gender Parity Options**

One area that has not been touched upon so far is equal gender representation in the legislature. Currently 51.1% of Ontario’s population is female, yet in 2003 only 25 women were elected to the Ontario legislature, holding 24.3% of its seats. So far nothing in the MMP model presented addresses gender parity, although it has been noted by many observers that PR systems, and closed-list PR in particular, produce outcomes closer to parity than FPTP.

However, there is nothing “built-in” that makes closed-list PR better at representing women. Rather, closed-list PR makes it easier for political parties to follow gender-parity policies such as alternating men and women, usually called “zippering”, on their party lists. In considering the gender parity question it is important to consider whether this is a goal that should be approached through electoral reform or whether it is a goal which political parties are capable of achieving on their own.

Should the decision be made to try and include gender parity into the electoral system there are a few different approaches which could be taken. One approach would
be to mandate “zippered” party lists. This would not necessarily achieve gender parity, since the riding representatives are still likely to be disproportionately male.

A second approach, which could be used in conjunction with “zippering”, is to require gender parity in each riding. This would mean giving each riding two MPPs, one male and one female. The “twinning” approach would be very effective at achieving gender parity, but the trade-off here would be either a vastly expanded legislature or doubling the size of every riding. In this situation each riding would have both a male and a female representative. There are a few ways this could be achieved. A first approach would use two votes in two parallel first-past-the-post races, with one vote going to a man and one vote to a woman. A second approach would be to give each voter only one vote and make all candidates a paired male-female duo, although this approach may hurt independent candidates. Both the first and second approach would also have a tendency to exaggerate the disproportionality caused by plurality voting systems. A third approach would have two parallel first-past-the-post races, with each man receiving a vote for the male candidate and each woman receiving a vote for a female candidate; this third option is the least acceptable of the three because it greatly limits voter choice and would lead to gender-imbalanced party caucuses if men and women tend to vote differently.

A third approach would be to have “dual party lists” in each region. If this approach is taken then each party will be required to provide a male party list and a female party list for each region. When party seats are allocated in a region which list the MPP gets drawn from depends on the seats that have already been allocated. If there are more male MPPs than female MPPs in a region then the seat will be given to someone chosen from the female party list and if there are more women MPPs in the region than male MPPs then the seat will be given to someone chosen from the male party list. While this system is not currently used anywhere, it would minimize the limitation of voter choice which arises from the implementation of strict demographic quotas. If gender parity is to be built into the electoral system then the recommendation here would be to use the “dual party list” system.

First Nations Representation

New Zealand’s Maori people have been guaranteed a number of seats in the New Zealand legislature since 1867. Under the FPTP electoral system used in that country until 1996 few Maori were elected beyond their guaranteed seats. However, since the adoption of an MMP system Maori representation has risen above their guaranteed seats to a level roughly in line with their share of the national population.

That being noted, First Nations seats could be included in Ontario. These could take the form of a province-wide PR or STV system. However, the inclusion of seats specifically set aside for First Nations people raises concerns about both the development of First Nations self-government and the perception of racial bias.

How Legislatures Act

Ontario’s tendency to produce artificial majority governments will likely evaporate under MMP. In making decisions the governing party will be more likely to rely on the support of other parties to forward an agenda. This will moderate the more extreme actions that majority governments can take and may allow items supported by a large section of the MMPs outside of the governing party to make it onto the agenda.
Moreover, since MPPs will often have to rely upon their adversaries today for support on legislation tomorrow greater proportionality will help promote a collegial, constructive political environment.

MMP will also promote better governance from the ruling party in Ontario. Proportional representation systems such as MPP tend to be better at electing women and visible minorities than FPTP. Furthermore, the MMP structure outlined here places a strong emphasis on diverse regional representation within party caucuses. Even the best-intentioned of governments can unwittingly ignore important minority viewpoints if their caucuses do not contain sufficient demographic or geographic diversity. By promoting diverse party caucuses MMP will help governments form diverse cabinets, resulting in better policy in Ontario.

Diverse, representative governments are more likely to institute policies which have the support of a broad spectrum of the public. Since FPTP systems tend to produce artificial majorities while PR systems tend to produce minority or coalition governments a pivotal point upon which the debate turns is the relative desirability of majority and minority governments. However, an often missed distinction when comparing majority and minority governments is the distinction between government stability and policy stability.

Government stability here refers to the question of which party or parties are in charge, who serves as Premier and Ministerial postings; policy stability refers to the taxing and spending decisions, regulations and the organization of the public sector in Ontario. While changes in government are the focus of media pundits and evening news broadcasts, changes in policy are what people rely upon to make their decisions. Stable policies help

- public agencies make long-term planning decisions;
- private companies estimate costs, market demand and regulatory considerations;
- non-profit sector organizations plan expenditures based on expectations of service; demand and public subsidization; and
- families plan borrowing, saving and consumption decisions based on tax expectations and income from government programs.

While it is difficult to determine whether government or policy stability is more important empirically, a major study suggests that the importance of government stability is often overstated. Arend Lijphard’s cross national analysis of democracies found that the difference in economic performance between “consensus” (PR and minority governments) democracies and “majoritarian” (FPTP and majority governments) democracies were statistically insignificant, with the consensus democracies performing slightly better overall. Indeed the only area in which there was a significant difference, inflation control, showed superior performance by the consensus democracies. Moreover, according to Lijphart “[there] is no evidence that coalition cabinets in multi-party systems are less responsive than one-party majority cabinets; on the contrary, coalition cabinets are usually closer to the centre of the political spectrum—and hence closer in their policy outlook to the average citizen—than one-party cabinets representing either the left or the right” (1998).

Minority may provide greater policy stability over time than majority governments do. Majority governments do not have to rely on other parties to maintain power, however they do have to keep their own party unified. In practice this may make
majority governments less likely to move towards the political centre to reach a consensus with other parties and more likely to move away from the centre to appease the more radical voices within their own party. The more radical an implemented policy is, the less likely it will survive a change in government.

On the whole an MMP system in Ontario offers two key benefits. First, it will greatly broaden the geographic, political and demographic diversity of the Ontario Legislature and successive Ontario Governments. Second, MMP allows more options to tailor the elections to the specific local-proportional representation trade-offs faced by Ontario’s regions. By allowing a diversity of approaches this MMP model will serve as a strong core component in the design of a more effective electoral system.
Appendix: Overhang Seat Calculations

Calculation of Overhang Seats by Party

Overhang seats are an optional method of bringing about proportionality in the legislature if the outcomes of the local riding elections do not achieve the desired level of proportionality. The allocation of overhang seats works much the same as the allocation of compensatory seats in a region, except they are now done at the provincial level.

The process works as follows:

Base Calculation of Overhang Seats

Step 1: Calculate Divisors
Each party will have a "party divisor" determined as follows:

\[
party \text{ divisor} = \frac{\text{votes for that party in the province}}{2 \times \text{total seats for the party} + 1}.
\]

Step 2: Allocate one seat
The party with the largest party divisor will be allocated one overhang seat.

Step 3: Repeat
Repeat until a termination condition is reached.

Terminal Conditions

To stop the allocation of overhang seats a termination condition must be reached.
The approach recommended here is to compare the party divisors for all of the parties winning seats in the legislature. First find the average of all party divisors weighted by the number of seats each has in the legislature.

\[
\text{Weighted average party divisor} = \frac{\text{party seats}_1 \times \text{party divisor}_1 + \ldots + \text{party seats}_n \times \text{party divisor}_n}{\text{total seats in legislature}}
\]

Then find the ratio of any individual party divisor to the average party ratio.

\[
\text{Party overhang ratio} = \frac{\text{party divisor}}{\text{average party divisor}}
\]

Finally, set an overhang ratio threshold. If every party overhang ratio is below the overhang ratio threshold then all overhang seats have been allocated. Otherwise, continue adding overhang seats. A high overhang ratio threshold will reduce the number of overhang seats likely to be added. Additionally, note that overhang seats are likely to favour smaller parties rather than larger ones.
Furthermore, an additional restriction can be made to overhang seats, which is the application of a hard cap on overhang seats. This would be an absolute maximum number of overhang seats which could be created following an election, and would serve as a second possible terminal condition.

**Choosing the List Members are Chosen From**

An important consideration with adding overhand seats is determining where they come from. Since there is no single provincial party list, the overhang seats will have to be chosen form among candidates on party lists from each region. The approach recommended here is to apply a process very similar to that used to calculate the number of compensatory seats per region. In this approach the party receiving the overhang seat will use divisors determined by region, using only the votes from the party in question.

**Choosing the List Members**

- **Step 1:** Calculate Regional Party Overhang Divisors
  Each region will have a "regional party overhang divisor" determined as follows:

  \[
  \text{Regional party overhang divisor} = \frac{\text{party votes in this region}}{2 \times \text{party seats in this region} + 1}.
  \]

- **Step 2:** Allocate one overhang seat
  The overhang seat will be given to the highest person on the party list from the region with the highest regional party overhang divisor.

- **Step 3:** Repeat
  Repeat until all the overhang seats a party is entitled to have been allocated.

This approach is taken so that overhang seats are allocated to the regions in which a party’s supporters are “most underrepresented”.

Bibliography


