



How We Vote

Submission to the BC Public Consultations for a
Referendum on Proportional Representation

Fair Vote Canada BC

Jan. 23, 2017

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Who We Are

Fair Vote Canada (FVC) is a specialized citizens' organization promoting electoral reform and proportional representation (PR) in Canada at all levels of government since 2000. It has 36 chapters across the country and 10,000 supporters in BC alone.

This submission is put forward by the FVC BC Steering Committee consisting of representatives from each of FVC's 15 chapters in BC, supported by members of FVC's national Executive Committee. Our aim is to help ensure a fair referendum in BC, in which citizens are given a clear choice between First-past-the-post (FPTP) and a proportional electoral system based on a clear understanding of the options in front of them.

Summary of Recommendations

Here are our principal recommendations:

1. a binding referendum question asking voters for a mandate to modernize our electoral system by bringing in proportional representation;
2. establishment of clear criteria that any mandated model of PR must satisfy, to be included in the preamble to the mandate question;
3. if the referendum passes, the creation of an independent commission involving citizens, experts and politicians organized and supported by Elections BC, which would be responsible for an expedited process to design a made-in-BC PR system;
4. as a possible complement to the mandate question, the inclusion of a second non-binding question allowing voters to express their preferences on PR models for BC
5. no artificial thresholds beyond what is required under the current BC Referendum Act;
6. careful attention to managing the transition by designing a PR system that avoids unnecessary disruption;
7. a robust public education campaign under the responsibility of Elections BC and a special commissioner for the referendum;
8. a public debate and government leadership that transcends partisan considerations;
9. The creation of one umbrella proponent group and one umbrella opponent group, each of which would be funded by a flat public contribution of \$500,000;
10. allowance for each group to raise \$500,000 in additional funds from individual contributors to a maximum of \$1200 per person, in line with the spirit of Bill 3; and
11. equal time and space obligations for public debate in the media.

A Mandate Question

The fundamental question in this referendum is whether citizens support the adoption of a proportional electoral system to replace the FPTP system. This should be the binding question that provides or denies the government a mandate to revamp BC's electoral system.

We recommend what some have called a “mandate question” that is precise enough to ensure that voters know what they are voting for but avoids drawing voters into the arcane technicalities of PR voting systems.

In our experience, while pundits and specialists like to debate the pros and cons and inner workings of different types of PR systems, the vast majority of citizens are satisfied to leave the technical details to others. A mandate question involving a straightforward choice between FPTP and PR would allow most voters to focus on the fundamentals rather than becoming embroiled in the details of system design or the competing advantages or disadvantages of different technical options. The details of system design can be worked out later, according to pre-established standards, under a process that citizens feel they can trust.

The precise wording of the mandate question should fit the government's purpose in calling the referendum. As outlined in the Supply and Confidence agreement between the NDP and the Green Party, the government is seeking a mandate to modernize BC's electoral system by bringing in a proportional system. This scenario differs significantly from what has happened in the past, in BC and elsewhere, when governments have only reluctantly called a referendum and hoped it would fail. It would be appropriate and fitting to reflect the government's intention in the language of the question.

We propose the following preamble and mandate question for consideration:

Preamble

The government of BC is asking for a mandate to modernize the way we elect our MLAs in time for the next provincial election by adopting a proportional system so that seats in the Legislature match the share of votes cast for each party or candidate.

If the referendum passes, an independent commission involving citizens, experts and elected representatives will be created and supported by Elections BC to design a made-in-BC system of proportional representation in which:

- *The result is proportional.*
- *Voters have more and better ways to express their preferences.*
- *Local representation is maintained.*
- *The number of MLAs is not reduced in any region of the province.*
- *Voters cast votes for individual candidates.*
- *The size of the Legislature does not need to be increased.*

After two or three election cycles using the new system, Elections BC will be mandated to organize an independent review to ensure that the new system is working in voters' best interests and to recommend any changes as appropriate.

The Referendum Question

Mark your choice for one of the following:

I support the plan to modernize our voting system by adopting a system of proportional representation

I support retaining the current First-Past-the-Post voting system

The Information Package

Not everything that needs to be shared with voters about the referendum question can be included in the preamble, but with a mail-in ballot, it would be possible to include a fairly detailed information package to be shared with every voter when their ballot is mailed to them.

We see two parts to such an information package.

Explaining the Question

The first part should be an elaboration on what is already said in the preamble. In particular, reassurance should be given that whatever PR system design is chosen would satisfy the following basic criteria:

- It **will be proportional**, meaning that the share of seats by party in the Legislature will be approximately equal to each party's share of the popular vote.
- It will **give voters new opportunities to make meaningful choices when casting their ballot and allow them to more fully express their preferences**. For example, with a top-up system, voters could cast separate ballots for their choice of local candidate and the candidate and party of their choice at the regional level. In multimember models, voters could express their preferences more fully by ranking candidates 1,2,3....
- It will **maintain meaningful local representation** by ensuring voter access to one or more locally-based MLAs who are accountable to them.
- **All voting will be for individual candidates** who have been democratically nominated, not party lists.
- It will **respect geographical differences**. More specifically, it will be regionally-based by grouping existing ridings in multi-member districts or top-up regions; it will leave the geographical balance of representation essentially the same as it is now; and allow for PR regions or districts of variable size as defined by the number of seats in each.
- Although adding a small number of seats to the Legislature might help to smooth the transition, **a substantial increase in the number of MLAs is not being considered**.

In terms of process, reassurance should be provided that an expedited process for finalizing the design of a new electoral system will be put in place that includes citizen and expert representation. Elected representatives should of course be included to ensure the political

viability of what is being proposed, but electoral reform is not something that can or should be left exclusively for politicians to decide because of the inherent conflict of interest that is involved. Accordingly, we propose that **an independent commission be set up and supported by Elections BC to finalize and recommend a made-in-BC PR system.**

This will require an expanded mandate and resources for Elections BC.

The process should include meaningful dialogue with leaders of BC's indigenous peoples to address how a change to a proportional voting system would impact indigenous peoples and what preferences they may have.

Assurance should be provided, finally, that whatever design is adopted and implemented, a review to be organized by Elections BC will be done after two or three elections under the new system. A review of BC's experience under PR would allow for adjustments to be made if required. A review process would help to reassure voters that the process of change is not irreversible, while providing some protection against reversals for strictly partisan reasons.

Tools For an Informed Decision

We take it for granted that voters will also receive an educational package that outlines the rationale for the referendum and provides sufficient information for voters to make an informed decision. This could be complemented with more detailed materials online for those who want more.

Subjects to be covered should include the following:

- a statement from the government outlining why it is seeking a mandate to revamp the electoral system;
- a short statement on FPTP, how it works, how votes translate into representation in the Legislature, and how governments are formed;
- a general statement about where PR is used in the world and how it differs from FPTP, including how majority governments or coalitions are formed;
- a review of evidence about the experience of countries using PR or FPTP, including the style of politics and of policy making associated with each model;
- an explanation of the criteria to be met by any made-in-BC model of proportional representation;
- a short description of illustrative models that meet the criteria, and the special features of each; and
- a description of the process that will be used to finalize the design of a made-in-BC PR model.

Not all voters understand that FPTP does not yield proportional results, so among the differences to be emphasized in a simple way are some of ways that results are not proportional under FPTP:

- FPTP typically gives the winning party a disproportionate share of seats in the legislature, making it possible to form a majority government with less than 50% of the vote - typically around 40%.

- FPTP makes it hard for smaller parties such as the BC Green Party or the BC Conservative Party to win seats; this means that voters have less choice of whom to vote for if they want their vote to help elect a winner.
- FPTP leads to regional imbalances in representation. In BC's case, this means underrepresentation of the NDP and Green Parties in the North and Interior and underrepresentation of the Liberal Party in Vancouver, the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island.

Of considerable importance will be how to deal with concerns about PR that can and would be addressed in the design of a made-in-BC PR system. It is to be expected that by the time of the referendum, all PR options on the table will have addressed the key concerns expressed in the past about issues such as party lists, local representation, or the special concerns of voters living in sparsely-populated areas. Supporting material should explicitly address how the PR models under consideration would satisfy the criteria listed above.

A Two-Part Question As an Option

As noted earlier, most citizens are prepared to leave the choice and design of a made-in-BC PR system to the experts. This is our preferred approach as well.

However this does not rule out consultations with citizens on their preferences. Based on results of [a poll commissioned by Fair Vote Canada after the 2009 referendum](#), we believe that more people will vote for PR if they have the opportunity to express a preference for the PR model of their choice. In particular, BC's PR champions continue to be divided between advocates of Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) and advocates of the Single Transferable Vote (STV), so giving voters a choice between these two options would be a democratic way to proceed.

This could be done as part of the consultations following the referendum or take the form of a second question on the referendum ballot itself. Two-part questions have been used before in New Zealand and most recently in Prince Edward Island.

What we would like to see, if this option is chosen, is an optional, non-binding, second question in which citizens can rank their preferences on different PR models. Under this scenario, the final design of a made-in-BC PR model would still be left to the independent commission and consultative process to follow, but would be informed by the results of the referendum. Viewed in this light, the purpose of the second question would be consultative in nature.

The only way to have a binding question on systems in a way that avoids distracting voters from the fundamentals would be to hold a separate referendum on systems choice six months after the mandate question. However, we believe that the public and the media would protest at the prospect of holding two referendums over a six month period, and do not recommend it.

No Artificial Thresholds

It should be obvious to all that the 60% threshold imposed in BC in 2005 and copied in subsequent referendums was imposed not for democratic reasons, but for partisan reasons, to

make it virtually impossible for the referendum to pass. There is no need to follow this undemocratic precedent.

Referendum expert Patrick Boyer points out that the BC Liberals were “roundly condemned for thwarting democracy” by imposing such a threshold in 2009 (Forcing Choice, pp. 165-166):

In Canadian democratic practice... a simple majority of 50 percent plus one is required to decide a matter. However, intent on preordaining defeat, the B.C. government imposed an extraordinary *double majority* threshold.

A 50% + 1 threshold is what was required in the New Zealand referendum and was the threshold applied in the 2016 plebiscite in PEI. It is the threshold specified in [section 4 of the BC Referendum Act](#).

We commend the government for staying the course on the 50% + 1 threshold, considering that:

- referendums suffer from a huge status quo bias in the first place;
- revamping the electoral system is not a constitutional issue and can be done by a simple legislative act; and
- the purpose of the reform is to ensure voter equality and equal representation.

There is no legitimate rationale for requiring a supermajority or any other extraordinary threshold on a proposal to grant all voters equal representation.

Accommodation for Voters Whose Address Has Changed

We recommend that some measures be put in place to make it easier for people such as students whose addresses have recently changed or others with no fixed address to vote by establishing a number of in-person polling stations in strategic places such as universities and colleges.

PR Options for BC

However the referendum is structured – whether it involves a single mandate question or a two-question ballot – it is imperative for the government to identify PR models that it feels are most worthy of consideration for a made-in-BC approach to PR. In particular, we strongly urge the government to put forward only models that satisfy the criteria outlined in our proposed preamble, eliminating models that do not satisfy these criteria in advance.

Models Which Do Not Satisfy the Criteria

Some of the models or characteristics of models mentioned in the How We Vote public consultations questionnaire do not satisfy our proposed referendum ballot criteria. These include:

- **The Mixed Member Majoritarian model (MMM), which** offers limited proportionality and has never been endorsed in this country. We recommend that MMM not be considered.

- **Closed List models.** Party lists can be used in List PR models and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP). These lists can be either ‘closed lists’ (in which parties determine the order in which candidates on the list are elected) or ‘open lists’ (which rank the winners based on what the voters decide). To our knowledge, no organization in BC is recommending the use of closed lists. We therefore recommend that the government strike closed-list options from consideration.

Models Which Do Satisfy the Criteria

Having discussed various PR options extensively in FVC and with allied organizations in BC, we would like to put forward some illustrative design options that satisfy all of the the criteria identified earlier. The intent is to address British Columbians’ goals and democratic values, while building on familiar and desirable aspects of our existing electoral tradition, such as local and geographic representation and the link between constituents and elected officials.

We have identified four models that we feel deserve special attention:

- MMP, which is a top-up model;
- STV, based on the use of multi-member districts;
- Local PR, a variant of STV that might make it more appealing to some voters; and
- Flexible District PR (formerly known as Rural-Urban PR), which combines top-ups and multi-member districts to accommodate BC’s geography and demographics.

A more detailed discussion of these four models can be found in our [User Guide to PR Options in BC](#). A summary presentation is offered in Annex 1 of this submission. It is recommended to include basic information on some or all of these four models as part of Election BC’s educational brochure to accompany the referendum ballot.¹

Our view is that any of these options would represent an excellent choice for BC. Any of these models can be designed to offer a high level of proportionality and enhanced opportunities for voters to make their preferences count at the polls. However, they do so in different ways. There are tradeoffs involved, and it is impossible to predict which options voters would prefer once they got used to the new system. This leads advocates of PR to react in different ways. Some are strong partisans of one model or another, but most say ‘Pick one, **any** one! Any of these models would be a vast improvement over the present system!’

¹ Worth noting is that we have witnessed a whirlwind of creativity in PR system design in last 12-18 months in Canada. This makes it challenging for even the experts to keep up. Most of these proposals are efforts to adapt PR to Canada’s particular traditions, and demographic/geographical realities. They include Local PR and Flexible District PR as described in this submission and in our [User Guide to PR Options for BC](#), but also [Dual Member Proportional](#) (an easy to implement version of MMP summarized in footnote 6 of our Guide, [Single Member District PR](#) which keeps ridings the same but tweaks the formula for electing the winners to ensure proportionality, and [Proxy Voting](#), which focuses on how votes are counted in the legislature itself.

Managing the Transition

Perhaps as important as the choice of model based on their intrinsic merits is the issue of how to manage the transition from FPTP. Change is always challenging, and while electoral reform is well worth the effort, the transition issue is one that many in our movement have tried to address. The subject is discussed in more detail in our User Guide to PR Options, with reference to each of the four models under discussion here ([pp. 10-14](#)).

In an effort to promote change with continuity, all of the models envisaged in this document retain a significant and meaningful measure of local representation and build on our tradition of voting for individual candidates, not party lists. All can be designed to respect BC's demographic and geographic realities and to avoid substantially increasing the size of the Legislature.

Note that the geographical balance of representation by region would not be changed under any of the four models we are proposing. Under STV or Local PR, the only required change would be to regroup existing ridings into multi-member districts, leaving the number of seats in each district the same as it is now. Under MMP and Flexible District PR, each top-up region would retain the same share of seats in the Legislature as they have now.

A criterion that we have not yet raised explicitly is that of "simplicity." The main reason for this is voting under any of these systems remains relatively simple, as shown in countries that already have PR. The complications, such as they are, have to do mainly with the optimization of the details from a technical point of view, and the challenge has to do with finding the right balance.

For example, hybrid models such as Local PR or Flexible District PR are in some ways more complicated than some other models. What they are designed to do, and do well, is to retain some of the features that people are used to. Among these are local representation, the existing nomination process and existing riding configurations. As systems, they are flexible enough that they could fairly readily be adapted and improved upon in the future.

The Option of Adding Seats

Another subject that merits attention is whether to ease the transition to PR by adding a modest number of seats to the existing number in the Legislature. This might be desirable if the use of top-ups is contemplated under the MMP or Flexible District PR options. Top-up seats can be created in one of three ways: one can carve them out of existing ridings, add new seats, or combine these two approaches. Adding a large number of new seats would not be politically acceptable, but there is something to be said for adding a small or modest number of new seats. Under the MMP model, this means that the remaining local ridings would not have to be so large. To respect the existing geographical balance in the legislature, any additional seats would have to be proportionately distributed across the province.

Under the Flexible District PR option, a small number of additional seats might be all that is needed. As explained in our User Guide,

With only 10-15% top-ups, it might be feasible to simply add top-up seats to the existing number. One could easily imagine adding 13 new MLA seats for a total of 100 instead of 87 as a way of managing the transition.

Adding a modest number of seats in this way would make redistricting beyond the grouping of ridings in multi-member districts unnecessary. It would allow all incumbent politicians to run again in the same riding or district as before and would create new opportunities for both incumbents and new candidates.

Public Education and Public Debate

For a referendum to be successful in giving citizens their say, citizens need to be well informed about the issues at stake and how to resolve them. And because referendums typically involve a choice between two options, there is a complementary need for a healthy debate between the proponent and opponent sides. A level playing field not dominated by moneyed interests or marred by disproportionate access to the media is also of crucial importance. It is government's responsibility to ensure that these conditions are fulfilled.

A referendum on electoral reform is fraught with partisan interests, since the proposed reform would eliminate existing distortions that benefit some parties and candidates relative to others. Ensuring a successful referendum under these circumstances requires responsible leadership from the government and the utmost care in designing the process.

Public education

The first and most important need is for a public education campaign. This is not the job of proponent and opponent groups. In 2009, this function fell to a significant extent upon the proponent group, which was thereby saddled with two functions: the education function and that of debating the opponent group. This is too much to ask of the proponent group.

Public education on subjects itemized under [Tools for an Informed Decision](#) is where the bulk of public funds should be spent, ideally under the tutelage of a fully independent body such as Elections BC. New Zealand's experience is instructive on this subject and could be used as a model. They spent the equivalent of C\$9M on public education in the first referendum.

In our view, the public education function requires considerable expertise in the subject matter. An option worth considering would be to **retain a trusted independent referendum commissioner** with expertise in the subject matter, strong democratic credentials and an evidence-based perspective to oversee the production of public information materials in consultation with a small team of experts.

Public Debate

Beyond partisanship

How to organize the public debate for the proponent and opponent sides is particularly challenging in a referendum on electoral reform because of the way partisan interests play into it. This raises questions about the role of politicians in a referendum in which politicians have a vested interest.

It is not unusual in referendums for politicians to lead the proponent and opponent debates. This is how it worked for example in the two referendums on Quebec sovereignty in 1980 and 1995, the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord in 1992, and the 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK. In other cases, government has stood on the sidelines, as Christy Clark did during the Vancouver transit referendum, and as most governments have done in the context of electoral reform referendums in Canada, including in BC.

The upcoming referendum promises to be quite different from past referendums on electoral reform. In this case, both the BC NDP and the BC Green Party have promised to campaign for the PR side and BC Liberal Party leadership candidates have been campaigning for the FPTP side.

Fair Vote Canada BC encourages all politicians to rise above their partisan interests in this debate, whether on the PR or FPTP side. We welcome the leadership role that the government proposes to play in favour of PR, and commend the non-partisan tone that the proponent side has taken with regard to this issue. We call on the government to pursue its leadership role but to do so as a defender of voter rights regardless of voters' partisan preferences. The government must speak for all voters and welcome all voters into the debate.

That said, it is important that the two parties who promised to campaign for the yes side should do so and take this leadership role very seriously. Voters across the country have had enough of broken promises on electoral reform, and are looking to this government to keep its word.

We recommend that equal time provisions should apply to proponent and opponent sides in the media by law, or as a general principle voluntarily accepted by media organizations.

The Role of Proponent / Opponent groups

Questions have been raised about whether there should be dedicated proponent and opponent groups or organizations, as there often are. Closely related to this is the question of how to create a level playing field.

Patrick Boyer, in his recent book, *Forcing Choice: The Risky Reward of Referendums* argues that the structure provided by the creation of proponent and opponent groups is both desirable and necessary in any effort to level the playing field by limiting campaign expenditures the way one does in election campaigns. Here is a passage from Boyer's book (p. 228), regarding the 1992 Charlottetown Accord referendum and how it was managed in Quebec compared to the rest of the country:

Quebec... stipulated the existence of two mandatory umbrella committees, a strict limit on referendum campaign spending (and) restrictions on campaign donations.... Outside Quebec, in contrast, people were free to form whatever committees they wished, in whatever number they wanted, to support or oppose the referendum, provided only that the committees register with Elections Canada if they spend more than \$5,000. No limit restricted the size or source of financial contributions to any campaign committee. If a particular committee reached its spending limit, another committee could simply be registered to carry on the campaign, like amoebas subdividing by binary fission.

We agree with Boyer that to have an organized and fair public debate, there is little choice but to have umbrella proponent and opponent groups, subject to equal ceilings on expenditures. This would require that organizations and groups, individuals and political parties register to be part of one camp or the other.

One could envisage different ways for persons and groups within the two camps to organize themselves. Most logical would be for them to establish a single umbrella organization and elect a single chair or co-chairs. Ideally, third parties in each camp would establish a democratic governance structure to ensure some coordination of efforts by different groups in each camp.

Public funding and limits on proponent and opponent expenditures

With regard to the use of public funding by the proponent and opponent camps, we propose that a flat amount of \$500,000 should be allocated to each camp for use by registered members of each committee. Considering the extensive efforts that are needed to gear up for a referendum campaign and do a decent job of reaching out, these funds would need to be provided as soon as possible.

All expenditures to be covered using public funds would need to be audited and reported upon by the opponent or proponent camps.

We suggest that registered proponent and opponent groups be allowed to raise and spend up to \$500,000 in additional funds once the referendum question is announced, based on individual contributions not exceeding \$1200 per person, in line with the intentions of the 2017 Election Amendment Act (Bill 3). We applaud the government for banning corporate and union donations in Bill 3 and expect that ban to apply here.

Persons or groups who do not register as proponents or opponents could act independently of registered committees, but should be restricted in the amount that they can spend without registering as they are in provincial election campaigns. We suggest that all third parties should have to register with one of the two camps if they spend more than \$500 on advertising.

Combining public funding and private funding, each of the two registered camps would face a cap on expenditures of \$1,000,000.

Annex 1: Four Models That Meet the Criteria

MMP

MMP has been considered as an option in every reform process at the provincial level to date, including by the BC Citizens assembly in 2004. MMP is based on our existing FPTP system of electing MLAs in single member ridings while setting aside a share of the seats to be used as top-up seats to ensure proportionality overall.

As noted above, we envisage a model of MMP that is regionally-based. In line with Canadian traditions, we suggest that all MLAs, local and regional should be directly accountable to the voter. This is different from the closed list MMP model rejected in the 2007 Ontario referendum, but matches the open-list MMP model which won the PEI plebiscite in November 2016. Voters would have two votes: one for a local candidate and one for a regional candidate in line with their choice of party. [Simulations indicate that MMP with an average MMP region size of 12 ridings would yield a high level of proportionality](#), assuming a 60-40 or 50-50 split between local seats and top-up seats.

STV

STV was the preferred option of the BC Citizens Assembly in 2004 because it was felt to maximize voter choice. STV offers voters the opportunity to express themselves more fully by ranking their preferences. This makes it possible for voters to support alternative candidates in case their first choice fails to win a seat or has more votes than are needed. Typically, in a five MLA district, over 85% of voters will cast a ballot that helps to elect a candidate. However, the proportionality of STV depends on the size of the districts involved. With small multi-member districts, the level of proportionality would be limited and third parties may have difficulty electing a representative.

Although STV was much maligned as “too complicated” during the 2009 referendum, this voting system is in fact no more complicated for voters than any other system and the counting process could be easily managed using electronic counting machines. Manual recounts would still be possible if needed. There is furthermore no mystery regarding how votes are translated into seats once the basic principles are understood.

Local PR

Local PR is an STV-based system that maintains a link to existing ridings. Ridings would be grouped into multi-member districts and voting would be by ranked ballot across the multi-member district, as it is with STV. The key features differentiating Local PR from STV are twofold:

- candidates for each party would be locally nominated according to existing riding boundaries (one candidate per party in each riding); and
- the counting procedure would be tweaked to ensure that one locally-nominated candidate is elected in each existing riding.

These features would help to ease the transition to a new way of electing our representatives while retaining locally-nominated MLAs. Local PR would not give the same riding-by-riding results as FPTP because the local candidate preferred by a plurality of local voters will not always be the one elected based on multi-member voting district wide. What it does is ensure the geographic link to a locally-nominated candidate that some voters would like to keep.

The appeal of Local PR, relative to classic STV, is that it offers citizens two forms of local representation. It guarantees access to a locally-nominated MLA in each existing riding, and gives voters a choice of MLAs district-wide. Allowing for this form of local representation addresses a common criticism of multi-member systems in a way that makes it possible to envisage larger multi-member districts than under classic STV. This yields a system that is more proportional and fairer to smaller parties.

Flexible District PR

The fourth model that could be considered is one that combines both multi-member and top-up features called Flexible District PR. The core feature of this model is the flexibility to tailor district size according to geographic needs, by merging of elements from both MMP and STV.

This system makes it possible to accommodate BC's particular demographic and geographic realities without sacrificing proportionality. Proportionality is achieved in two complementary ways. In densely-populated areas, it is achieved primarily through the use of multi-member districts of sufficient size (as in STV).

However, an acceptable level of proportionality is harder to achieve in the same way in sparsely-populated areas. In the North and Interior of BC, the average number of seats per multi-member district would have to be reduced and some single-member ridings would be retained to avoid having districts that are geographically too large for comfort. This is where top-up seats come in (as in MMP), to balance out any remaining disproportionalities and ensure a high level of proportionality overall.

While this system would be tailored to the specific needs of British Columbians, several countries, including Sweden, Denmark and Norway currently use variations of this system, although they don't allow for single-member ridings.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to seeing our submission on the How We Vote website.

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