

# Types of Voting Systems

(Adapted from the Library of Parliament publication: *Electoral Systems and Electoral Reform in Canada and Elsewhere: An Overview*. Find the complete document at: [www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/ERRE](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/ERRE) and click on the title of the document.)

## Plurality or Majority Systems

**First Past the Post (FPTP):** An elector casts a single vote for a candidate to represent the electoral district in which the voter resides. Candidates must gain a plurality of votes to win (could be any percentage depending on number of candidates eg 35%, 40% or more than 50% of votes cast).

*FPTP is used in Canada, UK, United States*

**Alternative Vote (AV):** Also used to elect a single candidate per electoral district, this system is often called preferential voting. Voters rank the candidates running in their electoral district in order of their preference. To be elected, a candidate must receive a majority of the eligible votes cast. Should no candidate garner a majority on the first count, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes (lowest-ranked) is dropped, and the second-preference votes on the ballots where that candidate ranked first are assigned to the respective remaining candidates. This process continues until one candidate receives the necessary majority (over 50%).

*AV is used in Australia (House of Representatives), France*

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## Proportional Representation Systems (PR)

As the name suggests, proportional representation (PR) systems seek to closely match a political party's vote share with its seat allocation in the legislature.

**List Proportional Representation (List PR):** There are two main forms of List PR: closed-list and open-list. Both forms use a regional or national list of candidates in each constituency drawn up by each party before election day.

In closed-list PR, the party ranks the names on the list, and citizens vote for a party, not a specific candidate.

In open-list PR, voters choose a preferred candidate (or candidates) from the list of the party for which they wish to vote. This means that voters effectively determine the order in which the candidates on the list will be awarded seats.

*List systems are used in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland.*

**Single Transferable Vote (STV):** Citizens in multi-member electoral districts rank candidates on the ballot. They may rank as few or as many candidates as they wish. Winners are declared by first determining the total number of valid votes cast, and then establishing a minimum number of votes that must be garnered based on the number of seats to be filled. Candidates who receive the number of first-preference votes needed to reach the quota are elected. If there are still seats to be filled, a two-step count occurs.

1. Any votes in excess of the quota for elected candidates are redistributed to the second choices indicated on the ballots of the elected candidates, using a weighted formula (this is called "excess transfer"). Candidates who then reach the quota are elected.

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## Proportional Representation Systems (PR) continued

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2. If no candidates reach the quota in this way, a second step takes place in which the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes (lowest-ranked) is dropped, and the second-preference votes on the ballots where that candidate ranked first are assigned to the respective remaining candidates.

*STV is used in Australia (Senate), Ireland.*

*From the 1920s to the 1950s, Alberta and Manitoba both adopted STV for elections held in urban ridings and AV for elections held in rural ridings*

*British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly\* recommended adoption of STV in 2004*

*(\*An independent, non-partisan assembly of 160 randomly selected British Columbians, set up by the provincial government and with a mandate to look at how votes cast in provincial elections translate into seats in the Legislature.)*

**Mixed Member Proportional (MMP):** In mixed electoral systems, citizens cast two votes: one to directly elect an individual member to serve as their representative, and a second for a party or parties to fill seats in the legislature allocated according to the proportion of the vote share they receive.

A citizen's second vote, which allocates seats to parties according to List PR, is used to attempt to compensate for any disproportionate results in the FPTP constituency part of the election. Additional seats are awarded to qualifying parties where the number of constituency seats that they won fails to reflect voter support shown in both components of the election.

*MMP is used in Germany, Mexico, New Zealand, Scotland, Wales.*

*In 2007, Ontario's Citizens' Assembly recommended adoption of an MMP system.*

*In 2006, Quebec's Citizens' Committee recommended adoption of a system of MMP similar to that of Germany.*

*In 2005, New Brunswick's Commission on Legislative Democracy, after public hearings, recommended an MMP system.*

**Dual Member Proportional (DMP):** This is a new proposal developed by a research project funded by the University of Alberta. It recommends two member districts where one is elected by FPTP and the other by a process of proportionality. It is one of the five options included on the Prince Edward Island plebiscite this year.

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## Other Electoral Reform Initiatives

**Mandatory or compulsory voting:** Mandatory voting, also referred to as compulsory voting, requires citizens to register as voters and to present themselves at their polling stations on election day. Those who refuse to do so are usually subject to a fine (unless they have an acceptable explanation, such as illness). Citizens are not required to vote. They may still exercise the option of spoiling their ballots or registering an abstention.

*Mandatory voting exists in Australia, Belgium, Luxembourg and Brazil.*

**Online Voting:** Research conducted for Elections Canada found that "a moderate proportion of electors would be likely to vote over the Internet, and that this proportion is increasing from one general election to the next." Elections Canada's research also examined the required legal framework to establish online voting, as well as consultations with European jurisdictions about their experience with online voting. Those in favour suggest it may expand accessibility of elections. Those against cite reliability and security concerns.



## MOTION

### SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

JUNE 7, 2016

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(16), the House proceeded to the putting of the question on the main motion, as amended, of Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley), seconded by Mr. Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly), — That a Special Committee on electoral reform be appointed to identify and conduct a study of viable alternate voting systems to replace the first-past-the-post system, as well as to examine mandatory voting and online voting, and to assess the extent to which the options identified could advance the following principles for electoral reform:

- 1) Effectiveness and legitimacy: that the proposed measure would increase public confidence among Canadians that their democratic will, as expressed by their votes, will be fairly translated and that the proposed measure reduces distortion and strengthens the link between voter intention and the election of representatives;
- 2) Engagement: that the proposed measure would encourage voting and participation in the democratic process, foster greater civility and collaboration in politics, enhance social cohesion and offer opportunities for inclusion of underrepresented groups in the political process;
- 3) Accessibility and inclusiveness: that the proposed measure would avoid undue complexity in the voting process, while respecting the other principles, and that it would support access by all eligible voters regardless of physical or social condition;
- 4) Integrity: that the proposed measure can be implemented while safeguarding public trust in the election process, by ensuring reliable and verifiable results obtained through an effective and objective process that is secure and preserves vote secrecy for individual Canadians;
- 5) Local representation: that the proposed measure would ensure accountability and recognize the value that Canadians attach to community, to Members of Parliament understanding local conditions and advancing local needs at the national level, and to having access to Members of Parliament to facilitate resolution of their concerns and participation in the democratic process;

that the Committee be directed to issue an invitation to each Member of Parliament to conduct a town hall in their respective constituencies and provide the Committee with a written report of the input from their constituents to be filed with the Clerk of the Committee no later than October 14, 2016;

that the Committee be directed to take into account the applicable constitutional, legal and implementation parameters in the development of its recommendations; accordingly, the Committee should seek out expert testimony on these matters;

that the Committee be directed to consult broadly with relevant experts and organizations, take into consideration consultations that have been undertaken on the issue, examine relevant research studies and literature, and review models being used or developed in other jurisdictions;

that the Committee be directed to develop its consultation agenda, working methods, and recommendations on electoral reform with the goal of strengthening the inclusion of all Canadians in our diverse society, including women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, seniors, Canadians with disabilities, new Canadians, and residents of rural and remote communities;

that the Committee be directed to conduct a national engagement process that includes a comprehensive and inclusive consultation with Canadians, including through written submissions and online engagement tools;

that the Committee be directed to study and advise on additional methods for obtaining the views of Canadians;

that the Committee be composed of twelve (12) members of which five (5) shall be government members, three (3) shall be from the Official Opposition, two (2) shall be from the New Democratic Party, one (1) member shall be from the Bloc Québécois, and the Member for Saanich—Gulf Islands;

that changes in the membership of the Committee be effective immediately after notification by the Whip has been filed with the Clerk of the House;

that membership substitutions be permitted, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2);

that, with the exception of the Member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, all other members shall be named by their respective Whip by depositing with the Clerk of the House the list of their members to serve on the Committee no later than ten (10) sitting days following the adoption of this motion;

that the Committee be chaired by a member of the government party; that, in addition to the Chair, there be one (1) Vice-Chair from the Official Opposition and one (1) Vice-Chair from the New Democratic Party, and that all candidates for the position of Chair or Vice-Chair shall be elected by secret ballot, and that each candidate be permitted to address the Committee for not more than three (3) minutes;

that the quorum of the Committee be as provided for in Standing Order 118, provided that at least four (4)

members are present and provided that one (1) member from the government party and one (1) member from an opposition party are present;

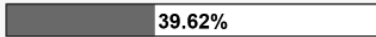
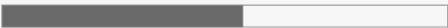
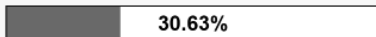

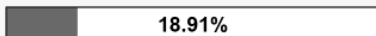

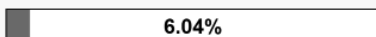

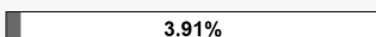
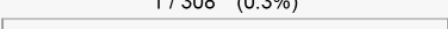
that the Committee be granted all of the powers of a standing committee, as provided in the Standing Orders, as well as the power to travel, accompanied by the necessary staff, inside and outside of Canada;

that the Committee have the power to authorize video and audio broadcasting of any or all of its proceedings; and

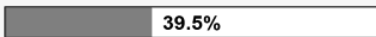
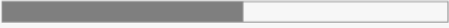
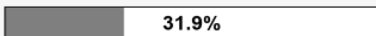
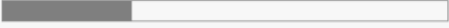
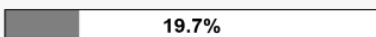

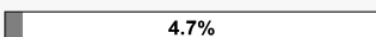

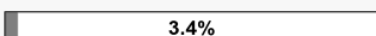

that the Committee present its final report no later than December 1, 2016.

# Recent Election Results and Seat Counts

## 2011

Party	Votes		Seats
<b>Conservative</b>	5,832,401	 39.62%	166 / 308 (54%) 
<b>New Democratic</b>	4,508,474	 30.63%	103 / 308 (33%) 
<b>Liberal</b>	2,783,175	 18.91%	34 / 308 (11%) 
<b>Bloc Québécois</b>	889,788	 6.04%	4 / 308 (1%) 
<b>Green</b>	576,221	 3.91%	1 / 308 (0.3%) 

## 2015

Party	Votes			Seats
<b>Liberal</b>	6,930,136	 39.5%	▲ 20.6%	184 / 338 (54%) 
<b>Conservative</b>	5,600,496	 31.9%	▼ 7.7%	99 / 338 (29%) 
<b>New Democratic</b>	3,461,262	 19.7%	▼ 10.9%	44 / 338 (13%) 
<b>Bloc Québécois</b>	818,652	 4.7%	▼ 1.2%	10 / 338 (3%) 
<b>Green</b>	605,864	 3.4%	▼ 0.5%	1 / 338 (0.3%) 

# More Information

You can also find these links on Linda's website ([www.LindaDuncanMP.ca](http://www.LindaDuncanMP.ca)) on the 'Electoral Reform Town Hall' page. A PDF copy of this handout is also posted there.

## **Advocacy organizations**

**Fair Vote Canada:** [www.fairvote.ca](http://www.fairvote.ca)

**The Broadbent Institute:** [www.broadbentinstitute.ca/canadian\\_electoral\\_reform](http://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/canadian_electoral_reform)

**Leadnow:** [www.leadnow.ca/votereform](http://www.leadnow.ca/votereform)

You can see the **Special Committee on Electoral Reform's guidebooks** and listen to **hearings** on its website at [www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/ERRE](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/ERRE)

**Video: Dennis Pilon**, Associate Professor, Political Science, York University:  
<https://youtu.be/D3guVBhKmDc>

To see the **Special Committee on Electoral Reform's** schedule of cross-country consultations, go to [www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/ERRE](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/ERRE)>*News Releases*>*Special Committee on Electoral Reform Launches Electronic Consultation*.

The committee is scheduled to be in Leduc, Alberta on Thursday, September 29.

There is also a link where you can request to appear before the committee. Requests to appear must be submitted by October 7, 2016.